

Khakhanate

Book II

The Crow

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For Deena

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Amona Island, 118 K

(Mona Is., PR, 1487)

My name is Crow. My name is also Karl Waldman, although I am never called that. Only my parents and sometimes my siblings called me Karl, to everyone else I am, in various languages, the Crow. I suppose it is presumptuous of me to think to carry on my grandfather's narrative, since I share few of his attributes. Still, among those few attributes I do share with him are a good memory and enough patience to ferret out the truth from the official version of events. These qualities would have long ago gotten me killed had I not eventually learned discretion. As it is, they did get me exiled three times (so far), and I now find myself with a lot of time and little to keep me busy. I am now (in my third exile) living on a small island named Amona that lies between the much larger islands of Aiti and Boriquen. It is about eighteen li long and twelve li wide, and is little more than a limestone slab rising about two hundred feet above the surface of the sea. It is riddled with caves and alive with innumerable birds. I am not allowed off the island, but I can receive visitors, and a most attentive staff of two Tainos from Boriquen meets all my needs. They grow, gather, hunt or catch and prepare whatever we eat, and keep my small house clean and cheerful. They are a very warm, friendly couple who make every effort to keep my spirits up. They even insist that they do not mind staying here with me and indeed, they only rarely return home. All this even though I was a complete stranger to them when their cacique ordered them to attend me in exile (in defiance of official instructions that I be left alone on the island) and make sure I live long and well. Their cacique, Behechio, does know me and feels indebted to me, but more on that at the proper time.

One of the few people who care to visit me regularly is my Ani' Yun'-wiya brother Cimmashote. On his last visit, he brought me the copy of my grandfather's memoirs, which I had left with his parents so long ago and reminded me of his mother's prediction that I would finish it. It was that, rather than the birth of a namesake grandson, that has led me to write this book. It should help keep me busy for a good long time.

I must admit that when I first read Grandfather's memoirs, I dreamt of writing my own after a great and successful life that easily eclipsed that of my great ancestor. As it happens, I write now more for lack of anything better to do, and my life has been quite mediocre and forgettable to anyone else but me. Still, I have been around great people and significant events and I can set them down with more disinterest than anyone else I know, especially since only a handful of people, all of whom are related to me, can read this old language.

I should probably begin where Grandfather left off. When he died he was ninety-five years old, a most ancient age that few others have attained, especially after so active a life. I was five years old when he died and while aware of him, knew him only as the very old man who would tell us wonderful stories. He alludes to his talent in the narrative, but he is too modest about it. They were marvelous tales, and he would tell them with exaggerated gestures, expressions, and inflections easily holding my rapt attention. His bright blue eyes would variously burn with intensity, shine with wonder, freeze with icy coldness, or sparkle with fun. I was heartbroken when my sister told me he was dead. It was many years and in my second exile before I fully appreciated such storytelling. I do remember some of his funeral to which my father alluded in his appendix. I stood with the whole family when the funeral pyre was lit by the then Khan, my cousin John. We all subsequently accompanied the ashes out into the middle of the lake in a fleet of small boats. There was a natural whirlpool there, and the ashes were placed in a basket that was directed into the whirlpool where it was sucked under. The only other thing I remember about the day was the silence. There was no sound from the throng in the square. My cousin John said very little. The fire crackled, steamed, and hissed dispiritedly, as if it regretted

its task. I recall being afraid to break the silence and remained quite still throughout the ceremony. Never since have I ever witnessed such reverence at a funeral.

When we returned home, my father gave away all Grandfather's things to the servants and then sat down to read his memoirs. When my father finished, he called the family together and told us about the memoirs and urged us all to read them. I was probably the last to read them, since I was just learning to read at the time and was hardly ready for such a tome. But when I did finally read the book, I was completely captivated and plagued everyone with questions raised by it. I wanted to know more about the old land, the frozen north, the oceans, the plains, the northern people, the southern people; in short, I was a real nuisance. It was at this time my siblings began calling me the Crow. At first they called me Karl, then began calling me "Little Raven" after my grandfather; soon my constant pestering earned me the name "Crow." Since Grandfather narrowly avoided the same name, I suppose it was inevitable and I was young enough to get used to it and eventually take pride in it.

It was no wonder that I would be curious about the world, for I had spent all of my short life in Cuauhnahuac, except for occasional trips to Tlatelolco and a few of the other cities of Anahuac, and there was much about which to be curious. My parents had both been born far to the northwest and had both (especially my father) seen much of the world. My mother's children were also born in the northwest, while most of my father's children were born in Cuauhnahuac. My brothers and sisters were only at home occasionally during my childhood, they were all so much older than me, and my father believed in sending us to stay with our northern relatives for years at a time to keep us "from getting jaded." By the time I was old enough for such a trip, only one of my sisters, Mathilde, was back at home and she was about to marry.

Grandfather mentioned my parents in his memoirs, but he only fleshed out my father a little. Since my father was his youngest son and spent very little time with him, that is not surprising. Still, I think he missed some of the man. He was most dedicated to healing the sick and worked tirelessly in that capacity— - readily interrupting whatever else he was doing to help anyone who was ill. He was also no respecter of persons, spending just as much time and effort on a slave or a beggar as on a wealthy merchant or even a relative. He had no patience with malingerers, however, and gave any that took up his time a rather strong laxative. His efforts were not always successful, but whenever he lost a patient, it was not because he didn't try everything to save him. On the other hand, when I was a child, I always found him distant and rather melancholy. The only time I remember him seeking me out was when he heard that there was an outbreak of the Zhen plague nearby and he gathered me up and rushed there, so that I could have the disease as a child when it was more easily endured. He was quite attentive to me and the other sick in the stricken town, making sure we did nothing to exacerbate the symptoms. His attentiveness was such a pleasant surprise to me that I made the mistake of faking illness after we returned and received his usual remedy along with a thorough dressing down. I never tried that again, and indeed I was very rarely ill. He had also given me the treatment that prevents the barbarian pox, but I was too young at the time to remember it. Other than these events, I had little contact with him until much later, not too long before he died.

My mother is just mentioned in Grandfather's book, and I suppose that was not strange since he hardly knew her, and even though they lived in the same house for his last years, she was rather quiet and unobtrusive. She also had an air of melancholy about her, and I always preferred the company of my siblings and the servants to either of my parents. It was not that she wasn't attentive to me, for she was a most conscientious mother, and the household was smoothly run, and all needs met. It was just that she wasn't good company. Some years later, I mentioned our parents' lugubrious aspect to my sister Mathilde, and she suggested that it was because they had both been in love with someone else and had lost those loves prematurely. While they were the best of friends, they still pined for their lost loves. She may have been right, since she knew our mother before she met my father, but Mathilde was quite young at the time, and perhaps it was just a bit of romanticism on her part. I did not really feel connected to my mother either, but was moved at her passing because of Mathilde, who deeply mourned her.

My father's children were Ignace, Sarah and Theodore. Ignace was twenty years older than me and was only home on rare visits. He had become a soldier and was posted to an Ordu somewhere in the west while I was growing up. He had married Goa, a woman from Coosa (one of the Southeastern towns), whom he had met while he was staying with his Ani' Yun'-wiya relatives. He had a broad physique, a short stature, and a

propensity to stand very still and very straight making him look more like a slab of dressed stone than a man. He was a man of few words, and those were mostly barely audible grunts, further contributing to his lithic aspect. Goa was very reserved and very polite. She was expressionless and impossible to befriend since one could never feel any warmth from the woman. It was impossible to tell if they were happy together, but they did remain together until their deaths and had four children who were nearly as inscrutable as they were. I never got to really know them and was guilty of wondering if they even knew each other. Sarah had married a local man, Tepeyotl, a Tlahuica merchant who took her on many of his travels. She was a cheerful person, with a sturdy build and a well-developed sense of fun. She teased all of us, but especially and unmercifully Ignace, whenever he was around. She always brought me something back from her many travels. Tepeyotl was a wonderful man, tall and strong; he would toss me up on his shoulders and tell me all about the strange lands he had visited and the various things for which he had traded there. They eventually had five children with whom I became more acquainted between exiles, but more of that later. Theodore had become a healer like our father and had married Mahwissa, a Dzitsiista whom he had met during his travels in the north. He was very kind and thoughtful, although he also was very quiet. He was often lost in thought, much like our father and also undertook many journeys. He was the most patient with my questions when he was at home. He eventually moved to the Blue Sky Khanate and I rarely saw him as a child. Mahwissa was a very sweet and quiet lady. She, too, was most kind to me and with the utmost patience taught me her native language. They had three children, but I only met one of them once when he was an adult.

My mother's children were Sealth, Taiwit, and Mathilde. Her first husband had insisted on naming the boys, but allowed her to name the lone daughter. Sealth, and Taiwit were both soldiers, the former stationed with his father's old Ordu, the Salmon and the latter with the Pelicans. Sealth had married Kudeitsaakw, a 'Lingit woman he had met while on patrol off the coast north of the Ordu. (This alliance would serve me handsomely during my second exile.) Sealth was a tall, broad-shouldered man who seemed to radiate quiet strength and self-confidence. Kudeitsaakw was a cheerful though shy and self-conscious lady who was very fond of me and always made a big fuss over me when they visited. They had two children after a long barren time and I didn't meet them until after my second exile. Taiwit had married Simahi, an A'palachi woman he had met when he was taken to her town after a fall while he was serving as a courier. He was much like Sealth, except that he was friendlier and had a weakness for strong drink. Simahi was a strong woman who did all she could to cover up Taiwit's weakness, but things eventually caught up with them. They had no children. Finally there was Mathilde. She was only nine years older than me and had returned from her sojourn among her Salst relatives when I was five, just before Grandfather's death. She taught me to read and write the old language as well as Mongol and Nahual. She also taught me Salst, Nimipu, and Siksika and together we prepared dictionaries of all the languages I had learned using the Uighur script. It resulted in some awkward pronunciations at times, but helped me remember the languages well enough to converse in them. She was a wonderful girl, always eager to teach me and help me find the answers to all my questions. We both spent many hours together pouring over my father's books.

Because of his rather narrow medical focus, one would not have expected my father to have as many books as he did. He did, indeed, write down his discoveries in his field, and he would get a copy of any musings from a colleague that had been written down, but by far the bulk of his library was nonmedical. He had kept all of Grandfather's books and treated them with great respect and made sure we did as well. Grandfather didn't mention it in his book, but after he retired, he spent most of his time making sure that all the things he had learned in the old land were written down. His remarkable memory was as sharp as ever and had filled many books, all in Mongol, covering the many subjects he had studied and mastered. Copies of these had been made and sent to the Khakhan and both southern Khans. It was a bewildering mass of information. Grandfather had even compiled a dictionary of the Hanjen picture writing, but after spending a little time comparing it to that of the Nahual and Maya, I decided the latter were easier to figure out and gave up on the former. Another remarkable thing I remember was a book that had plans for many different things including a kind of weapon that hurled fire through the air at the enemy. This weapon required a kind of fuel with which I was unfamiliar, but he included instructions on finding such a fuel and preparing it for use. As it happened I was not the only one impressed with this device, and it was eventually made and kept secret until its surprise use at a most opportune moment.

I was a bit miffed at first when Mathilde met her future husband, because she no longer had as much time for me. But she was so happy, I put aside my disappointment and became her confidant and courier. The young man was Aspenquid, a member of the Pesmokanti, one of the northeast bands. He had joined the local Ordu and because of his remarkable skill on horseback had become a courier. In this capacity, he had traveled all over the northeast and had finally happened to be sent to Tlatelolco. He had become ill while waiting to return and had been sent to my father for treatment. He and I became fast friends during his recovery, and after I got over my initial jealousy, I cheerfully served as a messenger between him and Mathilde. After their marriage they decided to go back to his Ordu, the Panthers, to live and I was sent along to be delivered to the Ani' Yun'-wiya along the way. They eventually had five children all of whom are still fairly close to me and irregularly keep in touch with me, even during this exile.

Of course Mathilde was not charged with all my education in Cuauhnahuac. My father did not like the Mexica calmecac schools which were long on teaching discipline and short on education, so he instead had Qualiameyatl, an educated young man from Chalco, come and teach me for a fee. Through his efforts, I was fully schooled in the Nahuatl language and taught to read the picture writing. It was becoming obsolete (except on monuments) however, since the language had been put into the Uighur script and was being widely taught that way. Many of the more worthwhile books were being translated into the script from the pictures to make them more available generally. The Tlahuica had led the people of the basin in adopting the script and teaching most of their people to read and write, but others had been slowly following their example and even the Mexica had come on board. I was also taught the Maya language and picture writing. Actually, it wasn't exactly picture writing, but a combination of some pictorial representation and syllabic symbols. It was like a compromise between Nahuatl and Hanjen. Here, also, there had been an attempt to wean the Maya away from their difficult picture writing to the Uighur script, but except for the ever pliable Putun Maya, little progress was made among them, and few knew the script. Qualiameyatl also taught me the history of the Nahuatl-speaking people. It seemed to me little more than an attempt to prove that they were the greatest people ever spawned, and when I complained to my father, he said it was useful to understand how a people viewed themselves even if the vision was flawed by tribal tunnel vision. Had I understood his warning, I might have avoided my first exile some years later.

My brother Theodore taught me a little of the healing arts, enough to protect myself should ill befall me while in between towns. He readily admitted that I had no aptitude for his art, but did the best he could. He also taught me how to recognize and avoid poisonous plants and snakes and what to do should I fail to avoid them. This instruction saved my life more than once.

My father sent me for a winter down to Texcoco to a calmecac school run by the ruling family of that city. He wanted to expose me to Nahuatl poetry and literature and perhaps some art. He felt that in Texcoco I would become acquainted with the highest expression of Nahuatl culture. I was received most cordially and treated quite well, but again was found to hold no detectable talent in the arts, and, frankly, insufficient appreciation for them. In fact, I was bored to death by their poetry and found their literature bewildering. The art was a bit grotesque, but quite colorful. I did not, however, betray any skill in that realm either. What I did enjoy in Texcoco were the wonderful gardens the speaker or ruler, Nezahualcoyotl, had planted. I spent many hours in them befriending the tame animals that were kept there, and I returned home with a pet animal, a large blue and yellow parrot (the kind called chiconquetzalin in Nahuatl). He had a large beak and an interesting vocabulary of insults in the Otomi language (he had belonged to an Otomi feather merchant). He was a gift from Nezahualcoyotl, who appreciated my fondness for animals. Had he not given me the bird, I doubt if my father would have let me keep it. As it was, it would have been bad manners to get rid of a gift from the speaker of Texcoco.

I named the parrot Cuauhtzin (Little Eagle) and we were inseparable friends until I was sent north. He had a remarkably loud voice that on occasion was earsplitting. Because of this, he and I were relegated to a small servant's house some distance from the main house during much of the day. He was very quiet at night and I was allowed to have him in my room as long as I cleaned up after him. He was quite a guano factory, and it was a nasty business cleaning up in the morning until the intervention of one of the more ingenious and thoughtful of our servants, a mysterious Otomi who insisted that we call him Tetl (rock in Nahuatl—hardly a proper name).

He devised a sort of flatbed cart made of wood with a branch in the middle that served as a perch for Cuauhtzin and confined his mess to the cart which could be much more easily cleaned and occasionally replaced. Tetl loved the bird as much as I did and would help me with him when he could. I rewarded Tetl with most of the feathers Cuauhtzin shed (quite a prized commodity in the markets), and I entrusted him with his care during my absence in the north as well as my subsequent exiles until I returned from my second one. He never disappointed me and always returned the bird to me in the best of health and spirits. Tetl died shortly after I left Anahuac for the last time. Cuauhtzin and I were parted for a while during my time in the Khanate of the Clouds, but we were reunited once I was sent here. He is still with me but is quite old and seems a little feeble. He is probably quite a few years older than me and I don't know how much longer he can live, but I prize him and will do all I can to make him happy and comfortable for whatever time he has left.

Returning to my education, my brothers Sealth and Taiwit both had hands in teaching me to use the bow and the lance. I had a lot of trouble with both, but finally did get fairly good with the bow. I was too clumsy for the lance and was usually quickly disarmed in practice. They were not optimistic about my chances of a military career. Everyone had a hand in teaching me to ride, and in this I was quite adept. My only problem here, according to my siblings, was that I loved the horse too much. They felt it was better to remain in command of the horse and have him do as you instruct out of fear or respect and not out of friendship. But I couldn't help it, I loved horses and they knew it. Only a few of them did not return that love, and their previous handlers had jaded them.

My fondness for animals was not limited to horses and parrots. I also became quite a nuisance by befriending the domesticated animals and vigorously protesting their inevitable slaughter. I would self-righteously refuse to eat my "friends" and would glare accusingly at the rest of the family while they ate. Hypocritically, I would have no trouble eating a "strange" animal. This distinction began to blur when my brothers started taking me hunting with them. I very much enjoyed the tracking and stalking of the animals, but I soon developed a fondness for the prey and could not bring myself to kill them, nor would I allow anyone else to kill them. I think it is safe to say I was sent away to the north just in time. My entire family was convinced that unless they intervened my only future would be as a courtier, and they felt they could not allow me to become such a parasite.

I was actually quite excited about the trip and eagerly prepared for my great adventure. I was especially happy that Mathilde and Aspenquid would be with me for the entire journey. On the other hand, I was surprised and quite upset when told the climate in the north was too cold for Cuauhtzin and he would have to remain behind. This was made tolerable only by Tetl's assurance that he would care for him. I am ashamed to admit that after fussing over him the day before I left, I ran out before light the morning we left without giving him a thought, and in fact only remembered him when we stopped at an inn that evening and came upon another traveler who had his pet chiconquetzalin with him. His was one of the mostly red ones and it only spoke the Purepecha language, which I didn't understand. It brought home to me my own fickleness and made me see myself in an unflattering light. It was a valuable lesson

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Itsati, 83–5 K

(E. TN, 1451–3)

My soul-searching only lasted until we began our ascent of the pass between the volcanoes, the same pass my grandfather had used to enter Anahuac so long ago. It was much as he described it, except that it didn't snow on either of the peaks although they both had some snow on them. He had not exaggerated the cold once we were above the trees; it was numbing. I really didn't have much trouble breathing like some of his men did. Still, I was quite happy to regain the protection of the trees on the other side of the pass.

Everything was new and exciting for me during that trip. Mathilde had presented me with my own copy of Grandfather's book, which she herself had made for me, and I eagerly compared our route with his. Ours was much more direct, and there were no sieges or battles, but we passed through a land prosperous and at peace, with many large towns and cities bustling with activity. We only rarely stayed at what Grandfather called yams.

These had been replaced with comfortable inns most of the way in our Khanate. When we left the Huasteca lands into the more barren frontier between the Khanates, the yams predominated and the comfort level dropped precipitously. We stayed in the conical hide tents with dirt floors covered with some skins or old blankets. The food was usually dried meat added to mondamín (or centli as we called it in Nahuatl) stew. The villages were only a little better and I began to get concerned about my future for the next few years. Eventually we reached the towns of the Hasinai Confederacy and I took heart, for these had spacious, clean, and comfortable inns for visitors, and the food was plentiful and excellent.

We had begun the trip in the fall, and it was late winter when we turned off the trade road to go to the Pelican Ordu and visit my brother Taiwit. Once we left the coast, the climate grew cooler and there was snow on the ground after a few days. It was not deep, but it was my first direct exposure to it (I had, of course, seen it from a distance on the mountaintops at home), and I was fascinated. This was quickly eclipsed by my first encounter with an Ordu. We had been following the Ishak River upstream from the coast, and the trail was on the eastern side of the river above the floodplain and through a dense wood. Occasionally the woods would give way to a large clearing and a town with its fields would come into view. Eventually we came to a huge clearing with large tracts of fields on the cleared bottoms of both sides of the river, we went up a small rise, and there spread out was a vast tent city. It seemed larger to me than Cuauhnahuac, but the latter is scattered among hills, not concentrated like an Ordu. A large contingent from the Ordu was practicing maneuvers on horseback just beyond the camp, and I had to be pulled along to snap me out of my reverie.

One might think I would have encountered an Ordu by now, but I hadn't. With peace prevailing in Anahuac, they were rarely on the move, and all were situated away from but nearby the major trade routes. There was one Ordu in the central valley of Anahuac, but it was in the north. There were also three others within a hard day's ride from Tlatelolco, the capital of Anahuac, but I had never had occasion to visit them. I wanted to see everything and we spent several days there so I was able to do so. I was pleased to find I could ride as well as the children raised in the Ordu, but they were much better with weapons than I was, even the bow with which I thought I was proficient. I was only as good as the worst of them. They introduced me to the sword and taught me the rudiments of the weapon. I practiced with it faithfully and eventually got the hang of it. Taiwit surprised me with the gift of a small sword he had had made for me. I was also allowed to watch a test firing of one of the cannon Grandfather had been instrumental in developing. Finally, I was allowed to see a practice drill with the new handheld mini cannons that the now legendary Migizi had spent most of his life developing. They were frightening weapons, although they did not impress most of the warriors, since they had a poor range and were not very accurate. They did think it would be devastating to a massed attack, but only for one volley, after that it would be best to switch to the bow. Many years later, I saw that they were right.

I also got my first chance to see a yurt. Grandfather had lived in one a long time, but we all lived in houses in the south, and hide tents and thatch houses were the rule in the northern villages we had visited so far. In the Ordu, there were a number of yurts, but again the conical hide tent seemed to predominate. Taiwit lived in one of the latter, but a friend of his had married a Mongol woman who insisted on living in the yurt. It was larger than the tents and very comfortable, with rugs on the floor and wooden benches and chairs. I rather liked it. The woman, Borte, showed us all around with quiet pride and great pleasure. Her husband, Guatotente, a Ka-i-gwu, had become accustomed to it and insisted he preferred it. Remembering my grandfather's comments about the Ka-i-gwu language, I prevailed upon Guatotente to teach me a little. Grandfather was right; the language was impossible.

When we left the Ordu, we traveled east to the Red River and the great Hasinai cities. We followed the river to the Missi Sipi River. This river dwarfed any river I had ever seen before. Since it was early spring and the river was rising, we had to be rowed across. The pontoon bridge had already been taken down in anticipation of the floods. The current was not yet strong and we came ashore near one of the Taunika villages. We moved on and eventually arrived at a Pansfalaya town. Everywhere we went we were received cordially, fed well, and given fresh horses. While there were some differences among the various tribes, it was not marked. I noticed that only the oldest of the Pansfalaya and Taunika had the deformed heads Grandfather had mentioned. I embarrassed my sister by staring at those we encountered. It was quite rude, but I had never seen anything like it and had always been curious as to what they looked like. As Grandfather had suggested, the practice had been abandoned, and

all of them have died off by now. I wondered how much the people had changed since he had first traveled among them some seventy years before I did.

We soon turned north to the West Tsoyaha River, which we followed upstream. Here we came upon settlements of the Tsoyaha and the Southeastern Cities until we finally came to the Ani' Yun'-wiya. This was a beautiful time to travel this way, for it was now late spring and the floods had already subsided and our path was filled with flowers, fruit trees in blossom, and fields with young bright green shoots of centli growing out of their little hills, surrounded with young bean, squash and melon plants, in the manner they are planted here in the north.

At last we came to the town of Itsati and I was introduced to my new family for the next few years. Iskagua was the nephew of Metztlaconac, my father's first wife. He was a tall broad-shouldered man with a strong rugged face and the clear eyes of an honest man. He served as the shaman for the town and had the highest regard for my father. His wife was Ghigooie, a small pleasant woman with piercing eyes and a sharp wit. She reminded me of my sister Sarah. They had two sons, the older one was Gatagewi and the younger was Cimmashote. The latter was just my age. I was warmly embraced by all and accepted as member of the family. Mathilde and Aspenquid were also greeted warmly and pressed to stay a few days to be properly feasted.

The town was much like my father had said it would be. He had told me what to expect and how to behave. The houses were still as Grandfather described them, made of wooden planks or logs notched and stacked, then plastered with clay inside and out, although he didn't mention that sometimes they were painted white with a lime solution. The houses were about seventy feet long and sixteen feet wide and were divided into three rooms connected with doors. The rooms were the cooking room, the dining room, and the sleeping room. Many houses had porches and separate storerooms and almost all had the small round dirt "winter house" for their sweat baths. The furnishings included wooden benches and beds, the latter with rush mattresses and hide, cotton, or woolen blankets. There were also baskets and pottery for storing things. The wool and cotton were trade goods.

The town was probably larger than Grandfather would have remembered, but it was still dominated by the huge town house, which was supposed to be large enough to hold the entire town for their meetings, which he hated. He said the house was round, but actually it was seven sided, one for each of the clans. When the meetings were held, everyone was supposed to sit with his clan. The clan affiliation was inherited from one's mother, so Iskagua decided that I belonged to the same clan as his aunt, since she was my "mother," so I sat with the Ani'-Tsi'skwa or Bird Clan. He also belonged to the Bird Clan, but Ghigooie and her sons belonged to Ani'-Ga'tagewi (Ga'tagewi was the name of a plant). I eventually grew to actually like the meetings, although I was too young to participate until my final year there.

When Mathilde and Aspenquid finally left, I stared after their caravan until it disappeared over a hill. I really felt that all with which I was familiar was gone. Still, I was only allowed so much time to adjust, and soon Cimmashote had me in tow and was showing me around the village and introducing me to all his friends. I looked strange to them, of course, but most of the adults had known my father and he was held in great esteem. Actually, I didn't look much like my father, except for the pale skin and blue eyes. My hair was reddish brown at the time and my features rather favored my mother. I was also tall for my age and by the time I returned to Anahuac, I was taller than my father. The height kept me in good stead among the tall Ani' Yun'-wiya, and I was immediately recruited to learn their game "little war," the stick ball game so popular in this part of the land. My grandfather mentioned it in his narrative as well as the ball game of the south. They are nothing alike except in so much as they are very widespread in popularity. Tlachtli is played in many variations from the far western lands of the Hopitu-shinumu all through most of the Anahuac Khanate and even on the islands of the Taino. The "little war" is played by the Ani' Yun'-wiya, the Pansfalaya, the Southeastern Cities, and had spread to their neighbors the Taunika, Timacua, Tsoyaha, and others. It was also played in the north by the Anishinabe and many of their neighbors and had spread east to the Leni lenape and even the several Mingue tribes. The northern version only used one stick and was usually less violent. Tlachtli is more of a contest between individuals to perform a difficult task, hit certain small targets with a ball without using their hands and without letting the ball hit the ground. While there were small teams, only one from each competed at a time, although the other members could pass in an errant ball. The ball was made of solid oli (about eight inches in diameter and rather heavy) and the players had strategically placed pads as part of their equipment. The "little war" was played by

large teams, about twenty or so among the Ani' Yun'-wiya, far more among the tribes to the south. The playing field was quite large and the deerskin ball was not too difficult to hurl over the goal markers with the sticks (about two feet long and bent over to form a loop at one end, with crossed cords effecting a sort of net to hold the ball). However, the game was called "little war" for a reason. Indeed, a player (who wore no protective gear at all) was allowed to do whatever he found necessary to get the ball to his team and expedite the scoring of points. This resulted in the sticks, as well as arms, legs, heads, or even bodies becoming weapons with frequently injurious results. Oddly, both games had religious elements. Tlachtli was seen as a symbol of a struggle to maintain the cycles of nature and fertility from the vagaries of the gods (at least among the Maya). The Mexica would occasionally use it for conjuring (the winner's viewpoint obviously coincided with that of the gods), but usually it was just another medium for gambling. That was why my father had never permitted me to attend one; he despised gambling. The "little war" was preceded by a week of preparation, including fasting, rituals, dancing, and even some scratching of the players' arms and legs. There was also some gambling on the outcome. Still, it was an exciting game to watch and I often regretted that I had to leave before I had a chance to play in a real one.

As children we were not actually allowed to play the game, but we were encouraged to get the feel for it with much running back and forth and practice with the sticks. The ball was considered a sacred object not to be touched by hand, so we had to improvise with a rough facsimile. Another game we practiced was also popular in the near south. It was called chungke and involved skill with a seven-foot-long lance. A disc-shaped stone was rolled on the ground by one player, and the other would try to hit the still rolling stone with his lance while the first would try to hit the other's lance while still in flight. I never showed any talent for this game. We were also encouraged to experience and overcome hunger, cold, and pain. Such endurance was as highly prized as skill with the bow. This proved to be very valuable training.

There was also no getting out of hunting. I had been strongly urged by my sister to overcome my problem with hunting. She explained that the northern people greatly respected their prey, asking their permission to hunt them and thanking them for their acquiescence. I thought that while the hunter's heart may have been in the right place, I doubted that any prey actually went along with this. Of course, she also pointed out that it would be insulting to my hosts if I didn't do whatever they asked me to do, quickly and without comment. The look in her eye gave me the impression that I had better shelve my finer sensitivities and cooperate. After all, I was a long way from home. In fact, hunting was considered an essential part of manhood, second only to warfare. I worked hard to put aside my feelings and did my part to bring meat to the family. I never did enjoy it, however, and still don't.

My education was not all hunt and games, of course. I was also taught how to make bows, arrows, blowguns, snares, traps, canoes, and even pottery. The bows and arrows were only for hunting or emergency, since the Mongol compound bow and iron tipped arrows were far superior in battle. The other skills were useful, although I must admit my attempts at pottery were not memorable. I was helped with my swordplay by retired warriors, happy to share their skills with a youngster. As I found out, the Mongol peace had caused some major changes in the Ani' Yun'-wiya way of life.

In order to prove themselves as warriors, the young men had to go off and join an Ordu for training. Then they had to volunteer to go on the endless campaigns in the southern landmass. These would only be mounted every few years and the volunteers would be gone for quite a while. Most would return from the conflict, few would talk about it, except to compliment each other on particular acts of bravery. Still they held themselves with a certain air of dignity and confidence and were much admired by all. Those who either married young or felt it necessary to care for their parents and families and did not go, found it necessary to excel at bagging dangerous game like bear and panthers to prove their manhood. While no one openly questioned their courage, you could see they bitterly regretted their decision. I understand this situation prevailed among some of the other tribes also.

Perhaps the only man in the tribe who did not go on campaign and had no regrets was my Ani' Yun'-wiya father, Iskagua. As a shaman, he had nothing to prove and was held in the highest esteem by everyone. When he was not caring for the sick or foiling evil spirits, he was much given to introspection and would sit for hours lost in his thoughts until he was needed again. Still, he found time to talk to all of us either together or alone to

advise, admonish, and instruct. Gatagewi was the only one of us interested in becoming a shaman and he received quite a bit of training and instruction. Cimmashote wanted to be a warrior and tirelessly trained himself to that end. I went along with the latter since I found it more interesting than the shaman art. As it happened, I really wasn't too sure what I wanted to make of myself, and indeed, would be hard-pressed to describe my chosen profession up to this point, although I think ne'er-do-well might come close.

Iskagua's talks with me were difficult to characterize. He would answer any factual questions I asked directly, but if my questions were more philosophical or attempted to elicit his opinion, he would question me until I had answered the question myself. At first I found this annoying, but in time I realized he was helping me think logically and I came to greatly appreciate his help. Ghigooie also would talk to us, proffering advice and instruction. She felt we should know what we could eat should we not find any game and took us into the woods to show us what was edible and what was not. She also showed us how to plant and tend crops even though this was considered a woman's job. She felt we should know in case we found ourselves alone. She had the long sight and had foreseen a need we would all eventually have, although in much different situations. We would try to get her to tell us our future, but she would just tell us to do our best and meet the future with no regrets.

Another great influence on my life was Oganaya. He had been a warrior for a long time. He had never married or raised a family, but had returned to his hometown to spend his last days. He left when he was about fifteen years old and had trained with the Manati Ordu in the Timacua Peninsula. He fought in the southern wars for five years, and then returned as jagun commander to train new recruits. He traveled extensively for over a year, then joined another campaign as minghan commander. He remained for twelve years and again returned to train recruits. He was offered command of the next campaign, but felt he was too old and too slow from his many wounds to take on such responsibility, although he went along as part of the staff. On his return from that campaign he retired and came home "to die." He was only about fifty, but he looked older and moved only with a lot of pain.

He took a liking to me because he had met my uncle Theodore a long time ago and greatly respected him. He told me he would have preferred to serve under Theodore's Ordu rather than those of the Blue Sky Khanate since he never would have used disease to defeat his enemy. I remembered what my father had added to Grandfather's memoirs and suggested that perhaps the field commanders had not been aware of the strategy.

"Would that it were so, Crow," he said, "but I know they knew. That was the real reason I could not accept command. Still, I went along for the sake of the men. I must admit it was a most effective weapon, but we are not exactly loved in the south."

"One is never loved by those he conquers," I pointed out.

"Not at first," he shrugged, "but eventually you can win them over. Your uncle Theodore is loved by most. Of course, it was your uncle George who did most of the conquering and Theodore the winning over. Like your grandfather, he retired well loved."

"My cousin George rules there now," I said, puffing up a bit to be related to such powerful men.

"Yes, but he is not like his father," he frowned. "He is bent on conquest and is succeeding from what I hear."

I had to admit I didn't know much about George's progress. My father never spoke of him as though he didn't exist. When I had mentioned to him that I had heard George had succeeded Theodore, he had gotten angry and called Theodore a blind fool. He would not elaborate when I asked him about it, but instead insisted that I never mention his name again. I told this to Oganaya and he nodded.

"Your father had the measure of the man."

"Why do you both despise a man who enables the young men to go to war?" I asked.

"A war for young men to prove themselves need not be a war of conquest. And even if it is, it need not be a war of bitterness. George and the Khan in the eastern part, Hutulu, are harsh conquerors. They destroy everything in their path, take everything of value and impose impossible tribute on the survivors. The result is constant revolts and ambushes. The men pay for their commander's intransigence."

“But Grandfather always wiped out any town or village that did not surrender.”

“Only if provoked by them, except for the campaigns of the wretched Kuyuk. There is something very wrong with the Khanate system, when it allows such unworthy swine such absolute power.”

“But it has brought peace to the land and no one ever suffers because of crop failures. Is not that worth the occasional bad ruler?”

“It is the peace that forces our young men to go so far away for so long a time to prove themselves. It makes those unable to go feel like lesser men. As to the crop failures, are they such a bad thing? Perhaps they are Asgaya’ Galu’ladi’s way of proving us. Is it such a good thing to frustrate his plans?”

Asgaya’ Galu’ladi was the Ani’ Yun’-wiya god. His name meant “Honored Man” and he was a sky god like Tengri. They also believed in a number of spirits with various functions, but did not bother with them as much as the Mongols used to with their ongons when they first came to this land. I couldn’t make much sense of Oganaya’s question, but I later asked Iskagua what he thought about Mongol rule. He, true to form, turned the question back to me. It went something like this as I recall.

“What should I think about Mongol rule?”

“It doesn’t matter what you think, I just wanted to know.”

“If it doesn’t matter, why do you want to know?”

“Your opinion is important to me.”

“But you just said it didn’t matter what I thought.”

“I meant, whatever your opinion was I would be glad to hear it.”

“As a good Mongol, I should think you would not be glad to hear that I did not approve of Mongol Rule, only if I approved it.”

If I didn’t have such a high regard for his opinion, I would not have gone to such trouble to elicit it. After more such verbal sparring, I finally told him what Oganaya had said and tried to get Iskagua’s view of the remark. Predictably, we went around for a while before he demanded my view first.

“Oganaya is a great warrior and a wise man, I cannot ignore what he said, yet to agree with him is to despise all my grandfather’s efforts.”

“So then, you want me to approve of your grandfather’s life’s work?”

“Not necessarily, I just wanted your opinion.”

“Why?”

“Because I respect your opinion.”

“Your grandfather did what he did with great energy, cleverness, inspiration, and dedication. He clearly thought he was doing what was best for his people first and for those who joined them second. Who am I to approve or disapprove of such a man?”

“But was he right to do what he did?”

“What do you think?”

“I think he thought he was doing the right thing.”

“Should not a man do what he thinks is the right thing?”

“Well, of course.”

“Then you have answered your question.”

“No, that’s not what I want to know. Do you think his effort has made the Ani’ Yun’-wiya better off?”

“Do you?”

“Well, yes, I think so, but I’m not an Ani’ Yun’-wiya and am not in a position to judge.”

“Did we not welcome you into our family as a son?”

“Yes, but what does that have to do with...”

“Are we not Ani’ Yun’-wiya?”

“Yes.”

“Does that not make you, our new son, an Ani’ Yun’-wiya also?”

“Well, I suppose it does, but not as much a one as you.”

“Have Ghigooie and I treated you as less of a son than Gatagewi or Cimmashote?”

“No, of course not, you’ve been more than parents to me.”

“A curious thing to say, but to the point, what do you, an Ani’ Yun’-wiya, think of the legacy of the great Raven, one of the founders of the Khanate?”

“I think I need to discuss it further with my elders until I can form a proper opinion of it.”

“An excellent answer, go and do so. When you have formulated your opinion we will discuss it again.”

I never did find out what Iskagua thought about this or any other such subject. Ghigooie did feel the Mongols had done more good than harm and was especially pleased that they did not unduly interfere in the everyday lives of the people. Most of the other men I asked were positive about the Mongols; only Oganaya was negative. Yet it was to him I kept returning and talking. Unlike Iskagua, Oganaya was quite content to give an opinion on any subject without worrying about mine. Actually, it was a relief to talk to him, but ultimately a mistake.

We didn’t just talk of course, I also helped him with little chores and went hunting and fishing with him so I could help him. He was alone except for me, and quite grateful for my company and help. He was not entirely negative about the Mongols; he felt they were great warriors with wonderful weapons, remarkable organization, and devastating tactics. But he also felt they had made life too easy and war too one-sided. I asked him if he would really prefer to go into battle without an edge.

“No, but my edge should be my skill, not my weapon or my horse.”

I asked him about the campaigns in the south, and he regaled me at length about them, again unlike the others. On his first campaign, he was a mere soldier. After almost a year of training, he finally embarked on one of the large Koryo transports heading for the south. They stopped on the large Taino island of Cuba where they were allowed ashore for a day. Then they followed the long chain of islands east at first, then south, stopping briefly along the way on Boriquen, Liamuiga, and Madinina Islands. The last stop was on Cara, the large island off the coast of the continent.

This was the second invasion under the command of the eastern governor, Kaidu. They were put ashore at the frontier encampment just east of the Warao River Delta. The people encountered spoke a language something like that of the Taino, and they also cultivated the yocce plant, but were not as organized or amenable to joining peacefully. Of course, they were not allowed to think about it, either, and the first village that refused to join was wiped out. Instead of moving the others to join, it caused them to melt into the dense jungle and subject all our movements to ambush. They would not stand and fight, but would simply fire a volley or two of arrows at the invaders, then disappear. The Mongols had to change over to laying ambushes also. This was most difficult given the vast variety and number of insects determined to devour anything that didn’t move fast enough. Eventually a suitable repellent was found, but the locals could soon smell it and more frustration followed. Once in a great while, an empty village was found and destroyed, but this brought little cheer. Very slowly, mostly by using the few locals that had been won over, they were able to advance along the coast and a modest distance inland. After the three years of his tour of duty were up, the amount of territory taken was

embarrassing. He decided to stay for another tour and was made arban commander. Over the next two years, the progress was far better, but still slow. Due to his exemplary service, Oganaya was promoted to jagun commander and sent back to the Alligator Ordu to train recruits in the more difficult tactics necessary for this type of warfare.

He was relieved to be out of the jungle, although the Alligator Ordu is in a close approximation of a jungle. After training men for two years, he was allowed to take some time off. He returned to Itsati, but was restless and soon moved on, visiting comrades in arms all the way across the Khanate. He eventually found himself on the west coast near the great bay named Raven for my grandfather. Oganaya continued south and wandered through the Khanate of Anahuac along the western coast. He stayed along the coast, never visiting Tlatelolco or the other great cities. Ultimately he found himself in the area ruled by my uncle Theodore. Oganaya went to visit the capital, Tamalameque, a great trading center along the Yuma River. He was impressed by the bustling city and presented himself at the governor's palace where he was warmly welcomed and invited to stay. Uncle Theodore was a very down-to-earth man looking on everyone as an equal. His older son Ignace was much like him, but the younger, George, was haughty and cold.

While Oganaya was there, the surprise message came down that his brother George had named Theodore khan of his province. He would remain subordinate to George, of course, and ultimately to Jelme, the Khakhan, but Theodore could rule otherwise as he saw fit. The new Khanate (which he named the Khanate of the Clouds because of the huge mountains in its midst) would continue to be the proving ground for the Ordu of Anahuac. He was mostly interested in mapping and trade, but would use the Ordu to crush any tribe or town that dared attack a trade or mapping expedition. Neighboring towns and villages were invited to join, but were allowed not to do so. There was a good feeling in the new Khanate; trade was booming and prosperity was spreading around nicely.

Oganaya decided to return to the eastern campaign and went north to one of the prospering Putun Maya colonies among the Tairona cities and secured passage to the island of Cara. When he landed, he found out that the east had also become a Khanate with Kaidu as the new Khan. He called his realm the Khanate of the Green Mist. Oganaya felt that was a most appropriate name. He offered his services to the local commander and was immediately sent to the frontier as minghan commander. The frontier was not as far as he thought it might be. It seemed that the advance was halted about two years after his departure and attempts were made to consolidate the gains and pacify the locals. This was only partially successful, and travel was often hazardous.

While the troops were still gathering at the frontier, a mysterious group of men came ashore with many bundles. Their leader went to meet the commander of the campaign, Kaidu's son, Hutulu. Shortly afterward, Hutulu came out rubbing his hands with glee and ordered his second in command, Ananda, to join him. Ananda emerged with a grim look and put together a small group for a special mission. These and some local guides took the bundles and, crossing the frontier river, proceeded inland. The mysterious group of men returned to their ship and left. Some weeks later, just as the campaign was about to start, the men returned from their mission among the enemy.

Word filtered out that they had just been giving away bundles of blankets to our prospective enemies. That puzzled him. Soon some of the local guides who had gone with them came down with the Zhen plague. That puzzled him even more. The campaign was launched and found almost no opposition. Whole villages were dead and dying of the Zhen plague. The invaders were able to move rapidly along the coast and inland for some distance. Everywhere they went, the plague led the way. Many of their local auxiliaries also sickened and most died. The plague then spread westward and all the way back to Anahuac. Grandfather already wrote about that.

Oganaya and his men found themselves on little more than a mopping-up expedition. The plague spearheaded their advance. Resistance ended and whoever survived quickly surrendered or fled inland spreading the plague far afield. Oganaya and his men came to the great river named for Juchi and halted briefly while they extended their lines inland as much as three hundred li. Around the delta of the Juchi River there had been large cities with houses made of cedar planks. The people had deformed their heads something like the Pansfalaya used to do. The number of dead was appalling. There was no pleasure in this campaign and all the men were grim and getting angry. The halt enabled the survivors in the delta to consolidate into a few towns and try to rebuild their

lives, but when the orders to advance were given, none of the towns resisted. Only Hutulu was pleased with the campaign and anxious to press his advantage. Had the ground been easier, it is most likely they would have reached the end of the landmass. The jungle finally gave out some fifteen hundred li beyond the Juchi River turning into a most pleasant grassland. That soon gave way to a semiarid scrub and thorn forest all the way to eastern terminus of the continent (which they reached fifteen years later). He left the campaign before they reached the terminus, but returned five years later, after they turned south. As they turned south, they encountered more jungle, more grassland, more jungle, and then forest along the coast, although farther inland it was mostly jungle. The resistance picked up after five years, but was only sporadic. After ten years, it was still not effective. It was twenty years into the campaign before resistance even slowed them down a little. Only the decision of the Khan finally halted their advance. Communication was becoming difficult and he wanted to move inland instead of along the coast. It had been almost thirty years since the campaign had begun when Oganaya finally left it for the last time and returned home "to die." He had arrived in Itsati only shortly before I did. He died about a year after we met.

3

Itsati, 86–7 K

(1454–5)

Another person who influenced me while I was among the Ani' Yun'-wiya was Necowee. He had also gone on campaign in the south, but only for six years and had returned with his new wife to raise a family. He was Ghigooie's brother and was married to Wetosy, an Anishinabe. He had met her when he traveled around after returning from the south. (It seemed all the returning warriors felt the need to travel around on their return, and eventually I understood the need.) Like most of the veterans, Necowee was not inclined to discuss his experiences. I won him over by insisting that I was only interested in the big picture of the campaign, not the actual battles. I explained that I was most interested in Mongol history and I had heard little from the south, except for what Oganaya had told me. As I hoped, he also told me about the battles in which he took part.

It turned out that Necowee had served under my cousin Ignace during one of the western campaigns. It seemed that his group of recruits had been given the choice of serving in either Khanate. Since they had heard from returning veterans that the eastern campaign was only a mopping-up operation, they volunteered to go to the western theater. Having made that choice, they were sent directly to the Khanate of the Clouds to train, since there was no terrain quite like theirs in the north. They boarded the Koryo ships and stopped only at the island of Xaymaca on their way. He thought it was the most beautiful place he had ever seen and only left with difficulty. They were finally put ashore at one of the Putun Maya settlements on the north shore of the Khanate. They were marched inland to Tamalameque where Theodore himself welcomed them and thanked them for helping in his Khanate. They were then assigned to a training Ordu not far from the capital. It was situated right at the foot of a very high, mostly green but snowcapped mountain. It was on it and the surrounding jungle that they were trained for most of a year.

To put things in context, when Theodore was made Khan, his Khanate was little more than a thin strip of land about 750 li along the coast south of the isthmus with a thicker band along the coast north of the isthmus. When the Zhen plague broke out, the Khanate grew quickly, not by conquest but by offering to help. This was in startling contrast with the eastern Khanate. The troops were instructed in treating those afflicted with the plague and were sent out to help all that would accept their aid. Only the Muisca refused; all others they encountered gladly accepted their help and then gratefully joined the Khanate. By the time Necowee joined the forward elements (about the year I was born), the plague had long subsided, but the effects were still visible. They would come upon many deserted towns and villages, and those still inhabited would have as many as half of their houses empty and in disrepair. They would enter such a town in a modest force and seek out the leader to whom they would pitch the Khanate. If they joined, they were immediately helped in any way possible and were plugged into the courier system so they could receive swift help should it be needed.

As it happened, most joined readily, and a few joined only after making sure the system worked. This was not really surprising, though, when you consider these people had lost at least half of their population to a strange disease. They were probably still so devastated that any oblique reference to aid when in need sounded good to

them. In any case, there were a total of four tumen on the campaign. Two, under the command of Theodore's younger son, George, moved along the coast west of the high mountains; the other two under Ignace moved through the mountains and the foothills east of the mountains. Beyond the foothills there was dense jungle and another campaign would deal with that.

Since Necowee was with Ignace's Ordu, he had the harder terrain to cover. Ignace had organized his march so that no one would spend all his time scrambling through the mountains. One tumen (Necowee's) advanced along the intermittent valleys between the two mountain ranges and covered the western range. The other moved along the eastern foothills and covered the eastern range. There were occasional overlaps and a few towns were visited twice. In general, the Ordu was splintered into jaguns (one hundred men), which fanned out to visit all the towns and villages along the area. Actually, while they did have to cross some high mountain passes, they did not have to climb mountains, and at any rate, there were well-worn paths everywhere. Ignace would move between the two tumen of his Ordu, to see that all was going well.

All went well for the eastern tumen until the end, but for Necowee and his comrades it was different. At first things went smoothly, they left the frontier near a village called Tanguwa and proceeded south. They encountered some ruined and deserted villages and towns, but the inhabited towns were showing signs of rebounding. The people were glad to see the Mongols, and they were feasted and fussed over, and the towns joined the Khanate with puzzling relief that only grew as they moved south. Eventually they came across a large valley whose river flowed northwest through the mountains. Here they were greeted as saviors and urged south at all speed. Ignace was still with the eastern tumen, but the commander of the western tumen, a Mexica named Coatleztli, was no fool. He demanded an explanation from the locals, and they told him that a great chief from the south was conquering all in his path and had just begun approaching their outlying villages in force.

It seemed that the upper end of the valley had formed something of an alliance to fight the incursion, but they did not think they would prevail and would grasp at aid from any direction. Coatleztli explained that if they joined the Khanate, he would be obliged to protect them; otherwise, they were on their own. They fell over themselves joining. He then sent a minghan (one thousand men) to confront the invaders and advise them of the folly of continuing their advance. Meanwhile, he sent scouts to spy out the size of the invading force and organized the local levies into something that might be useful in battle, at least as auxiliaries. He detached one minghan to visit the towns and villages in the lower part of the valley and concentrated the rest of the troops in the path of the invaders. He also sent word to Ignace of the situation.

The scouts reported back that the invaders numbered no more than perhaps fifteen thousand. Necowee was in the minghan sent to confront the invaders. The latter halted in confusion at the sight of a mounted minghan with arrows at the ready, and their leader came forward to confer with the commander, a Tairona named Marcobare. With some difficulty, an interpreter chain was set up and Marcobare delivered the news to the invader. The latter looked over the minghan, spat in contempt, and returned to his forces. Marcobare graciously waited until the man got back to his lines, then ordered a volley right into the man's wake. The enemy began to throw their spears using atlatl, but the minghan had already moved out of range and was sending more volleys of arrows into them. They continued to retreat deliberately back to the rest of the Ordu frequently stopping and firing volleys of arrows into the pursuing enemy.

When they reached the rest of the tumen, the invaders halted at the sight and began milling around waiting for orders. Coatleztli was not inclined to wait and immediately launched his attack. He massed his artillery in the center and sent three minghans around each side of the milling mass to fire into their flanks and rear. He reserved three minghans and the auxiliaries behind the cannon. The enemy continued to mill until one of their leaders finally fell into the trap and ordered an advance on the center. They were allowed to get into range of the cannon, then hit with a full salvo of grapeshot. They turned and fled and the pursuit was on. None of them escaped. Those who attempted to surrender were cut down.

The auxiliaries got into the pursuit once they got over their shock at the cannon. They captured a few and brought them back. Noticing this, Coatleztli asked them what they had in mind to do with their prisoners. They replied that they planned to sacrifice them to their god. Coatleztli then informed them that as members of the Khanate they can no longer sacrifice men to gods. Puzzled, they turned them over to the Ordu and returned to

their towns. There were only about a dozen of the prisoners, and they made a pathetic spectacle, stripped of their clothes, kneeling down with their hands bound, and their heads bowed. Coatleztli contemplated them for a moment, and then was about to order them executed when Marcobare spoke to him for a moment. He scowled, then shrugged and ordered them released and sent back to warn their leader what would happen if he tried any more attacks and to suggest that he not try any resistance when he in turn was invaded by the Mongols. Once they were made to understand, they took off, furtively looking over their shoulders to see if they would be attacked as they fled.

Ignace soon arrived and was briefed. He approved of Coatleztli's actions and sent a dispatch to Theodore. He then returned to the east to underscore his approval of Coatleztli's actions. It was easy to see why Ignace was so popular with the army. Meanwhile, the tumen returned to its mission, but scouts were dispatched to the south to check up on the enemy. Every town in the valley joined without a murmur. A modest number of auxiliaries were pressed into service and marched directly south a little behind the main force. As they moved south from the valley, they encountered no resistance or people at all until they neared the central town of the enemy, Cayambe. There was no wall, and the houses were dried-mud walls with thatch roofs. The scouts had warned that the town was full of warriors and they were likely planning to fight house to house. They estimated the warriors at perhaps twelve thousand.

I learned later that the merchants from the Khanate had already advised Theodore what to expect on this campaign. The leaders knew the size of the armies of each state, how they were armed, what their defenses were, how soon they could mobilize, and what sort of leaders they had. In short, all of this was no surprise except to the average soldier, like Necowee. It gave him the idea that his army was invincible, and for all intents and purposes, it was.

The battle developed when the town was surrounded with the men staying out of spear shot. The cannon were massed at the north end of the town and loaded with shell. The auxiliaries were brought up and interspersed among the Ordu to make sure no one escaped. The cannon began firing and the houses began disintegrating in a shower of dirt. Screams were heard and warriors began fleeing the town to the south only to be cut down by the surrounding forces. As the bombardment continued, more men were shifted to the southern end of the town, and soon the trickle of fleeing men became a torrent as thousands rushed headlong to the south. Firing and retreating, our men led them along, pouring arrows into their flanks and front until the enemy dropped to the ground to find shelter. Instead, they found more arrows falling on them from the sky. Those who tried to surrender were cut down mercilessly. When it was over, the town was completely destroyed and no one was left alive.

South of Cayambe, there were only deserted towns and villages for some distance, then some obviously overcrowded towns with too many women and children in them, which obsequiously joined after assuring that they were in no way connected with the tyrant of Cayambe. They were allowed their fiction, but some were pressed into service as auxiliaries and guides. About this time, Ignace rejoined them and word spread that the eastern tumen was having an easy time of it. The progress of Necowee's group was unimpeded for some distance until they made contact with the Puruha.

The tumen came upon a basin surrounded by high mountains, many of which were snowcapped. The basin was largely grassland with cultivated fields drained by tributaries of a large river that flowed eastward from the center of the basin. Around the river was dense forest. Also near the center were two very tall snowcapped mountains on either side of the basin. The western one was called Chimborazo and the eastern one Tungurahua. The western was taller and was considered male, while the eastern one was held to be female (an interesting concept). They were held to be the generator deities for the people of the basin. Necowee thought that peculiar enough to remember. I didn't tell him about the Mongol origin myth my grandfather recorded, and was too polite to remind him of the Ani' Yun'-wiya Star Woman myth. The people of the basin were the Latacunga in the north and the Puruha in the south. Each people were divided into tribes with their own chieftains who in turn were subordinate to a sort of king.

As the tumen entered the northern end of the basin, they were met by a delegation from the Latacunga. They had heard of the fate of the inhabitants of Cayambe and felt that it would be most prudent to establish dialog.

They were given the usual recruitment pitch and requested time to think it over. It was granted, but Ignace insisted that he be allowed to continue on his way south while they were thinking. They agreed and when he warned them of the dire consequences of any treachery, they sent along a group of their higher-ranking officials as a pledge of good faith. True to their word, they did not break that pledge.

As the tumen reached the southern limits of the Latacunga lands, they heard the unmistakable sounds of battle. The scouts reported that it was a Puruha force attacking a border village of the Latacunga. Ignace took a small group including Necowee to watch the action. There was little difference between the forces; both looked the same, fought with the same weapons and tactics. They used wooden swords, lances, and slings that hurled hard wood pellets (rather than stones) with remarkable effect. Both sides fought bravely and although the Puruha finally withdrew, one would be hard-pressed to say which side had gotten the worst of it. Indeed the Puruha withdrew in good order and the Latacunga did not pursue them. The tumen moved on into the Puruha lands and set up camp for the night.

In the middle of the night, the men were roused, mounted, and silently moved first north, then east or west to envelop an unseen enemy force which the scouts had detected moving to surround the camp. By first light Necowee found himself behind a low hill. The order was given to move up the hill, and at the top he could see the enemy force, about twelve thousand men surrounding the camp and then with a shout attacking it. As they milled around in confusion in the empty camp, some of them noticed the encircling tumen bearing down on them. As usual, the tumen halted when they were in bowshot and the salvos of arrows began to fall on the enemy. After some confusion, their leaders organized an attack on the southern end of our lines. Again, as usual, the encircling bowmen moved with them continuously pouring arrows into their ranks. Seeing that their situation was desperate, the enemy turned to the east toward the distant forest. Just then, the scouts reported that a relief column was approaching from the south.

Ignace ordered the auxiliaries to dispatch the wounded enemy and to follow the fleeing enemy east. He withdrew the bulk of the tumen (all but two minghans) from the chase and prepared the classic surprise for the approaching relief column. The artillery was massed on a low hill, behind which were the men. A small troop was sent forward to bait the trap. They, of course, ran into the enemy and turned tail in seeming confusion and rushed toward the trap with the enemy in hot pursuit. At the last possible moment, the onrushing enemy were hit with a crushing salvo of grapeshot. Their charge stopped in confusion long enough to receive another salvo, which ended the confusion as they fled madly toward the south from whence they had come. Meanwhile the tumen moved along their flanks pouring arrows into their ranks. The fleeing Puruha reached one of their towns before they were wiped out and the tumen fanned around it to await the cannon.

Meanwhile, the first enemy force had been greatly reduced and before it could reach the cover of the forest, the pursuing force cut off their retreat and closed with them finishing the enemy force off with hand-to-hand combat. Our losses were minimal due to our superior weapons and the exhaustion of the enemy. Back at the besieged town, the cannon were brought up and, using solid shot, the tumen began to destroy the town from the north. The houses were made of stone and mud, which took longer to destroy than mere mud, but was harder on the inhabitants, many of whom were felled by flying stone or crushed under the falling walls of their houses. As usual, a sortie was made from the south of the town and it met the usual murderous escort into oblivion. The town was leveled and all those in it were killed. Ignace rested the tumen for a day after the battle and sent the scouts out to see what the Puruha would do next.

The scouts reported back that settlements were being deserted and the inhabitants were scurrying southeast into wooded hills. The men rested another day, then split up into jaguns and fanned out to see if anyone remained behind. Necowee's jagun was the westernmost and they found all the settlements deserted. He found it rather eerie. The tumen eventually reformed at the edge of the forested area into which the enemy had withdrawn. Some of the men had found a few ancients left behind, but no one else. These were not disturbed except for one old warrior who stumbled toward one of the men brandishing his old wooden sword. He was granted his wish to die in battle.

The forested area was not as dense as that around the river, but it was not our preferred battle site. About this time, the "king" of the Latacunga came to our camp and expressed his desire to join the Khanate. He was

immediately accepted and urged to send his warriors to assist in the coming campaign. He readily agreed and asked if we had any plans for the suddenly abandoned lands of the Puruha. He was assured that since he was joining us they were his to exploit. He rubbed his hands together with unseemly glee and ordered his subordinate chiefs to send their warriors immediately. Ignace was pleased with this development and decided to return to the eastern tumen since the situation was well in hand. It proved to be a fatal mistake for him.

Coatleztli moved the tumen to the southern edge of the forest area and sent the Latacunga armies into the northern edge to flush out the Puruha. The latter did not retreat but fought to the death in place. The Latacunga losses began to rise and they asked for help. Seeing no alternative, Coatleztli moved the Ordu into the woods on foot in infiltrative formation. Since the wood was not dense, it was not too difficult to use the bow, and soon the Puruha were pushed into what proved to be the private resort of their "king." The buildings were on the hills above an area of small lakes connected by canals. Their last stand was in the buildings. The cannon were brought up and made short work of the buildings. Necowee was sure some of the Puruha escaped over the mountains to the east, but none were left in the basin except for the abandoned ancients. Necowee was puzzled that they preferred extinction to parley, but at no time did they request quarter or send a delegation to us. He was impressed with their bravery, but I thought them insane.

Not long after this, the tumen resumed the march south. Coatleztli dismissed the northern auxiliaries and took along a contingent from the Latacunga. Before they had reached the southern terminus of the basin, a courier arrived with orders to halt since a relief Ordu was in route to take over the campaign. Necowee's tumen was ordered to go into camp in the basin and act as a reserve if needed. The camp was pitched at the southern end of the basin and they stayed there for the next year doing little more than patrolling and hunting down bandits. It was soon after pitching camp that they heard about the fate of Ignace. On his way to rejoin the eastern tumen, a jungle tribe attacked his escort. He was hit with a small dart on his neck. He removed it, dressed the wound, and thought no more of it. Soon he found he couldn't move and finally he stopped breathing. One of the local guides explained that he had been hit with arrow poison or woorari as it was called locally. Oddly, many of the men had seen the pots of the black paste for sale in the markets of Tamalameque, but had never thought to use it for hunting (the suggested use) since they thought it cowardly. Enraged by the death of their beloved leader, the eastern tumen identified and relentlessly hounded the offending tribe, killing all they found and chasing the rest deep into the jungle where they likely ran afoul of other tribes. It was only with difficulty that the tumen commander got them to return to their camp. They also had been ordered into camp while their relief Ordu continued the march south.

After the year of camp, another Ordu was sent to replace Necowee's Ordu. They had suffered some casualties on the march and their commander, a Nicarao named Tlancho, asked for volunteers to join them. Necowee rashly volunteered. They remained at the camp while his old Ordu returned to the Khanate. After a short time, they were ordered to the front to relieve the forward Ordu. The latter had been bloodied in a long, hard fight with a people called the Canari who lived in a series of basins beginning about 120 li to the south of Necowee's camp and extending roughly south for about 150 li. They were not a very united people and some had joined, others had refused to join, and some had attacked without provocation. The confusion had caused a lot of problems.

When the lead Ordu first entered the basin, it was received coldly but correctly by the northernmost chieftain. It was impossible to tell where one chieftaincy ended and another began, and during a routine visit, most of a jagun had been wiped out in an ambush in one town. The town was annihilated as usual, but the commander then mistakenly attacked a neighboring town which belonged to a different chieftain, which resulted in a prolonged war with two of the chieftains while the first encountered chieftain wavered, making it impossible to leave him unguarded. While much of the land was the open grassland, there was also quite a bit of dense forest and the enemy made excellent use of it. While the two chieftaincies were being reduced, the others began to take sides, even without invitation, and soon there was a general war in the basins in which participants changed sides or reverted to neutrality with remarkable ease and frequency. It seemed that much depended on which chieftain had taken which side at a particular time and which other chieftains liked or hated him.

By the time Necowee's Ordu arrived, the fighting had degenerated into rounding up bandits (enemies who hadn't surrendered) in the forested areas. The arrival of the eastern Ordu shortly after Necowee arrived had

done much to convince the neutral chieftains that it would be better to join the Khanate. Necowee saw only a little action at this time, but was able to describe the people for me. They were quite a bit more affluent than their northern neighbors. There was a lot of gold and silver ornamentation worn by them along with colorful stone beads. They also used copper for tools, weapons, and ornaments. They used lances, wooden swords, and slings, but also favored a sort of club with a star-shaped head of stone or copper. They seemed to have a lot of rounded or cylindrical jars with faces near the rim. Otherwise, their pottery was decorated with red, black, and buff, had thin walls, and was polished.

Again, he noticed that they worshipped mountains as well as other natural objects (the sky, volcanoes, trees, rocks, lakes, and even river confluences). In the southernmost basin there was a mountain called Curitaqui, which had a cave near its summit. Here they would sacrifice about one hundred children each year to ensure a good harvest. Needless to say, this practice was ended when they joined the Khanate. He also mentioned that they seemed to do a lot of trading to the west and south.

Once the area was pacified, Necowee got permission to visit the western Ordu. From one grizzled old veteran who had been along for the whole campaign, Necowee was able to learn how it had gone. Cousin George had also split the Ordu, sending one tumen along the coast and the other inland along the western end of the mountains. The latter tumen met no resistance most of the way and only pleasant, friendly people who either happily joined or pleasantly demurred, but cooperated fully. Because of the dense forests, progress was quite slow and it was likely they missed a few villages along the way.

Along the coast, the former tumen (with whom George remained) soon encountered elements of a once-populous people rebounding from the plague. They cultivated food crops, fished, and hunted and had some crude gold ornaments. They had several towns and a few cities with many houses, but still some of the towns and many of the houses were abandoned. Their principle city, Atacames, was particularly large with a few thousand houses. They received George with cordiality and were reluctantly willing to join the Khanate in order to get the proffered aid should the plague recur. It took quite some time to pass through their lands.

South of them were another people who were more sophisticated. Their northernmost settlement received George with some indifference while messengers were dispatched to their leaders in a city called Manta. George waited for the reply, setting up a fortified camp near the first town. Eventually, the messenger returned with orders from the ruler that they must withdraw at once or suffer dire consequences. George was incensed, and with his usual insensitivity, ordered the messenger seized and the town wiped out. Once there was nothing left of the town, he sent the messenger back to his ruler with the head of the town chieftain. The inevitable result was a long, harsh, cruel campaign of conquest necessitating the request for another tumen for help. At first the campaign was easy, since much of the terrain along that part of the coast was open and arid except for the river valleys, but soon the enemy withdrew into the forest and the losses mounted steadily. The arrival of the second tumen caused the enemy to lose hope and a delegation came to discuss surrender. George would likely have had them all executed and continued with the war had not two messages arrived just before the delegation. The first was from Theodore advising him of his brother's death. The second was from his eastern tumen requesting help. The former piece of information gave him unseemly good cheer and the second gave him much-needed pause.

He accepted the surrender of the delegation and demanded that their army (what was left of it) immediately join in the subjugation of their eastern neighbors. Necowee added that the Manta, whose lands he later traversed, were impressive sailors using great rafts propelled with large cotton sails. They also had built terraces to cultivate up the side of hills. He also mentioned that both sexes had the peculiar habit of going about wearing ornamentation about the neck and over the chest and nothing at all below the waist. He thought that rather bizarre.

The difficulty in the east came from the Huancavilca people (who at least did cover their privates with loincloths and skirts). They were primarily an agricultural people exploiting their well-watered lands. They had treacherously feigned friendship, drawing the tumen deep into their northern forested area, and then falling on them in ambush. The tumen was able to fight its way out of the trap, but was forced into retreat from enemy territory. Once out, they began to fight their way back into the area, but the going was slow, and the losses were

heavy. George determined that the Huancavilca lands extended to the sea where the terrain was more open. He immediately launched an invasion by his two tumen along the coast and up the river valleys, wreaking havoc and destroying all the cities and towns along his path. Meanwhile the Manta and Atacames auxiliaries were sent in from the west. Faced with this three-pronged assault, the Huancavilca withdrew across their great river only to watch helplessly as George built a pontoon bridge and crossed after them. They fled into the forests to the east but found themselves pressed against the advancing Ordu from the basins of the Canari and soon all of them surrendered.

It was clear that George wanted to kill each and every one of the Huancavilca, but fortunately for them, Theodore picked just this moment to visit the front. He received their surrender delegations and generously accepted them into the Khanate. George was livid, but dared not say anything lest he undermine his own ambitious plans to succeed his father. Instead, he praised his father's kindness and thanked him profusely for arriving in time to save him from making a grievous mistake. Unfortunately, Theodore, a profoundly honest man, accepted George's word at face value and named him as his successor.

Two Ordu were left in the area to maintain order, one near the coast and the other among the Canari. The rest of the tumen were withdrawn to the north. Necowee went north with Theodore and George, and, after a short stay in Tamalameque, returned home. He spent a few glorious months in Xaymaca, and winking, assured me he left some descendants there. He then returned home following a very circuitous route. He added that he learned later on that there was a big island in the bay between the lands of the Manta and the Huancavilca that was called Puna. The people of the island were somehow related to but independent of the Manta and began raiding the coast. Aided by the Manta rafts, an invasion was launched and the raiders were subdued. There was no more activity on that front for four years.

4

Itsati, Panther Ordu, Itsati, 88–9 K

(E TN, Portland, ME, E TN, 1456–7)

There were quite a few other Ani' Yun'-wiya veterans in Itsati besides Oganaya and Necowee, but none of them would talk to me about the campaign. A few would mention particular incidents in the middle of a battle or siege or march, but none would help me flesh out the big picture. Necowee suggested that perhaps they were not interested in the "big picture" but only in their own particular part of it. After all, he told me, staying alive is a very important part of any campaign and will often dominate all your attention. I would understand, he assured me, when I went on campaign. Fool that I was, I looked forward to the day.

During the fourth year of my stay with the Ani' Yun'-wiya, I received a letter from my father. He rather tersely informed me that my mother had died and urged me to take the news to my sister Mathilde in person and comfort her over the loss. I was surprised that he realized what a blow it would be to her and secretly pleased that he put such a mission in my hands. I made immediate arrangements to accompany a group of young men to the Snake Ordu where they would train and I could make arrangements to get to the Panther Ordu to deliver my sad message to Mathilde.

I was rather excited about my coming adventure and Cimmashote was upset at not being allowed to accompany me. Ghigooie felt that I would have enough trouble as it was remembering the reason I was going to visit my sister without the added distraction of a playmate. She was right, of course, but I sincerely wished he could have come with me.

It was early spring when we left Itsati. We traveled northeast through many Ani' Yun'-wiya towns and settlements scattered among the mountain valleys. We finally left the mountains and began encountering the towns of the Cheroenhaka along the upper reaches of Hokomawanank River that we would follow to the Snake Ordu. The Cheroenhaka were enough like the Ani' Yun'-wiya that we felt right at home with them and they made us quite welcome. The language was similar, but there were a lot of different words and sometimes a similar word had a very different meaning.

The Snake Ordu was a bevy of activity since a large group was getting ready to depart on campaign in the south and there was much excitement. The recruits who accompanied me were immediately put to work while I was ignored. With difficulty, I got a member of the Ordu commander's staff to notice me and listen to my request to go to the Panther Ordu. He looked me over for a moment and sent me to tag along with a northern-bound merchant train.

I presented myself to the merchant, an old Mexica named Cocatli. He asked if I was related to the great physician John, and when I told him John was my father, Cocatli welcomed me as an honored guest. It seems my father had saved Cocatli's life some years before, and Cocatli was delighted to offer some small service in return. He promised to take me all the way to the Panthers, even if it was out of his way. On this leg of his trip he was visiting the coastal Ordu and towns, but that would take him fairly close to my destination.

This was a very strange trip. We did not move very quickly, since we had to stop at every town of decent size. We also did not go very directly since that would have caused us to miss some of the worthwhile towns. He carried feathers, gold, silver and copper ornaments, furs, dried ox meat, and some knives. He traded for copper sheets, dried fish, shells, and beads made from shells and furs. When he finished going along the coast, he would turn inland and work his way back to the south trading the coastal goods far from the coast. He would eventually return to Anahuac.

I asked about his encounter with my father. It had been some time ago in what became the Khanate of the Clouds. Cocatli had just returned to Tamalameque from a trading expedition to the Muisca and had fallen gravely ill with some sort of strange fever. My father had been treating the locals for the Zhen plague for a few years and was just getting ready to leave for home when Cocatli was brought to him. He immediately abandoned his plans and devoted all his attention to his patient. He pulled Cocatli through and the grateful Cocatli tried to pay him with one of the Quetzalitzli stones. My father had refused, thinking it extravagant pay, but finally accepted a small one to give his then wife, Metztlaconac. He must have buried it with her, for I never saw it.

I asked Cocatli about the Muisca. He told me that they lived in a beautiful high plateau where the weather is always mild, except for an occasional hailstorm. They lived in circular houses with conical roofs made of plaited grass. The communal houses were rectangular with gabled roofs. Their chiefs lived in very large houses with massive beaten gold sheets hanging from the roof at the entrance and were carried around in gold-covered litters. They had large temples to their sun god and also considered many lakes, caves, and hilltops to be sacred and placed idols of wood, stone, cotton, or gold at these sites and left valuable offerings to them. They also made human sacrifices to their sun god. The victims were usually prisoners of the Pache tribe along the upper reaches of the Yuma River. He had heard that the Pache had finally joined the Khanate and suspected that George would use that as an excuse to conquer the Muisca.

The Muisca were short, broad, barrel-chested, with round faces, black eyes, and thick black hair. The men had short-cropped hair and most wore thick caps woven from fibers of a plant called cabuya, but the wealthier wore feather or gold caps. They also wore a skirt that hung below their knees and a manta tied over one shoulder, both made of died cotton. The women kept their hair long and braided and went bare headed. They also wore skirt and manta, but the latter was draped over both shoulders and held with a pin. They cultivated various tubers and grains not found in the north. All they seemed to want in trade was gold (which they made into rather uninteresting flat ornaments, or used to adorn their leaders' houses), raw cotton (died red or black), smoked fish, arrow poison, or the leaves of a bush called coca, that was a kind of stimulant. All they had to trade was a huge supply of salt, copper, and a secret nearby source of the fabled green quetzalitzli stones. The latter was the only reason Cocatli he ever climbed up to their high valley. He didn't seem to care for them much.

I asked him about his travels, and he regaled me at length about many of the innumerable tribes he had encountered, although most of his information was about their tastes in trade goods. While I suppose I should have remembered all of this for this book, it really didn't interest me, and I did not. I only remembered the Muisca because I heard about them many times before and was curious about them. Needless to say, although the journey was a long one, Cocatli did not begin to exhaust his supply of information. I was most relieved when the Panther Ordu finally came into view.

I first tried to find Aspenquid, thinking he could help me break the news to Mathilde, but he was out on patrol, so I would have to handle this by myself. I got directions to their tent and slowly approached it. Just outside the tent, I could hear her singing a lullaby to her baby (she had sent word to me when he was born a few months before). I listened for a while recognizing the song as the one with which she had sung me to sleep when I was so upset about Grandfather's death. It was a Salst song and was both haunting and comforting at the same time. When she had finished the song, I called out in greeting. She rushed out and embraced me almost lifting me off my feet.

"You didn't tell me you were coming, what a wonderful surprise! Oh, you've grown so tall and handsome! But you've missed Aspenquid, he left yesterday. Come in, you must see the baby, your new nephew," she prattled on bravely while leading me into the tent. But she finally dissolved into tears and clinging to me desperately, wept softly.

She knew why I was there, and I didn't have to say a word. I felt so badly for her that I was soon weeping with her. This was a help since she was presently trying to comfort me, and it drew her out of her loss, but for the next several days, I would often find her sobbing alone and would try to comfort her or help with the baby and let her cry out the grief. It was not a happy visit. Aspenquid returned a few days later and greeted me warmly before grimly receiving the news. He was most attentive to Mathilde and she finally drew out of her grief. She told me that she had felt a stab in her heart some months before and was sure there had been a loss in the family. When no word came, she had begun to hope that she was wrong. When she saw me, however, she knew it had to be our mother. It was rather disconcerting the way she picked that up.

Since it was midsummer when I arrived at the Panther Ordu, I stayed for the rest of the summer. My new nephew was named Aju (the name of a Mongol commander who had been like a father to Aspenquid). He was a little too young for me to enjoy his company, but Aspenquid took me hunting and fishing and checked up on my martial skills, and Mathilde made sure I hadn't forgotten all the languages we had learned together and brought me up to date on her life in the Ordu. When I was on my own, I looked around for older, retired warriors and after helping them out with a few chores asked them about their campaigns. As usual, I found only a few willing to talk and all but one of them seemed to only notice what was directly in front of them. The one exception was Tegulun.

Tegulun was a Mongol name, but only his grandfather had been a Mongol. Like so many of the people of the north who spent their whole life in an Ordu, he was of mixed tribal roots, Mongol, Siksika, Ocheti shakowin, and Leni lenape. He had recently returned from the latest campaign in the Khanate of the Green Mist. He had known Oganaya; in fact he had been trained by him before his first campaign. By the time he had entered the fray, the devastation from the Zhen plague had abated and the locals had begun to resist more effectively.

The people along the coast from the mouth of the Juchi River on south spoke a similar language and had come to be called the Tupinamba collectively, although each band often had its own name. They were very warlike and often fought among themselves in order to secure captives for human sacrifice and cannibalism. They had huge houses, five-hundred-feet long and a hundred-feet wide in which lived as many as thirty related families. Each town could have any number of such houses. They rightly blamed the Mongols for the Zhen plague and were able to unite with varying degrees of success to fight the common enemy. Unfortunately for them, there were always a few among them who held a grudge against their neighbors that was even stronger than their fear of the Mongols and they were easily and often betrayed. Even so, they fought bravely and fiercely and depending on the terrain with some slight success. By the time he had left the campaign, the coast had been cleared of hostile bands, and the attention had turned inland where the forest soon gave way to jungle and progress slowed significantly.

It seemed that the Tupinamba were themselves invaders. They had moved to the coast from the interior and had been displacing first the original inhabitants and then each other. The Zhen plague had interrupted this activity for a generation, but it was renewed even while the Mongols were moving along the coast from the northwest. After fighting them for three years, Tegulun felt he knew his enemy well. He described them as attractive people although they did tattoo and paint themselves too much for his taste. (Again, as Grandfather had predicted, tattooing and body paint had gone out of style in the Khanate.) They wore no clothes at all, but were

ornamented heavily. Both sexes removed all body hair and the men also shaved the front of their heads. The men wore bone, wood, shell, or stone labrets, and some even had cheek, ear, and nose plugs of stone, bone, or wood. The women wore their hair long and braided and wore shell ear spools. Both sexes wore elaborate feather headdresses, beads, shells, teeth, and anything else they thought attractive as ornaments. They often glued the ornaments to their hair and bodies with wax. Their body paint was usually red or black, although on occasion one would find yellow and blue.

Their cannibalism had certain bizarre elements. They would capture a future meal in battle by disarming him and touching him on the shoulder announce, "You are my prisoner." Thereafter, the prisoner would do as he was told. He would then be alternately harassed and treated like a guest until the fateful day. Even then, he was allowed to harass back and even throw harmless missiles at his tormentors. In the end, he would be gaily decorated and bashed in the head with an equally decorated club. The victims were quite pleased with their fate being convinced that they would be going directly to a sort of paradise. The whole business sounded much like the similar nonsense practiced in Anahuac before the Mongol conquest. I had to wonder where such ideas came from.

The Tupinamba were quite nonplused the first time they tried to capture a disarmed Mongol only to have him produce a knife and continue the fight. They soon discovered the only way they could eat a Mongol was to find him alone and kill him in ambush. This was nearly impossible since they always went about in force. In any case, the conquered Tupinamba had to give up all that and wean themselves from human flesh. Any backsliding was severely punished.

The club and the bow were their main weapons in battle and their tactics were primitive. Their battle plan consisted of trying to surprise a sleeping foe at dawn or dusk and, after firing off arrows, closing with their clubs while dancing about to avoid presenting an easy target. There were no further orders during battle. The first time they tried that with a small Mongol encampment, they learned the futility of their tactics. Even so, it took them a while to turn to jungle ambush as the tactic of choice. But these ambushes were usually betrayed by supposed allies who harbored some long-standing grudge, and resulted in disaster for them. Tegulun was glad to be done with them and did not even briefly entertain the idea of reenlisting for another three years.

Another veteran who arrived in the Ordu shortly before I left would only tell me that they were still fighting the Tupinamba in the jungle inland, but had also started back down the coast and had run into a rather primitive people called the Tremembe who hated the Tupinamba and had joined the Khanate to help fight them. The only thing he could tell me about them was that they used a crescent-shaped stone axe that they would leave with the body whenever they killed anyone with it. Whenever a crescent moon appeared in the sky, the men would make the axes while the women sang songs all night long. They believed that they could not be defeated with such a weapon. Since they joined the Khanate, the belief was never really tested.

Aspenquid was annoyed that I had not been able to come directly to the Panther Ordu with a dispatch rider instead of taking the rather circuitous trade route. He insisted I stay until a dispatch rider was scheduled to go right through Ani' Yun'-wiya lands. Early in the fall, one such was finally scheduled and Aspenquid prevailed on him to deliver me home. Since the dispatches were not urgent, he was quite willing to oblige. The night before departure, Mathilde gave me dried meat and grain cakes for the trip and presented me with a new outfit made of deerskin. We made our farewells and Aspenquid took me to meet the dispatch rider.

His name was Lapahnihe, a Leni lenape, not too many years older than me. As his name suggested, he was a big bear of a man, quite a load for the horses. I asked him how such a large man had come to be a dispatch rider. He laughed a rumbling chortle and explained that everyone in the Ordu had to run an occasional dispatch, although his were never urgent and he could always set a nice easy pace. He was quite happy for the company and delighted to visit the Ani' Yun'-wiya, since so many comely women could be found among them.

I spent the night with Lapahnihe since we would leave at first light. And so it was, he woke me while it was still dark, we quickly ate breakfast, mounted our horses and, as the first light began to soften the eastern sky, we rode south. As we went along the trail, the vibrant early fall colors took form out of the shadows and the cool morning warmed into a beautiful warm day. I was caught up in the natural splendor when, about midmorning, we came upon a small train of wagons. We absently waved greeting to the drivers as we past, but then for some

reason I turned to look after we had passed them and saw a young girl looking dreamily out from the rear of the last wagon. I was startled by her appearance, for she was as fair skinned as I and seemed to have light brown hair. I was rooted in the spot staring after her until her wagon turned out of view. When I caught up to Lapahnihe and told him about the girl, he pointed out that the sun would have been shining directly on her and it would have made her appear fairer than she was. He had never seen anyone as fair as me, although he had heard that there were white-skinned fishermen that plied the waters off the northeast coast.

I asked him why the Koryo ships had not intercepted them. He didn't know, although he suspected it was because they generally plied the southern coasts where their settlements were. He asked me if I had ever been on one of their ships. I admitted I hadn't, although I had seen them while we were traversing the lands of the Huasteca on my trip from home. He gave me a better idea how large they were and asked me if I had noticed that they all had sheets of copper covering their bottoms. I had not and asked him about it. It seemed that when the Koryo first launched their ships in the southern sea, they soon discovered that a type of sea creature was relentlessly eating the wooden hulls. They tried several kinds of pitch and tar and different types of wood, but nothing worked, until one day when one of them happened to see a trade caravan carrying the copper sheets and decided to try it. It completely prevented the creatures from attacking the wood. Because of the military use of the ships, the Khakhan supplies the copper to them. It does have to be replaced occasionally but they never have to pay for it.

He told me about his travels and described many of the things Grandfather had mentioned in his book. He had been to the Missi Sipi River a few times but no farther west. He had been far enough north to have met the Inuit and confirmed many of the things Grandfather had observed. He was certain that they had changed little since Grandfather had visited them. His people, on the other hand, had changed quite a bit since the visit of the legendary Juchi. I recalled that his visit precipitated the war with the Mingue. He nodded and observed that that war had had a profound effect on his people.

"The Mongols eliminated our greatest enemies," he said, "and gave us their empty territory. We suddenly found ourselves awash in riches of fertile lands and endless hunting grounds. The young men would not bother going on campaign with the Ordu, but would sit about fussing over their appearance until it was time to go hunt. We were in danger of growing fat and lazy. Then in our time of need, a great leader emerged. His name was Choqweke, but he came to be called Gelelemend (Leader). As a young man, the general inertia of the people disgusted him and he left to join the Osprey Ordu, which was still stationed nearby in the lands of the defeated Mingue. He stayed with them many years and served in the conquest of the Anahuac lands. When he returned home, he was commander of the Ordu and when he retired he returned to his people. While being honored at a general tribal meeting, he shamed the young men of the tribe by challenging them to single combat with an "old" man. The challenge was reluctantly taken up by the strongest of the young men, but Gelelemend quickly defeated all who took him on. He was prevailed upon to train the young men, but he refused and instead said he could not be bothered by anyone not manly enough to join the Ordu. So it was that almost all the young men of the Leni lenape join an Ordu and go on campaign. Gelelemend soon became the high chief, and no man would dare approach him if he was not a veteran of a campaign."

"Have you gone on campaign yet?" I asked.

"No," he shook his head, "not yet, but I will next year."

"Where will you go?"

"Wherever I'm sent."

"Sometimes you get a choice, I'm told."

"Well, if I get a choice, I would pick the Clouds over the Green Mist. I've been in the jungle of the Alligator Ordu, and I didn't much like it. It is too damp and hot."

"I understand that there is jungle in the Khanate of the Clouds also."

"True, but at least there are the high, cool mountains, and the temperate foothills also. The Green Mist, on the other hand, is uniformly hot and usually damp."

“I hope you get a choice.”

I asked him about the white fishermen, recalling that Grandfather had mentioned something about them. He said that they never touch the mainland since their long-ago near encounter with an Ordu patrol, but the ships are still seen on the horizon in the spring and summer and occasionally they will land on an offshore island. In the far north he had heard from the Inuit that once in a great while a long ship with shallow draft will put in to the shore and white men get off to chop and load wood, then return to the east. The Inuit say that the white men live on the southern tip of a large island in the east, but that they are dying off since they can't take the severe weather. This made me wonder how they got there, but I never did find out. It seems they were already there when the Inuit reached the large island and there had been a few desultory clashes between them, but little more than skirmishes. Grandfather had mentioned these people in his book, but had little information about them.

Lapahnihe did add that the weather had changed over the years. The old people of his tribe insisted that the winters were shorter and milder when they were young. Now the snow covers the ground during all the winter and much of the fall. I was too young to know about winters long past, although the winters in Anahuac seemed to be always mild, and so everyone had said. Still, the winters among the Ani' Yun'-wiya were far from mild and generally featured very heavy snowfall. When I got back to Itsati, I asked some of the oldest people about the winters and they confirmed that in their youth, the weather was milder, the snow was wetter and wouldn't always last all winter long. Apparently, they would also get rain that would freeze overnight covering everything with ice. I decided, that perhaps it was better that it was colder. I have lived long enough to reject that conclusion.

Lapahnihe took me all the way to Itsati, even though it was out of his way and Iskagua and Ghigooie prevailed on him to spend the night and enjoy a feast. He loved to eat and needed very little persuasion. Meanwhile, a letter from my father awaited me. He thanked me for helping my sister and told me to stay where I was a few more years. It seemed that the weather had deteriorated in Anahuac. It all began the year after I left. Heavy rains caused Lake Texcoco to flood Tlatelolco, Tenochtitlan, and the other cities on the lakeshore. The Tlatoani of Texcoco, Nezahualcoyotl, designed and began work on a dike to prevent future flooding. Then the next years featured heavy snowfall that collapsed many of the flat roofed houses in the valley, and then early frosts wiped out the centli crop. This last year saw a devastating drought shrivel the crops. Fortunately, the problems were confined to the high valleys and the crops were abundant near the coast and elsewhere in the Khanate, so no one was starving. Still, there had been some lawlessness since the Ordu are busy facilitating the flow of food, and he didn't think it was safe for me to come back yet. He thoughtfully assured me that Cuauhtzin was in fine health and voice and Tetl was taking good care of him.

I was quite happy to stay where I was, for I really did like it. My Ani' Yun'-wiya family was also happy to have me stay, so I plunged back into my routine. Still, I couldn't get the image of the fair-skinned girl out of my head and finally sent Mathilde a note asking her if any such girl was seen at the Panther Ordu, since that's where she seemed to be headed. Reading between the lines, Mathilde made a great effort to find out about the girl but to no avail. Mathilde could only tell me that a small wagon caravan had passed near the Panther Ordu about midday on the day I left. However, it had not stopped, and no one knew where it was going or whence it came. She promised me that Aspenquid would make discreet inquiries when he went on patrol toward the northeast, the direction in which the wagons were last seen moving. By the time I got her note, it was already winter and I doubted if anyone would remember the caravan. I tried to keep myself busy, but again and again the image of the girl would return to me.

Early in the spring, both my father and sister wrote to tell me that it was time for my vision quest. The practice had spread among some of the eastern tribes, but had not really caught on among the Ani' Yun'-wiya. My father had picked up the practice from his brother Theodore, whose quest Grandfather mentioned. In any case, it was a family practice and Iskagua was fully prepared to instruct me. He took me aside and explained that I must go off by myself and fast, pray, and meditate until I was granted my vision. It would give my life direction, it might tell me to avoid certain foods or animals or even people. It might reveal to me which animal would be my protector, with whom I had a special bond. In short, it would guide me to the path that would be the best one for me to take.

Frankly, I had some misgivings. Cimnashote thought it was a rather strange practice and felt I shouldn't bother with it. Ghigooie insisted that I should and assured me I wouldn't regret it if I gave the quest the time and effort required. Iskagua admonished me to honor my father's request. Gatagewi was intrigued with the concept and also wanted to make the quest. Iskagua agreed, and so on a beautiful spring day, we purified ourselves in the sweat bath, plunged into the river, and started off in different directions on our vision quest. Gatagewi went northeast and I went southwest.

Remembering Theodore's quest, I decided to climb a mountain, but first I wanted to get far enough away that hunters wouldn't distract me. I walked most of the day drinking only water and by nightfall, I was very hungry, but had arrived at the foot of a most likely looking mountain. I decided to go ahead and climb it in the twilight, but had to stop partway up because I kept tripping. I rested quietly for a while trying to blank out my mind by saying the appropriate prayers for guidance. Soon the moon rose above the trees and the silvery glow inspired me to climb the rest of the way up the mountain. I reached the top and found a sheltered spot among some rocks. I sat down and resumed my meditation. Not surprisingly, I fell asleep and awakened the next morning very stiff from the unnatural position in which I had spent the night.

I moved about to loosen up and decided to explore the mountain a bit to see if it was home to bears or panthers and find a good source of water. I found a stream about midway down the western side. It came directly out of the mountain and was quite cold. After a bracing bath, I determined that there were no large predators in residence on the mountain and I had best return to my meditation before I succumbed to starvation. I brought up a good supply of water and resumed my quest. The hunger was not too bad, for I had trained to endure hunger, but the sitting still was maddening. Endless thoughts flooded my mind, annoying itches distracted me, insects found and plagued me, and the sun first warmed me, then made me too hot, then abandoned me to chill in the shadows. Birds called out; small animals scurried and chattered; I heard the occasional rattle of the snake called tecuancoatl in Nahual and utso'nati' in Ani' Yun'-wiya and the distant howls of wolves. All these things conspired to make a mockery of my efforts.

Still, I refused to give up. I tried to allow the distractions to pass through my mind unremarked. Eventually, either this began to work or I was becoming delirious from hunger, because toward the end of the day I began to sense things. At first these were monstrous things: giants, fantastic beasts, bizarre colors and shapes, but I persevered and finally fell asleep.

Again I awoke very stiff and sore and repaired to the stream for another bath and supply of water. I returned to my spot and decided to try the nawak'osis Iskagua had given me. I was hungry enough to eat it, but instead filled a small pipe and used it properly. I knew to be careful with it since it tended to set me off into a fit of coughing, and indeed managed to work through the pipe with no ill effects. It had the added benefit of discouraging the flying insects. I returned to my reverie even though both my stomach and head were aching (my training enabled me to endure this). I tried another pipe at midafternoon and it helped disperse the persistent insects again. Finally I began to see real or at least realistic things and found a guide and received guidance. Of course, I can't identify the guide or reveal the guidance.

5

Itsati and Journey Home, 89–90 K

(E. TN to SE OK, 1457–8)

When my vision ended, it was dark and although I was very weak from hunger, I swallowed a large draught of water and went to sleep. The next morning I rose early, and putting to use my survival skills, quickly found some young weed shoots I could eat. I walked back toward Itsati, stopping at the first fishable stream to get some real nourishment. I soon had a fair-sized fish (the one called agoli [perch] by the Ani' Yun'-wiya) and prepared myself a meal. I walked on until dusk, then found a cozy spot to spend the night. I awoke suddenly from a dream in which my guide told me to get up immediately. I jumped up and heard the unmistakable snuffling of an approaching bear. The air was still, so I quietly moved off away from his path and, since dawn was not far off, walked through the rest of the night by the light of the moon. I reached home near midmorning. There was something to be said for this quest business.

Ghigooie welcomed me warmly, congratulated me, and handed me a just-prepared bowl of centli porridge. She had awakened that morning and knew I would be back by the time she fixed up the porridge. It was disconcerting the way she could do that. I asked after Gatagewi and she said he had arrived the night before and had also been successful in his quest. He was now with Iskagua making preparations of the feast called Sah LooH Stu-knee Keeh Steh Steeh. Cimnashote came up, greeted me, then stopped and peered at me curiously.

“You have changed Koga (Crow in Ani’ Yun’-wiya). You look older now,” he said. “Perhaps I should go on a quest also.”

“I would recommend it,” I told him.

Ghigooie laughed and asked him if he thought he could sit still long enough to get a vision. He had to admit it was unlikely, but thought he should try. He eventually did go (that following winter) and also came back a different person. I really didn’t feel different, but everyone said I was. What I did feel was a newfound confidence and a sort of independence. I found myself wandering off from time to time by myself to consult my guide and feeling quite at ease alone. I suppose I had matured a little.

The following summer Mathilde and Aspenquid came to visit during the feast called Tung Nah Kaw Hoon Ghni. They brought along Aju and their newest child, a daughter named Paula, after our mother. They both remarked how I had grown up since they last saw me. I asked if they had ever found out about my mystery girl, but they had not. No one else had seen such a girl. Even so, I was sure I had not seen an illusion and would find the girl one day.

I should write a little about the Ani’ Yun’-wiya feasts since some of my relatives have never lived among them. These were usually held only in the principle towns whose shaman was sufficiently esteemed. Itsati was one such town. The people of the smaller towns would go to the principal town to which they felt some allegiance at the proper time. The Ani’ Yun’-wiya year began with Nung Tah Tay-quah, on the first new moon of autumn. Hunters were sent out seven days before the feast, hunted for six days, and returned on the seventh depositing the game in the Town House storeroom. On the day of the moon, the tip of the tongue of the first buck deer killed was wrapped in old leaves and given to the Uku (Iskagua’s title). Seven specially appointed men prepared seats and tables and seven women oversaw the preparation of food. Each family contributed a sample of every crop they had raised to the Uku and also a larger amount for the feast. Only infants were allowed to sleep that night and the women performed a special dance all night long. Before dawn, the Uku marched everyone down the river where all immersed themselves seven times. Upon leaving the water, each would walk to a table where the special crystals were set up. These were long, clear rock crystal pieces thought to be able to foretell one’s fate. One would hold out his hands to the crystal and if he saw himself standing erect in the crystal, he would live at least until the first spring new moon; if he were prone, he would die before that moon. The doomed would go off to the side to pray alone, the rest would take up a piece of medicinal root and go change out of their wet clothes. That night the great feast was served for everyone except the Uku who had to first sacrifice the bit of tongue, the attendants who had to wait until everyone else was finished, and the doomed who were expected to fast and try to get the crystal to change its mind about their fate. I really don’t see how anyone could see himself other than erect in the crystal, but some did, every year, and would die if they couldn’t get their image to change. Again, only infants slept that night and the women danced again. In the morning it was over.

The next feast was called Ah Tawh Hung Nah. It was held about eight to ten days after the Great New Moon Feast. On the first night, pairs of young men would begin to silently exchange clothes until each was dressed in the other’s garments. This would symbolize that they were joined as one and would henceforth be devoted to each other. The men did this on their own and would indeed look out for each other, always hunting and going on campaign together. It was quite a commitment and was never lightly taken.

During this feast, the Uku would wear a conical hat and a crystal stone wrapped in leather around his neck. Seven men were called upon to “purify” the town house and to beat all the houses in the town with rods from the kotsune tree (white bark sycamore). Seven women were appointed to lead all the dances, seven more men were sent out to get certain necessary evergreen woods for the purification rites, seven more were assigned with the making of the sacred fire, and a special attendant was to sing the Yo Wah hymn. All these special people along with the Uku would only eat a little food once a day after dark for the next seven days.

Meanwhile another seven-day hunt was undertaken and all was made ready for the feast. The wood was placed in a basket and, on the sixth day, placed in the storeroom of the town house along with game and other victuals. That night the women danced to singing and drumming, then most went to bed. During the night, the appointed seven cleaned out and whitewashed the interior of the town house, the fire makers started the new fire with seven kinds of wood, and the sacred cauldron was placed near the fire and filled with running water collected in the seven special dipping gourds. The Uku recovered the evergreens from the storehouse, prayed, entered the town house, prayed again, circled the altar, sprinkled nawak'osis on the fire, directed the steam from the cauldron in four directions with a heron wing fan, repeated the circling, sprinkling and fanning three times; then the evergreens were lowered into the cauldron, the fanning repeated, and all took their seats.

Elsewhere in the town, the women of each household rose early, put out all fires, and swept the house clean. Then, when they went to the town house, they got a coal from the sacred fire to light new fires in their homes. Everyone gathered at the town house, and then the purifiers came forth, received the rods, and filed outside. The chanter was called, and he came forward, was dressed in a white robe, and was given two rattling gourds. He began to chant, circled the altar, and went outside. At this point, the purifiers beat the eaves of first the storeroom, then all the other houses in the town, then the storeroom again chanting all the while, too. The chanter meanwhile climbed onto the roof of the town house while holding a note ("eeeeh") until he reached the top. At this point, he sang the Yo Wah hymn. When finished he descended holding a different note ("iiiiii") until he reached the ground. He reentered the town house, was relieved of his robe, and sat down. Then the purifiers each took a gourd, dipped it into the cauldron, and took it to the clan's headman. The latter drank a little, rubbed some on his chest, and handed it to the rest of his clan to do the same. When everyone finished, the Yo Wah hymn was sung again.

Two hours before sunset, the Uku led everyone to the river, prayed, then told them all to bathe. The men went upstream, the women and children downstream. All faced east and plunged under the water, faced west, and did the same. This was repeated seven times, then all got out, changed into fresh clothes, and returned to the town house. The Uku then sacrificed the leaf-wrapped deer tongue on the new fire along with some nawak'osis. The number of times the meat popped indicated the number of deaths that would occur during the year, and if the smoke did not rise directly, it indicated there would be much sickness among the people. Then the Uku placed his crystal on top of seven folded skins. If the people would be healthy, it would flash clearly; if not, it would get smoky and those who would die would be seen in the crystal. At sunset, the Yo Wah hymn was sung again and then the feast would begin.

The first night there was dancing until midnight, the second day another general house beating, on the third a repeat of the second, and on the fourth a repeat of the first. All remained awake on the fourth night, with the women dancing all night. On the morning of the fifth day, the Uku made sacrifices again, then removed the basket of evergreens from the cauldron and took it to the east side of the town house, placed it there, and left. Then the chanter left, then the other principles, then everyone else. It was over.

The next feast was called Eelah Uahtah Lay Kee. Its time was also set at the Nung Tah Tay Quah Feast and was generally after Ah Tawh Hung Nah. Once all had assembled in the town square, a man with an open-topped box danced among them while chanting. Whoever he passed would place some nawak'osis in the box. When it was filled, he would depart. On the first three evenings of the feast, all would sit around the perimeter of the square while pairs of costumed men and women danced around a large fire in the center of the square. Six of the men carried hoops bisected with sticks with feathers attached and the rest carried evergreen boughs. The dance would end at midnight when the hoops and boughs were placed in the town house until the next night. On the fourth night, there was a feast, and at midnight the man with the box reappeared and everyone was allowed to take a piece of nawak'osis from the box. Then they pulled some evergreen leaves from the dancers' boughs (except for those of four couples), crumbled the leaves in their hands, mixed them with the nawak'osis, approached the fire in concentric circles, and after some show of reluctance, threw the mixture into the fire. This ended the feast.

The next feast, the First New Moon of Spring Feast, usually occurred when the snows melted and the first new shoots of grass appeared. Before the day, the Uku and his seven prime counselors would meet and appoint seven women to perform the stone coat dance (commemorating the slaying of a stone-coated monster who

taught them all their songs while he was dying). After the dance, the exact day of the new moon was determined and messengers were sent to advise the smaller towns of the day of the feast. Hunters were sent out for game. The skin of one buck, doe, and fawn were whitened with clay. The buck was dressed whole with heart, lungs, and liver left in. The day before the feast, the people gathered and the hunters placed their catch in the storeroom. The whitened deerskins were taken into the town house. An attendant renewed the altar and prepared a pile of the inner bark of seven different kinds of trees (taken only from the east side of the trees and free of worms or flaws) for the sacred fire. That night everyone feasted and visited, and the women performed the Stone Coat Dance. Then everyone retired.

Before dawn the leaders of the clans entered the town house and took their places; then the rest followed them. The attendant placed the deerskins next to the fire with the heads pointed toward it. He then sprinkled fresh blood from another animal on the skins and drew a line in the blood on each from nose to tail. He placed a crystal on each and sprinkled nawak'osis flower buds (gathered the year before) on them. After the sun rose, the Uku ordered the entire group to the river. The people were supposed to look straight ahead all the way to the river. Bringing up the rear were the seven councilors carrying baskets of medicinal roots, the chief speaker carrying a basket of small flags, the Uku's assistant carrying seven folded deer skins containing crystals, and last the Uku. Seven tables with benches for the leaders were set up by the river and the assistant placed a skin on each table. He then took the small flags, dipped the end of each stick into the water, and then planted them at intervals about the same distance as their height away from the river and parallel to it. The people were urged to closely watch the flag nearest them and note if anything crawled out of the river there, since if anything did and fought near a flag, whoever was closest to that flag would either die or suffer great distress. After a suitable period of flag watching, everyone was ordered into the river fully dressed. They all faced east and immersed themselves entirely seven times (even infants were dunked by their mothers).

Meanwhile the Uku unfolded the seven deerskins to reveal their crystals and covered the tables with the medicinal roots. The people would then come out of the river according to age (oldest first), go to their clan table, walk around it four times, wet the tip of their right forefinger, draw it along the length of the crystal, then draw it from their forehead to their stomach, take a piece of medicinal root, return to the town, and change into dry clothes. The rest of the day was spent fasting.

At sunset all gathered at the town house. The Uku picked up the nawak'osis flowers from the whitened deerskins and flung them into the fire. Then he took the inevitable leaf-wrapped tongue tip (from the whole dressed buck), and flung it into the fire. If bits of it popped to the east, all was well, if to the west, someone would die. After this the buck was cooked and small pieces distributed to everyone along with a thick centli porridge. Everyone had to have some of each and all had to be consumed before dawn. Some of the ritual scratching (long gashes with fish bones, pieces of flint, or even snake fangs on arms and legs) was done at this time. The medicinal root was partly chewed and the juice rubbed on the body. Only infants were allowed to sleep that night and the women performed the Stone Coat Dance all night. At dawn the festival was over. The next day the Uku set the date for a special dance followed by the making of a new fire seven days later. On the appointed night, dancing proceeded all night long. The next morning the seven chosen men made the new fire. This was done with rubbing sticks and block using certain dried weeds for kindling. This fire was transferred to the hearth and from it coals were taken to each home to start a new fire. The tongue of the next deer killed by the man of each household was sacrificed to the new fire in his house.

The next feast was called Sah Looh Stu-knee Keeh Steh Steeh. It was held as soon as the centli reached a stage where it was fit to eat although still quite green. As usual, it was preceded by a six-day hunt with the leading hunter preserving the tongue bit from his first buck kill wrapped in leaves. Meanwhile a special attendant was charged with finding a perfect ear of centli among the fields of each of the seven clans and delivering them to the seven counselors. The Uku and his assistants and the counselors entered the town house and fasted for the six days. On the evening of the sixth day, the hunters brought in their game, and each family offered a sample of every kind of fruit available to them either prepared or raw. All was placed in the storeroom. The tongue bit was presented to the Uku, and then the night was spent in dancing silently with solemnity.

At sunrise the Uku was presented with the seven ears of centli and the people were ordered to abstain from all labor and levity. The altar was renewed as in the last feast and the people gathered in and around the town

house. At dusk the Uku took the tongue bit in his right hand and seven kernels of centli (one from each ear) in his left hand, raised his hands above his head, said a special prayer, and tossed the meat and centli into the fire, followed by ground nawak'osis. If the meat popped westward or the smoke settled over the altar, it was a bad omen. After this, a feast was served in the square and all sat down to eat except the Uku, his assistant, and the seven counselors who had to fast until sunset and could only eat stored food at this time. Seven days later, there was another gathering at the square for a banquet of new fruits in which the Uku and the others could partake. This ended the feast.

The last feast was called Tung Nah Kaw Hoon Gh-ni and was celebrated forty to fifty days after the previous feast or as soon as the centli was ripe. Once the centli looked ready, a special dance was performed and everyone was alerted that the feast would begin in about twenty days. Hunters secured game; an arbor of green boughs and a large booth with rows of seats were set up in the town square. Also, a hole was dug in the center of the square and a large shade tree that had been cut down close to its base was "planted" in the hole. Each of the men secured a tree bough for the first day of the feast. That first morning, the men performed a special dance while holding their green bough in their right hand. The leader held a rattle and led the others around the tree seven times while they jumped, shouted, sang, and ran. The Uku and other leaders sat in the booth and the women and children sat around the periphery of the square. At sunset, the men stopped and put away their boughs; then all took part in social dances. This was repeated for four days; then a great feast was held and all went home.

There were lesser festivals at each new moon, slightly more impressive on the other two seasonal new moons, and a small sacrifice was offered every seven days. There was also a special Ookah Festival that was only held every seven years. It was a thanksgiving feast but mostly was to honor the Uku. On the feast day, he was washed and dressed in his special installation yellow clothes by attendants, then carried with music and song to a special white chair with a canopy and footstool. He sat there a bit, and then was carried to another similar chair set up in the middle of the town square. Here he remained silently all night while the people danced. The next day he was carried into a marked-off circle also in the square where he was set on his feet. He began a slow step dance looking right and left and bowing to and being bowed to by each spectator he passed. The other leaders followed him mimicking his steps. After completing a circuit of the circle, the Uku was returned to his chair and the leaders stood watch over him. In the afternoon, a banquet was served and all the people except the Uku and the leaders sat down and ate. The latter had to wait until sunset. After eating, the Uku was returned to his own house and redressed in his ordinary clothes. Except for the bath, the entire ritual was repeated for four days. On the fourth day, once replaced on his chair after his dance, the Uku was reconsecrated in his position by his assistant. He only wore the yellow clothes at his investment and at this feast; otherwise, he and the other leaders always wore white.

These festivals very much defined life among the Ani' Yun'-wiya. They were a very united, supportive, reverent, respectful, dignified, and generous people. If any of these attributes rubbed off on me, it is entirely their doing, and it was an honor to have lived so many of my formative years among them and be viewed by them as a kinsman. I have always happily taken part in any of the festivals when I found myself among them. I still remember all the dances and most of the chants and songs. I hope I can spend my last years among them, but at the moment, that is out of my hands.

Mathilde and her family could only stay through the end of the feast since Aspenquid had to return to his duties. He had decided not to go on the southern campaigns until his children were a little older. I could understand this decision but thought it would impede his career. Of course, I said nothing, since it wasn't my place and they were all happy about it. I was sorry to see them go, but resolved to visit them in the fall and perhaps make a serious effort to find my dream girl in the process.

As it turned out, just as I was preparing to go north I received a letter from my father calling me home. He felt I was at the age when I had to choose how to make my way in the world and home was the best place to make that choice. Much as I wanted to go on my northern quest, it never occurred to me to defy my father and I sent a note to Mathilde explaining the change of plans. I made all my farewells, many with a heavy heart. I was old enough to make the trip home by myself and I planned to do just that. I secured two horses, loaded one up with my belongings, and mounting the other, turned southwest.

I decided to stop at my quest mountain since it would be on the way. I reached there on the evening of the first day since I set a good pace. I tied the horses near the spring and climbed up the rest of the way on foot. That night I dreamt I was flying above the mountain. My guide joined me and we both flew southwest all the way to Cuauhnahuac. I awakened convinced my journey would be uneventful. I returned to the stream, bathed, filled up the water gourds, and continued on my way. I did not seek out the merchant or courier trails but wandered through the woods along hunting trails using my skills to guide myself southwest. I came out of the woods, after a few days, near the westward bend of the West Tsoyaha River. There was a town near the bend, so I stopped there to spend the night. It was an Ani' Yun'-wiya town with only a few dozen houses.

I was warmly welcomed as the son of the Uku of Itsati and was pressed upon to spend the night with the shaman and his family. His name was Moytoy and he was a very tall, dignified young man with a young wife and small children. His brother, Tathtowe, was also visiting. The latter had just returned from campaign in the south and was on his way to their hometown, Setacoo, a few days upstream on the West Tsoyaha. I asked him about his campaign experiences and, to my surprise, found a talker.

He managed to get himself sent to the Khanate of the Clouds instead of the Green Mist and had recently finished his three-year tour (actually, it was deceptive calling it a "three-year tour" since the time spent getting there and training were not counted, so they generally took at least four years). When he arrived in the Khanate, the land of the Muisca had just been taken in a fairly easy campaign. Just as Cocatli had suggested, they were accused of attacking the Pache after the latter had joined the Khanate. He did not go up to their high plateau, but trained a short distance southeast of the capital. He was eventually sent south. To his great disappointment, he found that he would not be campaigning in the mountains, but in the jungle. When they reached Tanguwa, instead of continuing south, they turned sharply east, went through a mountain pass and after moving some distance south along the eastern foothills of the mountain chain, descended into the jungle. The next three years were spent in infiltration and ambush punctuated with sickness and fatigue. Most of his Ordu's losses were from sickness, but with arrow poison erratically in use, to be wounded might be to die, so all wore the thick cotton "armor" to deflect the darts, while increasing the misery from the heat and humidity.

It was quite an expedition. There were ten tumen assigned to go as far east as they could in the three years while another two were sent south from the previous conquests until they met an organized foe; then they were to turn east also and go as far as they could. The latter quickly ran into the Chimu and turned east eventually also ending in the jungle.

It was frequently a very hard campaign for the northern ten tumen. There were no borders, no large cities, no pitched battles, no organized resistance, and no front line. If the locals saw them, they usually melted away into the jungle and could not be found. If they were surprised in their towns, they would flee immediately without making any pretense of defending their homes. They would only fight if surrounded, and it was very hard to surround their towns and villages, since they were always on rivers, some of which were very wide and swift. But the men would fight to the death and the women and children would surrender. Any surrenders were accepted and the survivors allowed to remain in place, with no demands made on them. This made for a very bewildered foe, but did induce a few towns to surrender rather than run. Eventually a sort of Ordu was organized from among them that traveled everywhere by boat.

Tathtowe's tumen was about halfway down the line of march with five tumen to the north and four to the south. When they scrambled down the deep ravines and gorges into the jungle, they found themselves among a people called the Kicho. This proved to be an advantage since they were friendly with the Latacunga who had already allied with us. They spoke a similar language and had powerful chiefs. After some reassurance, they reluctantly allied with us and helped us. They lived in huts near their fields, but would repair to towns for market days. The men wore either nothing (with their manhood tied up) or a cloak knotted over the shoulders. The women wore cotton loincloths. They deformed their heads making them look rather pointed. They wore golden nose and chest ornaments, and a thin labret through the upper lip. Some wore feathered ear spools. Their weapons included spears and wooden swords like the Latacunga. They are very superstitious, giving much time to divination and magic and much worry over spirits and demons. They revere birds, trees, mountains, rivers, etc. They understood our "bizarre" prohibition against cannibalism and grudgingly acquiesced.

The next people they met were called the Kofan. They were very hard to pin down and the difficult terrain made surrounding settlements nearly impossible. Not many of them were captured; most fled east where the tumen followed. Eventually they began to run into their less-than-friendly neighbors, who came to be named the Pioje (the word meant “no” in their language, and was the apparently the one most used by them in dealing with the tumen). Faced with no choice, the Kofan began surrendering since they feared the unknown less than the known. He couldn't tell me much about them since he only saw them as bedraggled refugees.

The Pioje lived on both sides of a river (eventually named for them). They lived in small villages from three to nine li apart and more than nine li from the river. Each village seemed to be a single extended family in less than ten houses. They wore either nothing or a type of loin covering made of bark cloth or fiber. Their hair was long and worn braided and wound around the head with a piece of cloth, but they plucked their eyebrows and lashes. They wore earplugs, nose ornaments, and some wore feathers or sticks in holes near the corners of their mouths. They all painted their bodies and faces and some even painted their mouths black and teeth red. Some stuck cotton fuzz on their bodies and some wore circlets of feathers on their heads. All wore a profusion of necklaces, bracelets, and chest bands made from seeds, beads, animal teeth, and anything else deemed suitable.

They were armed with the bow and poison arrows as well as spears and clubs. They were not well organized, but seemed to belong to subgroups which viewed other groups with varying degrees of hostility. They were not great warriors but would let loose a shower of spears and arrows, then melt into the forest. The tumen was still working its way down their river when their replacement tumen came up. No one volunteered to do another tour. On the long march back, he compared notes with friends in the other tumen. It seemed the worst of it was in the north where the use of the poison arrow was more common. The fiercest warriors, however, were in the south, the Chiwaro. Fortunately, their only weapons were spears and shields with an occasional copper axe and they were not well organized. Had they used the arrow poison they might have prevailed. As it was, they were the most implacable of foes and few could be induced to surrender. He also mentioned that the remnants of the tribe responsible for killing my cousin Ignace were found and they quickly and abjectly surrendered. They were called the Kanale and had been reduced to a handful of villages living on the eastern frontier of what had been their land.

Tathtowe strongly suggested that I not volunteer for service in the south until George decided he had enough jungle and was ready to move along the coast again. From what he heard, the Chimu would be an interesting foe. I thanked him for his counsel. The next morning I continued on my way staying along the southern shore of the West Tsoyaha River until it turned north, then continued westward staying well north of the path I had taken so many years before. Each night I would stay at either a yam or a town and while there were many veterans, I could not find another talker.

One of the towns I visited proved to be inhabited by the Chikasha who had run afoul of the Mongols in the early days of the Khanate. They were quite friendly to me and many boasted of their brave deeds on the southern campaigns but could give me no useful information. I crossed the Missi Sipi in a reliable Taunika boat with the horses swimming alongside. I set out for the great Kadohadacho capital with a view to see how it had changed since Grandfather first described it. It took a few days, but at last I found myself on a bluff above a huge sprawling city on both sides of a wide river with a pontoon bridge joining it. The land near the river was under cultivation but the town covered the high ground. The mounds were on the southern side of river, so I passed through the other part and followed the trail to the bridge, crossed it, and began my climb up to the city square.

6

Journey Home, 90–1K

(SE OK to NE Mexico, 1458–9)

I was relieved that I did not attract much attention. There was quite a lot of traffic on the roads through the town. Apparently, this was the norm since it didn't appear to be market day or any sort of festival. I made my way to the town square and looked at the mounds with the buildings on them. They were much as Grandfather described them, although they looked larger than I expected. Not that they came close to the temple pyramids in Anahuac, but they were higher than the mounds of the Pansfalaya and the southeast towns (at least taller than

the ones I had seen). As I was studying them, a pair of young men approached and greeted me. One was tall and dark complexioned with little adornment, while the other was shorter, lighter, and bedecked with bangles, earrings, and feathers.

“Welcome stranger,” the taller one said. “Might you be related to the great healer, John of Cuauhnahuac?”

“He is my father,” I replied, not a little surprised that he was known here.

“I was right,” the young man told his companion. Then he continued to me, “I am your kinsman, Tlapac, son of Citlalcoatl. This is my cousin Kinahiwi,” he indicated his companion, “the nephew and heir of the Xinesi.”

I greeted both politely, and then asked how we were related. Tlapac explained that my father’s first wife, Metztlaconac, was his cousin, his great grandmother’s niece. He added that while neither he nor Kinahiwi had ever met my father they knew him quite well by reputation. It seemed that my father had helped both Citlalcoatl and the Xinesi in the past and both remained grateful and indebted. He added that his great-grandfather was the great Texcatlipoca (Smoking Mirror), who had been my grandfather’s longtime friend and companion. Kinahiwi interjected that his great-granduncle had been my grandfather’s implacable foe. As often was the case in the north, inheritance was through the mother rather than the father, but since the Xinesi was preferably a male, it devolved on the son of the current Xinesi’s sister. Of course, if only a woman was available, she could be Xinesi and then the title would pass to her son. (I understand that has happened recently.)

I was embarrassed not to have known a relative, but while my father had been close to Tlapac’s family when he was younger, I had never visited them and hadn’t recognized the names. I was amazed to have run into the descendant of my grandfather’s old companion in the very spot where he had originally met him. I remarked on the coincidence and Tlapac was surprised that I had remembered the place of our ancestors’ original meeting. I explained that I had come to this town to see one of the important places that my grandfather had visited that was also not too far out of my way back home.

“Well, then,” he said, “one more thing is necessary to make the experience complete. You must be introduced to the Xinesi.”

“But, I have no rank or standing,” I protested. “It would be an insult to present me to him.”

“Oh, no,” Kinahiwi protested. “We would be sore remiss if we denied him a chance to offer hospitality to the son of the man who saved his life. In fact, he would be most upset with us.”

There was no avoiding it, they insisted on taking me to meet him. I was rather pleased with the idea of recreating my grandfather’s activities in the city, but was still rather uncomfortable with being presented to someone of such rank. Even though my grandfather had been a Khan and my uncles and some of my cousins had also been and currently were Khans, my father was just a healer and I had no rank at all.

We went up the mound to the Xinesi’s residence. This surprised me since Grandfather was left at the foot of the mound while his guide sought an audience. I was brought right into the large airy anteroom and made comfortable on a carved wooden bench while Kinahiwi went to get his uncle. While waiting, I remarked to Tlapac how impressed my grandfather had been with the perception of the then Xinesi, and, in fact, how many of the latter’s misgivings had been borne out. He looked at me and seemed puzzled by what I had said. Presently, Kinahiwi and the Xinesi joined us. The latter was tall, but shorter than me. He was slim and muscular and wore little adornment except for a shell gorget and gold earrings. His dark eyes searched mine for a moment; then he smiled broadly and bid me return to my seat.

“You do not look much like your father, except for the pale skin and blue eyes,” he shrugged, “but that is unmistakable. Did he ever tell you about our meeting?”

“No, my father rarely spoke of his work.”

“I am not surprised, I took him for a modest man. I’ll tell you about it. It was a long time ago and far from here. I was an adventurous youth and wanted to see world. I first went to Khanbalikh (the original site of the Eagle Ordu had become the capital of the Khanate of the Blue Sky and was named for the capital of the old Mongol Empire in the old land), then westward along the Mongol River eventually coming to the Great Western Ocean.

I followed it southward ultimately arriving at the Mexcala River, which I followed inland until I reached the lands of the Tlahuica and visited Cuauhnahuac. There I presented myself to your grandfather who received me quite warmly. Your father and his children were in the north during my visit. I went on to Tlatelolco and met your cousin, John, the Khan at that time, then turned east to visit my kinsmen, Tlapac's family. He was not yet born, of course, but I did get to meet his father and grandfather and the former took me to see the lands of the Maya. I then began to return home, but it was suggested that I visit the islands in the Eastern Sea instead. I agreed and was soon on my way to visit Xaymaca, Cuba, and Aiti before I returned to the mainland. As I was passing through the land of the Timacua, I began to feel ill. By the time I reached the towns of the A'palachi, I had to be carried on a litter. Their shaman was at a loss to help me, but he had heard that a skilled healer was in one of the nearby towns and he sent for him. It proved to be your father. I was delirious with fever when he got to me. I remember seeing a pale face with intense blue eyes that had already seen too much pain looking down on me. He worked on me for days. I would slip in and out of awareness and whenever I awakened he was always there. Needless to say, I recovered, but he left once I was out of danger because he had heard that there was someone else in need of help. When I was able to travel, I went after him to thank him properly, but it took a long time to find him. The person he had left me to help was a very old man who had been accidentally badly wounded by an arrow. He told me John had gone north to help in another town. I finally found that town, but again was too late, because he had gone on to the Snake Ordu. That was out of my way, but I was determined, so I followed. Again I had missed him, but this time, with typical Ordu efficiency, they knew exactly where he had gone and when. I arrived at the small town and found it in the throws of the Zhen plague. I found John and before I could speak, he asked if my party and I had ever had the Zhen plague. I replied that we had and he immediately put us all to work helping with the sick. I realized over the next few days that he didn't remember me; he had no idea of my rank and was consumed with his work. I had never worked so hard in my life as I did in that small village and I will always relish the memory and the man who gave it to me."

"Did you ever make yourself known to him?"

"No, and I forbade my companions to do so, but I heard he was told later by someone at the Snake Ordu."

"To be honest with you, my father was always consumed by his work, he had little time for anything else."

"Is that a criticism?" he seemed surprised.

"Not at all, only an observation. I was by no means neglected and he took personal interest in my education. I am on my way back to Cuauhnahuac now after years among the Ani' Yun'-wiya because he has called me back."

"Ah, the Ani' Yun'-wiya, your relatives Tlapac. Will you also be a healer?"

"No, I have no such talent or interest. My brother, Theodore, is a healer just like my father."

"And you. What will you do with yourself?"

"I think I will join an Ordu and go on campaign in the Khanate of the Clouds," I replied with some misgivings. In truth I had no idea what I wanted to do with myself.

"All young men need a taste of battle, I suppose. I had mine in the Khanate of the Green Mist, but the less said about that the better. Come let us eat now; then you must spend a few days with us."

We had a very tasty meal. The Kadohadacho were not afraid to use the various chilies from the south. The Xinesi spoke at length about many things especially his travels, but he would not talk about his campaign experiences. After our meal he had to attend some duties so Kinahiwi and Tlapac took me with them to see town. I asked them if they had noticed how so many warriors refuse to talk about their campaign experiences. Kinahiwi observed that it was probably so that the young would experience things for themselves without any bias. Tlapac thought it was because the campaign was an unpleasant memory not worth revisiting. They knew of no one in the town who would talk of his campaigning. Both also thought they would go on campaign. Kinahiwi felt he would have to follow his uncle to the Khanate of the Green Mist, since it would be expected. Tlapac, on the other hand, would, like me, serve in the Khanate of the Clouds. He admitted that he was not looking forward to it, but still thought he should go.

I was impressed with his honesty and suggested that perhaps we might join and serve together. He thought that a great idea, although he would not be able to join for a while yet since his father had sent him north on many errands and he was not done yet. I told them what I had learned so far about the southern campaigns and they got out a map and we traced out the various campaigns as best we could with the incomplete map. I slept that night in the same room with my two new friends, and the next day we set off early so we could do a little hunting. While we were on our way into the forest, I asked them if they knew the site of the ancient abandoned town on the Kadohadacho River that my grandfather had mentioned. They considered it a while, and decided that if it was the one they thought it was, it was a few li to the east. I realized I must have gone right by it. They were not inclined to visit it, so I decided to see it another time. I then threw caution to the winds and asked them if they thought their people were better off under the Khanate than they would be had the Mongols never come. Both looked at me with some bewilderment.

“That is a most puzzling question from the grandson of one the Khanate’s founders,” Tlapac finally said.

“I can’t imagine why you would have to ask,” Kinahiwi added, shaking his head in disbelief.

“An old Ani’ Yun’-wiya warrior I met,” I explained, “seemed to think the Khanate had made things too easy by preventing many of the consequences of natural disasters and too hard by forcing the young men to travel so far from home to prove themselves in battle.”

“My unfortunate great-granduncle’s obstinacy might have cost my people many lives had he not died before the great plagues,” Kinahiwi rejoined. “I would not want to contemplate life without the Khanate.”

“Your old warrior,” Tlapac added, “seemed to value little the lives of the very young and the very old. Thanks to the Khanate they do not die of starvation because of a fire, a flood, or a storm. It is true that the southern campaigns take us far from home, but at least we need not worry about our wives and children suffering depredation from some nearby enemy while we are on campaign.”

“I think he felt we have interfered with the will of his god,” I suggested, “and perhaps changed too many of the things he remembered from his youth.”

“Did his god wish his people ill?” Tlapac asked. “If so, he should have been grateful for the intervention. Anyway, things always change and it is foolish to expect them to remain the same.”

I decided to say no more on that subject, but I felt they were too young to really understand or respond to Oganaya’s assertions. We brought back a few deer from our hunt and gave them to the Xinesi’s servants. I spent a few more days with Tlapac and Kinahiwi, then told them I had better get on my way. I took my leave of the Xinesi (he bid me to take his best wishes to my father and gave me a rather large piece of the blue-green stone, called teoxihuitl in Nahuatl, for him). I thanked him for his hospitality and generosity to my father, but he waved it off as if it were nothing adding that in the likely event my father didn’t feel right about accepting it, he could donate it to my cousin, the Khan, for his treasury.

Actually, I suspected that he would keep it before he donated it to the Khan. I took my leave of Tlapac and Kinahiwi before we retired (since I would leave before first light) and urged them to come to visit me in Cuauhnahuac. I awoke early, dressed quietly, and left the sleeping household. I descended to the town square to find a servant holding my two horses and handing me a plate of centli mush for my morning meal. I ate it quickly, thanked him, gave him a small gift for the staff, and mounted up. I turned south on the main road, away from the river. There were already sounds of activity coming from many of the houses as I moved through the city. The sky was just beginning to lighten when I passed the last of the houses and entered the forest.

I had decided to make my way to the Pelican Ordu. Although my brother was no longer there, I thought I might find a talker among so many warriors. The yams along the forest track were interesting. They were always in a clearing near a stream. The houses were of the Kadohadacho style at first, but eventually became rather rude attempts to imitate them. The latter yams were run by members of various other tribes who tried to keep up with their northern neighbors. These were mostly Ishak and Titskan Watitch, but there were a few surprises like a Taunika, a Dinne, and even one who turned out to be a Mongol. This last one proved to be a talker.

His yam was just at the edge of the forest overlooking the Ishak River. I had come out of the forest at dusk about a day's ride north of the Pelican Ordu. Seeing the yam, I decided I had best spend the night there. I presented myself to the manager and an attendant quickly led away my horses. The manager, a short, wrinkled but muscular man with broad shoulders and a trim physique, introduced himself as Nambi. Thinking of my nephew, Aju, I asked if he had been named for a Mongol. He replied that he had, his grandfather.

"Your grandfather was a Mongol?" I asked.

"Yes, as was my father and as am I," he replied patiently.

"I didn't think there were any left," I ventured stupidly.

"When you consider that there were nearly five thousand Mongols and only four Ferengi in the initial migration nearly a hundred years ago, it is far more surprising that there is still a Ferengi than that there is still a Mongol."

I apologized for my lapse of logic and asked him about his family history. Delighted to oblige me, he invited me to share his evening meal while he told his story. His father's father had been named Buri. He and his mother's father (for whom he had been named) were both young men at the time of the migration. They often spoke of the hard passage through the frozen north and always talked of Kaidu with reverence. They had also honored the legendary Givevneu. They looked upon Juchi and the Raven as heroic figures, somehow more than human, although at first they did not trust the pale Raven. The two had taken Mongol brides shortly after they reached the new land. His father, Kamala, had been born at the old Hawk Ordu and his mother, Borte, at the old Eagle Ordu, now called Khanbalikh. His grandfathers had served together at first, but eventually were separated and one, Nambi, went on most of Juchi's expeditions, while the other spent most of his time training recruits at the Owl Ordu. Both took part in all the campaigns in the north. His namesake was killed during Juchi's campaigns in the south; Buri retired from the Ordu and died of old age while running a yam in the north.

His father had also gone on campaign in Anahuac, but he had been with the Antelope Ordu and served under my grandfather Padraig for a while. He was wounded fighting the Texcalla bandits, but had recovered and served in occupation and training for a while. He also took part in the early campaigns for the southern landmass in what became the Khanate of the Green Mist. He got quite ill after five years of campaigning and returned home. He never recovered his former strength and eventually retired to run a yam between the Owl and the Eagle Ordu.

I asked about his experiences and he answered readily. He had been born in the Antelope Ordu after his father had returned from Anahuac. He left for the southern campaign as soon as his father returned. He arrived in the middle of the first campaign east of the Warao River. He was kept behind the lines to train in the delta of the Warao for several months before joining the campaign. He thought that had been a good idea, for it helped him get accustomed to the heat and humidity before he also had to contend with battle. He had become ill during training, but had recovered in a few weeks.

He was sent to the front where the people along the coast called themselves the Locono and the people away from the coast were the Akawai. The former spoke a language related to that of the Taino, although they did not acknowledge any relationship to them. The latter seemed to be a different people, although they looked much like the former. Both pierced ears and nose septums for ornaments and the Akawai also used a labret. Tattooing was common but not excessive. The Locono did indulge in face tattooing. The Locono also used body paint heavily while the Akawai generally only painted their faces. Down feathers were often stuck on the bodies and the Akawai favored sticking them on their foreheads. Hairstyles were quite varied and many wore hats or headbands made of leaves, wicker, or nets and covered with feathers, tassels, knots, or insect wings. They also wore necklaces and leg and armbands, but little else (the Locono women did wear a very short skirt, however).

The houses of both peoples were either round or rectangular with a high-pitched roof made of a wooden frame covered with a thatch of palm leaves. The villages were generally small and widely scattered with perhaps fifty to a hundred usually related people in each. They had no real organization or leadership. Each village had a headman, but his authority was limited and dependent on consent. By the time Nambi had joined the campaign, there was some cooperation among villages and their war parties grew bigger and slightly more effective. Their weapons were the bow, club, and lance. Sometimes they used poison arrows and the Locono used a light shield.

The people were much inclined toward cannibalism and the taking of slaves. The only reasons the campaign took so long were because of all the sickness among the Ordu and the need to use infiltrative tactics in the very difficult terrain.

After this campaign Nambi spent the next three years training the new arrivals. He rejoined the front, as jagun commander while the Zhen plague was raging through the tribes. Progress became quite rapid and he, also, was disgusted with the tactic. He met Oganaya during this time, although the latter was of higher rank and in a different tumen. It was hard to say anything about the people they encountered during the plague years. Those not dead or dying were dispirited and defeated, waiting to die. When this tour ended, he was at the mouth of the Juchi River and he was glad to leave. He returned to the Khanate of the Blue Sky and indulged in the inevitable travel. He spent a long time in the far north especially the lands of the Kensistenoug and the Siksika, eventually marrying one of the latter, Amunis Ahki. (She was a wonderful, warm, cheerful woman who was delighted that I could speak her native language.) He stayed with her people for a few years, and then went with a group of the young Siksika to rejoin the campaign.

Because of his experience, he was made minghan commander and sent right down to join the current campaign. He found them at the easternmost end of the landmass fighting the Tupinamba, Tegulun had told me about. He did not know Tegulun, although he did run into Oganaya again. He left the campaign about a year after the latter, rejoined his wife, and talked her into running a yam with him. She agreed, but insisted that they go south enough to escape the severe winters. They took over this yam from an old Titskan Watitch who wanted to go home to die. I asked him if he had ever lived in a yurt. He laughed and replied he had always lived in one until he left to campaign. Now, however, a man must live in the house of his wife's choice. Amunis Ahki had lived in one of the conical hide tents all her life, but had liked the quasi Kadohadacho house they found here and wanted to live in it. I did not think it wise to ask Nambi if he felt the Mongols were good for the new land.

I moved on the Pelican Ordu the next morning arriving there a little before sundown. I was greeted by a few of the young men who remarkably remembered my visit to the Ordu so long ago. One of them, Halbi, a Pansfalaya, prevailed on me to spend the night with his family. To my surprise, they actually lived in a Pansfalaya house, looking quite out of place amid all the hide tents and scattering of yurts. After dinner Halbi, his younger brothers, and his father, Ofotaska sat around the fire and talked a while. Ofotaska had been in the southern campaigns several years and was now a jagun commander, but he would only talk about battle tactics, not the big picture. Halbi would be leaving for the south in the winter and was all excited about it. I explained that if my father allowed it, I would go on campaign later this year also. They invited me to stay with them a few days and I agreed.

After joining them in a two-day hunt, I wandered around the Ordu a little looking for some old soldiers. There didn't seem to be any except for some Mongols. The other old soldiers all seemed to go home to their birth villages to die. I suspected that would be changing eventually with all the people who had been born at the Ordu and were of mixed tribal ancestry. It occurred to me that these would always be loyal to the Khanate since it was all they knew. Even if they visited their kinsmen, they would feel much more at home with the Ordu than at their parents' villages. Perhaps it was already too late to return to the way things had been, if, indeed, that was actually desirable.

I decided to move on and bid my hosts good-bye, inviting them also to visit me in Cuauhnahuac should they ever find themselves there. I set out early and continued along the Ishak River for a while, but then I turned away before reaching the coast along a little-used but still-visible trail that seemed to be going southwest. There were no yams along this trail and I camped in the forest each night. The second day I found a most promising river and did some fishing in some likely looking pools. I caught several large fish and smoked them. I ate one of them and put the remainder away for the rest of my trip. On the fourth day, I came out of the woods and onto a prairie. There was a warm breeze blowing in from the east and I was sure I could smell the ocean. The trail soon gave out on the prairie and I just continued on a more directly southern track.

I finally came upon a small village of the hide tents. I was welcomed politely and I offered them some of my smoked fish. They were pleased with the gift and gave me some dried ox meat in return. I figured out that they were Titskan Watitch, but I didn't know their language and only one of them knew any Mongol and that not

very well, so we didn't talk much. I left the next morning and turned my track a little east of south so I could get back to the merchant road and the yam system. I reached the road a little before sunset, but since there was no yam in sight, I camped under the stars and ate another of my fish. I reached a small village a little after midday and decided to spend the night. I noticed that there were not many young people in the village, but supposed they were fishing or gathering shellfish. My hosts were rather taciturn.

I continued south staying at yams or small villages along the way. I eventually reached the delta of the Thanuge River. At a village just north of the river, I saw some men landing their catch and recognized it as my favorite fish. I didn't know its name since I had first had it on my trip north at a yam in the Totonac lands. I offered them some of the dried ox meat for one of their fish and they gladly made the trade. I cleaned and salted it quickly and then pushed on, crossing the pontoon bridge across the Thanuge and continuing south on the trade road. Near dusk I came upon a village. It looked like it had once been large, but now most of the houses were abandoned and falling apart. There were still a few people in the town and I saw an old man sitting quietly in front of his house smoking a pipe. I approached and greeted him, then asked if he would like to share my fish, which I held up for him.

"That is most kind of you," he replied in perfect Mongol. Then looking up at me, he rose. "I am Kopte and this is Mayapemes. I have seen a few of your kind before. I could tell you our word for that fish, but there would be no point. Soon, no one will speak our language."

"Why do you say that?" I asked.

"Look around you, what do you see?"

"A village that is being abandoned?"

"Deserted, would be a better word. Our young men leave and do not return. Some go north, some go south, some even go west, but none come back. The youngest man in the village had seen forty summers."

"Where do they go?" I asked, as his wife gave me a big smile, took the fish and went off to fix it.

"To the various Ordu. It is not an easy life, but it is more agreeable than this one. I should know. I, too, went to the Ordu, but I returned."

"Did you go on campaign?"

"Of course. It was far away in a damp, fetid place against an innocent people who had done me and mine no harm."

"What was it like?"

"Unpleasant."

"Was it in the Khanate of Clouds?"

"I don't really know. It was south and east of here, far away."

"Do you know what people you fought?"

"Naked people who wore feathers."

"Do you regret going on campaign?" It was obvious Kopte was unaware of the big picture, but I thought he might be of a philosophical bent.

"I regret taking part in the destruction of my own people."

"Do you think your people would be better off had the Mongols never come this way?"

"Perhaps. But then perhaps another people like them would have come instead. The Mongols may have saved us from a worse fate, or they may be our worse fate. Who can say? And what can I do about it anyway?"

"If the Khanate would be overthrown, would your people be better off?"

"What a strange question. Are you not related to the Khan in Anahuac?"

“Yes, he’s my cousin.”

“What do you think would happen to you and your family if your Khanate was overthrown?”

“I don’t know. I suppose we would be exiled.”

“You are very young and must have lived a very sheltered life. You and yours would all be killed, along with your servants and anyone who supported you or was vaguely related to you. The new Khan would not want any pretenders from the family of the old Khan.”

“But what if the whole system were overthrown, and all the people went back to what they had before?”

“No one who overthrew the Khanate would be able to resist having such power himself. If he did, someone else would not. There would be war until one ended up on top. That is the way of the world.”

“But it doesn’t have to be.”

“It is.”

“Anyway, do you think your people would be better off?”

“Hardly. No one would be better off in a general war. My people are scattered among the Ordu. They would bear the brunt of the fighting. When the smoke settled in Anahuac, the Blue Sky would swoop down and conquer it all back anyway. Our remnant would find itself in the way and would be swept aside. It would only hasten our disappearance.”

Just then his wife brought in the fish along with some of the flat centli bread called tlaxcalli in Nahuatl. She had prepared the fish flawlessly and we all ate with great pleasure. I decided that Kopte was too resigned to his fate to see the possibilities that would follow from the dissolution of the Khanate. Of course, it would be best if all four were overthrown at the same time, but I thought that if one went, the others would soon follow. I was an idiot. As I prepared to leave the next morning, Kopte fixed me with an intent look.

“The only thing more foolish than not learning from the past, is trying to return to it,” he said forcefully. “It is good to be young. It is bad to be foolish.”

I politely thanked him for his advice and thanked his wife for preparing the fish the night before. As I rode off I pondered what the old man had said, but was still convinced that it was possible to undo the past no matter what he said. I was sure time would prove me right. It didn’t.

I stuck with the merchant trail and the yam system for a while until I crossed into the greener Huasteca lands. The first Huasteca yam I came upon was just outside a small village. The owner was a Huasteca and like most of his fellows was friendly, considerate, generous, and inscrutable. At mealtime we discussed the weather, the crops, and the hunting. He artfully turned away any other subject I tried to broach. After the third such evening, I got it in my head to turn west and go home through the wild and rugged Ralamari lands. I spent the first night in the open just on the western side of the little range of hills that bisected the Huasteca lands. I continued across the western valley and picked up a southwesterly path heading for the mountains and the Ralamari. Dusk found me far from any settlement, so I camped for the night. While I was eating supper, a small group of men came in to my camp. I offered them some of my smoked fish. They thanked me and we all sat down by the fire to eat. One went to get some water at a nearby stream. Something hit me on the head and I blacked out.

7

Journey Home, 91 K

(NE MX to Cuernavaca, MX, 1459)

When I came around I had a bad headache, but that was only the first problem I detected. It was also apparent that I was blindfolded, bound hand-and-foot, and draped over the back of a horse that was moving along some rather rugged terrain. The unnatural position left me sore all over and getting more so as the animal continued movement. At length we came to a halt and I could see through my blindfold that there was a nearby fire. I heard some talk, but it was in a dialect that sounded something like Maya, although not enough that I could

understand it. Finally, I was taken off the horse and unceremoniously thrown on the ground. Someone reached down and cut my bonds with a knife. I then pulled off my blindfold. I was surrounded by perhaps a dozen men. They were Huasteca from the look of them. I noticed the men who had joined me for supper among them. The apparent leader, taller than the rest and perhaps thirty years old, was looking at me and shaking his head with a look of disgust on his face.

“You are the son of John, the healer?” he asked me in perfect Nahuatl.

“Yes, I am,” I replied, beginning to wonder if my brothers were ever so recognized.

“Are you in the service of the Khan or of an Ordu?”

“No.”

“What were you doing where you were found?”

“I am on my way home after spending some years with the Ani’ Yun’-wiya. I decided to go through the lands of the Ralamari instead of staying with the merchant road. Apparently, that was a mistake?”

“Yes, and it should have been a fatal one. However, I am in your father’s debt, so I can hardly allow any harm to come to you.”

“Are you bandits?”

“No, we are patriots. We are struggling to free our people from the yoke of the Khanate. You may call me Balam. What is your name?”

“Karl, but I am called Cacalotl.” (Crow in Nahuatl)

“A tall, fair-skinned, blue-eyed boy with reddish brown hair is named after a medium-sized black bird with a black beak. Is it a joke?”

“No, it was because Karl sounds like the call of a crow, and my grandfather, who was also named Karl was called the Raven.”

“Of course, a short, fair-skinned, blue-eyed man with brown hair named after a large black bird with a black beak. Don’t bother explaining it to me. If you want to be called Crow, I’ll call you Crow.”

“Did you know my grandfather? You can’t be old enough.”

“All Huasteca know your grandfather. His image is burned into our brain, complete with his scaly armor and snake helmet.”

“What do you plan to do with me?”

“What can I do? You will be returned to the merchant road on which you will remain until you reach your home. Not all patriots are indebted to your father.”

“There are more of you?”

“Yes, of course. Do you think there are only twelve patriots in all Huasteca lands?”

“Are you patriots united under one leader or just independent, scattered small bands?”

“I think you know as much about us as is wise already.”

“Why would you want to attack people traveling across your land?”

“At least you admit it is our land. That is refreshing from a Mongol. We attack any foreigners we find on our land as well as any of our people who ally themselves with the Mongols.”

“Do you want the Khanate to be overthrown?”

“I don’t really care. I just want them out of Huasteca lands. It doesn’t matter how that comes about.”

“How could that ever happen unless the Khanate were overthrown?”

“The overthrow of the Khanate would only help if it were not replaced by a similar regime. Being ruled by a Tlatoani is no better than being ruled by a Khan.”

“Don’t you think you could better your chances for that end if you got in contact with the other major tribes and worked together?”

“What have you been learning in the north? Is there such a movement there?”

“No, but I have talked to people who think the world would be better off without the Khanate.”

“It might, but I am not concerned with the world, only my people.”

“But the Khanate will hunt you down unless they are preoccupied with general revolts all over Anahuac. You need to work with the other tribes to plan a general uprising.”

“That may be helpful, but we will not work with anyone. We don’t trust anyone. If we were to contact Totonac malcontents, they would be more likely to turn us over to the Khanate for any proffered reward than work in concert with us. The Ralamari would simply kill us outright. We have never gotten along with our neighbors.”

“As I remember, my grandfather wrote that your cities fought against each other all the time, and never worked together against his invasion.”

“That is true. But now our allegiance is less scattered and some of us are prepared to work together for our independence.”

“Do you think you will recapture your old way of life if you succeed?”

“Our old way of life included fighting each other as well as our neighbors. Why would we want to go back to that?”

“I was thinking more in terms of your culture, arts, religion, things like that.”

“The Mongols never suppressed those things, although they did end some of our sacrifices. We just want to decide for ourselves what is best for us without any deference to foreigners. We also do not wish to take part in wars far from our home against people who have done us no harm to benefit other people far away who have done us no good.”

“It is just that if you alone revolt against the Khanate, you will be easily wiped out.”

“Really? Then why are we still very much alive after four years?”

“Four years! You mean the Khanate has not moved against you?”

“Not seriously. Your Khan is a weak ruler; he invites revolt. We don’t have to worry about general revolts, they will come.”

“I hope so. I think the Khanate has done more harm than good.”

“If you will take a bit of advice, young Crow, you and your family are unlikely to survive a general revolt. You should not be encouraging it. In fact, you should be very much against it.”

“One should always support that in which he believes no matter what the consequences.”

“You have much to learn. Farewell. I hope you survive to see your father. If you do, give him my regards. Kan, here, speaks Nahuatl. He will take you back to the merchant trail.”

Kan stepped forward and fitted me with a blindfold again. He explained that it would be best if I had no idea where I was. I was helped up on my horse and we started out. I decided it would be best if I not speak while I was blindfolded, so we went along in silence in the dark. I could tell that we were going along winding paths generally downhill for some time, and then we seemed to hit a level straight path for a while. I dozed off at this point. I awoke in front of a small campfire in full daylight. My blindfold was off, but Kan was still with me.

“You fell off your horse, so I made camp. I was surprised the fall didn’t wake you.”

“Where are we?”

“Near the merchant road. You should be able to rest in a yam tonight.”

“May I ask why you are named for a day in the Tzolkin calendar?”

“It is a code name. You are familiar with the Maya calendars?”

“Yes, I learned Maya before I left Cuauhnahuac. Is Balam (the Maya word for the large spotted cat called ocelotl in Nahuatl) also a code name?”

“Of course. Do you understand Huasteca?”

“No, it only vaguely resembles the Maya I learned.”

“Who taught you the Maya language?”

“It was a man from Chalco.”

“You probably won’t understand Maya unless it is written then.”

We broke camp and continued toward the southeast. I noticed we were on a little used trail that led back toward the ridge that bisected the northern part of the Huasteca lands. True to his word, we reached the merchant road around midday and he bid me farewell. Once he was well out of sight, I looked through my things, and to my surprise, nothing was missing. They had even replaced the fish I had shared with my captors the previous evening. I continued south along the road and as I had been assured came upon a yam a short distance north of the Huasteca River, the northern branch of the main river in the land, which had been named the Panuco River.

The man who ran the yam was a typically taciturn Huasteca who said almost nothing to me. There were some other guests, however, who were interesting. One was a smooth, eloquent Maya merchant named Ah Chan, who assured me that my Maya was excellent. I could tell that he was only being kind, however, because I had a hard time understanding him. He insisted that it was only because he had injected so much merchant jargon into his language that no doubt his own mother would have a hard time understanding him. He missed his calling; he should have been a courtier or an ambassador. Another guest was a Hotcangara merchant named Wangapee, a cheerful, joking sort who told ridiculous stories of his adventures. The last was Penuname, a Menominiwok ininiwok courier attached to the Owl Ordu. He was on his way back from taking dispatches to my cousin, Khan Henry. I had never met anyone from his tribe before and asked him about them. He said they were not much different from the Anishinabe, their northern and western neighbors, but tended to serve only in the nearby Ordu.

I separately asked all three if they thought the Khanate had been good for their people. Ah Chan was the most effusive. He felt that the Khanate was a fabulous boon to trade and travel. He could go almost anywhere in the Khanate without paying for an armed escort as his grandfather had found necessary. His family traded as far away as the Khanates of the Clouds and the Green Mist. In fact, he had relatives living in the former. The Putun Maya had grown fabulously wealthy thanks to the Mongols.

Wangapee also thought that the Khanate had been very good to merchants. He did not feel his people had fared so well under the Mongols, however. He reminded me that his people had been badly mauled in the very first campaign undertaken by the Mongols and had been crushed again in a second campaign. Still, the Mongols had made his people strong again and there was little enmity anymore. Of course, since they had been the most powerful people in the north at one time, one could only speculate what might have been had the Mongols never come.

Penuname felt that the Mongols opened up great opportunities to his people. Some of the older folks resented the gradual changes that had occurred since they joined the Mongols. It is very hard to distinguish between the tribes of the lake country anymore, since they all dressed and adorned themselves the same way and there was so much intermarriage between the tribes. But he was certain all older people resisted change. He knew his people were always respected and honored in the Ordu and he was proud to be a part of the Khanate. I asked if he had ever gone on campaign. He would only say that he had. It was beginning to look like there was hardly a groundswell of revolutionary fervor in the Khanates.

Before I left, I asked the young Huasteca who brought me my horses if he knew of the patriots in the western hills. He looked at me in complete bewilderment and asked if I was talking about the Ralamari. I told him that I was referring to Huasteca patriots who were trying to free his people from the Khanate. Had I four heads and wings, he could not have looked upon me with more wonder. He had never heard of such a thing and couldn't imagine any Huasteca would be involved in such activity. He assured me that it must be evil Totonac infiltrators trying to bring the wrath of the Khanate upon the innocent Huasteca. He urged me to tell the Khan that his people were loyal to a man. What bothered me was that he really seemed to be sincere. I even looked back at him a couple of times expecting to find him snickering, but he continued to watch me with earnest concern. Of course, he was just a simple servant at a yam, he probably wasn't aware of anything beyond the perimeter of the yam, but I had to wonder if Balam and his friends had any local support.

I continued south, crossing the Huasteca River and then the Panuco River and carefully staying on the merchant road. The road passed near the city of Panuco, which had surrendered to my grandfather without a fight. I decided to go on in and have a look at the city. (He had not actually visited the city during his campaign, but had merely camped outside it.) It was large and very colorful. All the houses were painted brightly in stark colors. I made my way to the center of the city. The main square was also large but in the center was a major surprise to me. They had erected a wall perhaps thirty feet long, twenty feet high and three feet thick. On it was carved and painted a representation of Grandfather and Smoking Mirror much as they must have appeared on the day Panuco surrendered. Both were mounted on horses and in full-feathered regalia. They had pink and red feather headdresses and green and yellow feather cloaks. Their armor showed resplendently silver under the feathers. Smoking Mirror's obsidian foot was actually a piece of obsidian attached to the stone. Grandfather's face and hands were a bit too pink, but his eyes were a deep blue and his hair brown. In front of them was a Mongol on foot carrying Grandfather's black-feathered flag. It was a stunning representation and I stared at it for some time. I wondered if Balam was from Panuco.

"A noble monument to your grandfather, eh?" a tall man next to me said. "I am Kikthawenund, a merchant from the north. You must be the Crow, son of John the Healer and grandson of The Raven."

"Yes, I am," I replied. "You are Leni lenape, perhaps?"

"Indeed, you have a keen eye, young Crow. Come, I am staying with a friend in this city; he will be honored to entertain you also."

As we went to his friend's house, he told me that he had met my father in Tenochtitlan just before he left and my father had asked that he keep an eye out for me and urge me to stop dawdling and hurry on home. I asked if there was a problem, but he assured me that it was only because my father wanted to go on a long journey as soon as I had returned and been settled. I found that rather annoying, but I suppose to his mind he was delaying his first responsibility to deal with his second, me. On the other hand, he was right, I was dawdling and was rather enjoying doing so.

Kikthawenund stopped at a very brightly painted house just south of the main square and, turning my horses over to a servant, took me in to meet our host. The latter turned out to be Yquingare, a Purepecha of all things. I had never met one and was startled to see the total lack of hair on his face and head, just as Grandfather had described them. It was odd that they had not changed their peculiar practices, as had most other tribes, but then Yquingare was an older man, perhaps sixty years old and the older ones tend to resist change.

He greeted me warmly, thanking me for allowing him to offer his hospitality. Kikthawenund excused himself so he could complete some business. Yquingare ushered me through a large room containing cane furniture and into an interior courtyard open to the air with many blooming flowers in pots of soil. He took me to some wooden benches that were in the shade and offered me a cool drink of chocolatl. I had not had it cold before and it was quite pleasant.

"How do you like your grandfather's portrait? It doesn't quite do him justice, does it?"

"I only knew him as a very old white-haired man. I read a description of his appearance before Panuco, but I had not imagined the costume to be so resplendent."

“Yes, it is quite a costume. When he conquered my people, he wore only the armor. It was enough, though, he was still impressive.”

“You can’t be old enough to remember that campaign. It was about seventy years ago.”

“No, I am not that old, but my father told me about it, and I saw your grandfather when he was Khan. He wore his snake armor on special occasions, when he reviewed the Ordu. He never wore the feathers, but they were on display in the palace. Perhaps you have seen them?”

“I haven’t been to the palace, yet,” I shook my head. “Father never took me there as a boy, and I have been away in the north for some years.”

“No doubt, that oversight will be remedied when you get home. Be sure and look for the display. It is very impressive.”

“How is it that you live here in Panuco?”

“My home and family were destroyed by a volcano some years ago. I felt betrayed by the land of my birth, so I left it never to return. I settled here because it is warm and pleasant, full of beauty and, most important, free of volcanoes. Now that I am too old to travel and too rich to need to do so, I stay here.”

“Have you ever heard of a group of Huasteca who call themselves Patriots?”

“Patriots?”

“Yes, they are trying to drive the Khanate out of Huasteca lands, but they also seem to be against all foreigners. They captured me in the western hills and would have killed me had not their leader been indebted to my father.”

“You will find there are a lot of people indebted to your father. But I have not heard of these ‘patriots’ and hope I never do again. What were you doing in the western hills?”

“I thought I would return through the Ralamari lands.”

“The Ralamari lands are very rugged, very dry and very dangerous. Do you have a death wish, young Crow?”

“No, I didn’t realize it was dangerous, I just wanted to see something different.”

“Stay on the merchant road. There is still, as you have seen, some banditry off the road. It is a holdover from the four years of famine on the high plateau. The Ordu have been busy shuttling grain up from the coast, but they have recently turned their attention to the bandits and should soon wipe them out so that a reckless boy like you can explore the dangerous country.”

“The leader of the patriots said that Khan Henry was weak and that the Khanate would be torn apart with revolts.”

“Khan Henry is kind and merciful, not weak. I think he is the best Khan since your grandfather. I think the leader was engaging in wishful thinking. Except for the Maya, who would rather revolt than eat and perhaps the Mixteca who are almost as bad, there is no general revolt in the wind.”

“Do you think your people are better off under the Khanate?”

“The Purepecha? Who can say? We were an odd people, always at war with our neighbors. We lost most of our army in the conquest, but have flourished since then and are among the richest people in the Khanate. Our worst enemy is the land with its earthquakes and volcanoes, and when they strike, who helps us? The Khanate. I would have to say that on the whole, we are better off. Why do you ask?”

“I have met some people in the north who feel that they would have been better off had the Khanate never been established and wondered how widespread that opinion was.”

“That is rather like feeling you would be better off had you been born to wealthy parents. Perhaps you would have had an easier life, and perhaps envious enemies would have killed your parents and sold you into slavery. Who knows? And since it isn’t the case, why speculate? It is the exercise of a fool.”

“They all seem to resent going so far from home to fight a people who have done them no harm, to the benefit of the southern Khanates who have done them no good.”

“I have never fought a battle, and no one ever asked me to. Joining the Ordu and going on campaign is voluntary. If they don’t like it, they need not do it. With what sort of whining malcontents have you been wasting your time?”

“Many tribes feel that if they do not go on campaign, they are not fully men. They need to prove themselves to hold up their heads among their people.”

“I see. They would rather kill their neighbors, who in turn will retaliate and perhaps kill their wives and children. But all is well, because they did not have to go far from home and they are killing real enemies to their own benefit. Why do you humor fools?”

“But the tribes are losing their identity and culture and becoming a homogeneous imitation of the Mongols, a group of refugees from far away who came uninvited and forced all to submit to their rule.”

“Why did the Mongols leave their own land?”

“I think they were driven out by the Hanjen.”

“Why were they driven out by the Hanjen?”

“Well, if I remember right, they had originally conquered the Hanjen, but the latter chaffed under their rule and eventually drove them out. Kaidu decided to disappear rather than take part in the final futile battle.”

“Your history is a little flawed. The Mongols did not integrate with the Hanjen, but always treated them as inferiors to be despised and oppressed. The Hanjen were very enterprising and soon found a leader adequate to throw off the Mongol yoke. Kaidu learned from his people’s mistake and integrated with the people of the land and treated them with fairness (on the whole) and respect. The Khanate does not oppress or tax heavily and they give us all peace, safety, and even protection from natural disasters. There is no rational impetus to revolt. None of us would be better off without the Khanate. You should read your grandfather’s book on the founding of the Khanate.”

“But is it not better for people to decide their own fate without any outside interference?” I was embarrassed that I had no idea my grandfather had written such a book, so I quickly shifted argument.

“Perhaps. But it has never been thus. There is always a stronger tribe ready to pounce on a weaker one. That is the way of the world. As it happens, in our case the stronger tribe was benign in the long run, and we are much better off.”

I was, of course, still not satisfied with Yquingare’s flawless arguments, but decided I would not discuss the matter further with him and switched the subject to the Huasteca and what it was like to live among them. He found them very thoughtful, generous, and kind, although they were rather taciturn and reserved. Eventually Kikthawenund rejoined us and we had a pleasant supper while he regaled us with tales of his adventures. It was obvious he was embellishing his stories, but he did so with such charm it didn’t matter. The best one was about a huge sea monster that had been washed up on the shore not far south of Raven Bay on the western coast of the Blue Sky Khanate. He said it was shaped like an octopus but its tentacles were as thick as the body of a man and at least thirty feet long. What an imagination!

The next morning Kikthawenund and I bid our host farewell and rode out of the city together. I asked him if he knew my friend Lapahnihe, but he did not. He had, of course, heard of the great leader Gelelemend. The latter had firmly cemented his tribe to the Khanate. I asked if he thought that was for the best and he assured me it was. Indeed, the Khanate was the best thing that ever came along for his people. I still wasn’t convinced. We parted at the merchant road, and he urged me to hurry along home as my father had requested. I assured him I would. My interest was piqued about Grandfather’s book. I had always thought that my father had all of my grandfather’s books and I had read (or at least looked at) all of them. I decided I would have to read them all again once I got back, and try to find the missing one.

I stayed on the merchant road and spent the nights in the yams the rest of the way. Since my father was in a hurry, I didn't tarry at all. I did run into other travelers in the yams, but all were merchants who would not (in my opinion) give me an honest answer about the Khanate. Of the people that ran the yams, the Huasteca and later on the Otomi would say little at all and never offer an opinion on anything. The Totonaca were very friendly and garrulous but never politically opinionated (at least not in front of me). I couldn't say how they honestly felt about anything. Once I reached the high plateau and Texcalla, I expected something different, but instead it seemed that Otomi ran most of the yams. There was one exception, however. I had bypassed all the cities of the plateau and arrived at a yam just east of the pass between the two volcanoes that would take me to Anahuac. This yam was about half a day's ride from Cholula, and I expected to find another Otomi in charge, but instead found a Texcalla. He was of at least middle years (but perhaps prematurely aged), short, wiry, and dark skinned. All I could tell when I first saw him was that he was not Otomi. He had the intense eyes of one not accustomed to keeping his own counsel. He did not disappoint. He greeted me politely but with a knowing smirk. I asked if he was the only yam keeper on the plateau who was not an Otomi.

"What makes you think I am not an Otomi?"

"I've known Otomi all my life; you simply don't look like one."

"Well, I am not," he shrugged. "But I am not the only one, there are some Mixteca to the east beyond Cholula. You have come from the north, I take it?"

"Yes, I am returning after several years among the Ani' Yun'-wiya."

"You picked a good time to be gone. Are these Ani' Yun'-wiya one of the tribes of the Blue Sky?"

"Yes, they are near the southern terminus of the eastern mountain range of that Khanate."

"I am not familiar with the geography of the north. Why were you sent there?"

"It is a custom in my family to spend some formative years in the north to prevent becoming jaded."

"And did this exile prevent you from becoming jaded?"

"Only my father could answer that. Where are you from?"

"I am Texcalla, my name is Aztahua. You are the son of John the Healer of Cuauhnahuac."

"Yes, I suppose it is nice to always be recognized."

"Only if it is for your own merit."

"Do I detect a little hostility?"

"Why should I be hostile? It isn't your fault that your grandfather's efforts reduced my family from rulers to innkeepers. It isn't your fault that your parents never had to hide in the brush living on leaves and twigs through much of their youth, followed by scrounging around trying to make a living off the rough unyielding soil of a mountainside, watching their parents age decades in years and die a miserable poverty-stricken death unattended and unmourned. It isn't your fault that I had to work as a slave for the vile Cholula peasant who ran this yam until he mercifully died without issue, leaving me this pesthole. How have I seemed hostile?"

"Could it be that I have finally found someone who would like to see the Khanate overthrown?"

"Whatever gave you that idea?"

"I have spoken to some people in the north who felt that it would be best had the Khanate never been established. I also met a band of Huasteca who are in open revolt against the Khanate. But, even though I inquired, I found no other interest in getting rid of the Khanate until I heard your diatribe."

"When did I say I wanted to get rid of the Khanate?"

"How else could you be restored to your rightful station in life?"

"Perhaps this is my rightful station in life. That is for the gods to determine and me to accept."

“I don’t blame you for being careful, but I assure you, I, too, am in favor of overthrowing the yoke of the Mongols.”

“Why?”

“I feel people should be able to decide for themselves how they live without any interference from outsiders.”

“Really?”

“Yes. I want each tribe to be able to decide how they want to be ruled, what they want to believe, how they want to relate to their neighbors, what language they want to speak, how they want to regulate merchants, in other words, I want all people to be free.”

“Very noble. How would removing the Khanate accomplish this?”

“Well, it is only the first step. Next each tribe would have to agree to leave their neighbors in peace. Then each people could develop their own culture freely and fully.”

“That’s nice. And you think that it’s possible?”

“Of course. It is for the best and anyone can see that.”

“I think it is safe to say that you are perhaps the biggest fool to ever stay at this yam. But I suspect that you are a sincere fool.”

“I am sincere, but I’m no fool. I thought that if I helped the overthrow I could secure exile for my family instead of death. But even if I can’t, I have to do what is right.”

“I see,” he studied me intently for a while. “Well, if you really feel that way, then go to market in Tlatelolco and ask for the vendor of cactli (sandals) whose name is Oztooa. When you find him, ask him for amatl anecuyotl (paper of destiny). He will tell you where to go. If he hesitates, tell him Xococ Yolotl sent you. You and I will speak no more of this.”

I was excited to think that I was now part of a conspiracy. I had trouble sleeping that night, but finally drifted off thinking of the new age of freedom that soon would dawn for the entire world. True to his word, Aztahua said no more to me about revolution, but became as taciturn as any Otomi. I eagerly mounted up after a light breakfast and was soon on my way up the pass. Even though it was now mid spring, it was rather cold when I got above the tree line. There was actually snow on the ground, although it was not deep. I had to fight a bitter wind near the summit of the pass and was quite relieved to reach the tree line on the far side by midafternoon. I spent the night in a yam near Amecameca, run as usual by an Otomi. The merchant road was not a direct route to Cuauhnahuac. It first went northwest to the cities along the southern shore of Lake Texcoco. Near Chalco, one branch heads north to the cities along the eastern shore of the lake, near Tulyehualco; there was a branch that crossed a causeway over the lake and led to Culhuacan, Iztapalapa and Tenochtitlan; then, near Tlapan, it branched north along the western shore of the lake and south into the mountains toward Cuauhnahuac. I took the branch that led south. I reached the town called Coaxomulco near dusk and decided to spend the night rather than try the last several li in the dark.

Early the next morning, I set out on the winding trail through the mountains. It was quite pleasant and warm and the air was clear with a hint of pine. I passed some people who greeted me warmly and welcomed me home. I didn’t recognize them, but I assumed they didn’t really know me, just my father. Even though it had served me well, I was beginning to resent being recognized all over the Khanates as his son. Near midday I turned off the merchant road to the road that led to my house. Finally, I entered the compound and rode up to the house. Everything seemed smaller than I remembered it. A young servant, whom I didn’t recognize, ran up to take away the horses. I got my pack off one of the horses and carried it into the house. Suddenly I heard an unmistakable shriek of greeting from Cuauhtzin, followed by a stream of obscenities in Otomi and the hearty laughter of Tetl. Tetl ran in to greet me.

“It had to be you,” he laughed. “You must come and salute your little friend. He is in your old room.”

“Father let him back in the house?”

“No, your father had to go to Tepoztlan. He should be back soon. I’ll send word that you have come at last.”

“Don’t. He’ll probably send for me to help with the sick.” I picked up Cuauhtzin and hugged him gently. He couldn’t stand still, but had to hop up on my head, then on my shoulder, then on Tetl’s arm, then back to me, all the while making little peeping noises, occasionally punctuated with an earsplitting shriek and a stream of Otomi.

“No, there is only one sick man. He won’t require your help.”

“I heard I was holding up another of his great journeys.”

“Ah my little Crow, you have not only grown tall and handsome, but bitter also. Did you not enjoy your relatives in the north?”

“Of course, I did. I had a wonderful time. It is just that I am everywhere recognized as his son, everyone seems to hold him in veneration, and yet he urges me to hurry back so he can be done with me and go on about his business. I feel the ‘great man’ is a poor parent.”

“I see. Well since my father was not famous or even infamous, I have not suffered your notoriety. We Otomi tend to be easily ignored.”

“Why is that, Tetl? Why don’t the Otomi revolt and drive all the interlopers out of their plateau?”

“We are not natural fighters. We are farmers and farmers are usually conquered by warriors. So it is, but in the end, we continue to farm, so in a way, we win.”

“Do you think the Otomi would be better off without the Khanate?” Cuauhtzin finally settled down on my arm and I helped him preen.

“No.”

“But why?”

“We are treated well and with respect by the Mongols. It was never thus before.”

“But what if you could rule yourselves again?”

“In this valley, you either rule or you are ruled. We do not wish to rule others, so they will rule us.”

“But it doesn’t have to be that way.”

“The earth doesn’t have to shake, but it does.”

I dropped the subject, but I resolved to speak for Otomi rights in the revolutionary movement, and felt quite pleased with myself. Tetl and I talked over what had happened while we were apart. My father had spent very little time at home while I was away and had been traveling extensively in the west and north, very rugged land. It seemed he was planning to go to the southeast once I was settled. My sister Sarah and her husband were now living in Chalco. Ignace was on campaign in the Khanate of the Clouds and Theodore was on a journey to the south. He was expected back in a few weeks. Sarah and Tepeyolotl would be coming by for a visit any day now. Cuauhtzin would not let me put him down, so I carried him about the compound while Tetl showed me the changes in my absence and introduced me to the newer servants. We seemed to have fewer horses, but more land in cultivation. There were no crops, of course, just a plethora of plants with some sort of medicinal value. Tetl offered to identify them for me, but I really wasn’t interested. We seemed to have acquired a larger flock of the large bird called huehxolotl in Nahuatl and had two odd-looking animals about the size of a large dog. Tetl said they were goats. I remembered Grandfather mentioning them in his book, but had never seen one before. While we were eating our evening meal, word came from my father that he would be home the next day. When I retired for the night everything felt so strange, but I loved hearing Cuauhtzin little contented noises, and finally drifted off to sleep.

(Mexico City, 1459)

I awakened fairly early and cleaned up after Cuauhtzin. I had forgotten what a job that was. Then I wheeled his stand to “our” little house away from main house. He had no intention of leaving my shoulder, of course, but I tried. I walked around the compound drinking in all the barely familiar sights. Eventually, I walked over to the kitchen house and shared a couple of tlaxcalli and a piece of fruit with Cuauhtzin. Tetl came in and told me that my father had already come and was in his workroom. He prudently took Cuauhtzin. I wandered over to my father’s workroom. When I was a child, I used to enjoy all the strange smells of his various herbs, but I had always been afraid to step into the room unless he was there. I remember thinking there had been too much fear in our relationship and that was now ended.

The door was ajar and a rather pungent waft greeted me as I entered. My father had his back to me and was bent over a metate, grinding some sort of dried plant to a powder. As I approached, I noticed that he was definitely shorter than I, and that gave me no little satisfaction. I also noticed that, as usual, he was so engrossed in his work that he didn’t notice me. Rolling my eyes, I went over to the lone chair in the room and sat down, waiting to see how long it would take him to notice me.

“It would have been more polite of you to greet me before sitting down,” he said, his back still to me.

“I didn’t want to interrupt,” I stammered.

“You mean you thought I was so wrapped up in my work I didn’t notice you come in and you thought you’d wait and see how long it took me to notice you.”

“Exactly.” I was embarrassed, but decided to meet him head on.

“Good,” he turned toward me. “Communication is greatly facilitated by honesty. Stand up. Let me look at you.”

“I’ve grown,” I announced proudly as I rose and lowered my gaze to meet his.

“Yes, I can see that. I thought you’d end up tall like your mother’s family. I suspect that held you in good stead with our Ani’ Yun’-wiya cousins. Did you learn the ‘little war’ while you were there?”

“Yes, but I left before I could play a real game.”

“Good, you would probably have been half killed.”

“I don’t know, I think I’m rather good.”

“Well, in that case you would have been killed outright. The arrogant ones are always the first to fall. I received reports on your progress and am quite satisfied with all I heard. I understand you had a good experience on your vision quest. Don’t forget about it, it will guide you and help you throughout your life if you let it. Now, what took you so long getting here?”

“I wanted to look around a little on my way back. Your letter did not suggest there was any urgency.”

“Yes, that was an oversight. So, tell me, what do you want to do with yourself? Have you and your guide decided on any particular career?”

“I think I should join an Ordu and go on campaign.”

“You’re not too young for that; in fact, you might be considered a bit old. Most of the boys go when they’re sixteen. Are you sure you want to do that? I don’t remember you showing particular prowess with any weapons, except perhaps the bow. Iskagua mentioned you had been most attentive of some older warriors. Did they inspire you to go on campaign?”

“Partly, although most of them would not talk about it. I have managed to piece together a good idea of the campaigns in the southern Khanates by asking questions.”

“The campaigns interest you? Do you want to write a history of them like your grandfather wrote of his campaigns?”

“Perhaps. But mostly I want to understand them myself. I want to picture them clearly in my mind.”

"I'm afraid you would have to be on the commander's staff to get any clear picture of a campaign. Soldiers in the ranks rarely have any idea what is going on around them. To that end, I won't be able to help you. I have no influence in the Khanate of the Clouds since that creature George took over. I'm afraid if you go on campaign, you will have to work your way up through the ranks."

"I'm prepared to do that. I can work on my weapon skills for a year and then volunteer to go on campaign."

"Very well," he sighed heavily. "At least I can help you a little. The former head of the Khan's Guard is named Acolmiztli. He now spends his time training local youth, so they will have enough weapon skills to join an Ordu. The Khan has given him use of an old calmecac just north of the palace. He is originally from Texcoco and a good dependable man. I'll take you to meet him in a few days and he will see to it that you have the skills you need to survive on campaign, if you are sure that is what you want to do."

"You disapprove of my decision?"

"Disapprove, no, but I would have wished you another choice. I have been on campaigns and I understand those who do not wish to speak of it. War is an ugly business: the loser is dead and the victor is scarred for life. Still, we all must follow our destiny wherever it takes us. I hope this path you choose serves you well."

"I never knew you went on campaign."

"I never spoke of it in your presence. It was before you were born. I was with your uncle Theodore during the time of the Zhen plague. After it abated, I went along on campaign to help with the sick."

"That must have been after you helped Cocatli."

"Who?"

"Cocatli. He was a merchant who took me from the Snake Ordu to the Panther Ordu to visit Mathilde. You saved him from a fever and he gave you one of the quetzalitzli stones."

"I don't remember that one. Was there anything special about the fever?"

"He just said that it was strange and you saved his life."

"Well it was kind of him to remember me."

"If you saved his life, how could he forget you?"

"Gratitude is a rare thing, Karl, never look for it. Do things because you want to, not because they will earn you gratitude."

"Not so rare, the Xinesi of the Kadohadacho also is in your debt and sent a piece of teoxihuitl for you. I also bring you greetings from a Huasteca bandit who calls himself, Balam."

He remembered neither encounter, and again cautioned me about expecting gratitude. He was appalled at the size of the teoxihuitl the Xinesi had sent, but decided he would sell it so that he could contribute to my upkeep at the calmecac and make it easier for his friend Acolmiztli to help me. He urged me to rest up from my journey and let him finish up his medicines. We would go to Tlatelolco in a few days. I left pleased that I would be able to take part in the revolution from within reach of the palace. I was so caught up in my plans, I forgot all about rereading my grandfather's books and looking for the one I had missed.

In the late afternoon, my sister Sarah and her husband Tepeyolotl arrived with their five children. The eldest daughter, Teypachtli, was about eleven years old at that time, next was another daughter, Chipilotl who was nine years old, then the three boys, Icpitl, Iztacyochitl, and John who were six, three, and a year old, respectively. They were wonderful children, full of fun, just like their parents. Sarah and Tepeyolotl made a big fuss over how big and handsome I had become; then they regaled me with all their travel tales and brought me up to date on all the children. They also plied me with innumerable questions about my time with the Ani' Yun'-wiya and Sarah asked after everyone she had met while she lived there. The older children and I rode all over the surrounding hills and had a grand time of it. They stayed a few days but finally had to return to Chalco

to meet an expected shipment. They promised to look me up in Tlatelolco and urged me to drop in on them in Chalco.

I hated to see them go, but my father decided he had made enough medicines and it was time to go anyway. We set out early the next morning. He thought it best that I leave Cuauhtzin behind because of his noise. Tetl had to tie him to his perch to keep him from flying after me and he shrieked pitifully as I rode away.

It was hard to engage my father in conversation, as he was usually lost in thought. I tried to ask him about his travels only to get one-word answers. Eventually I gave up and we rode in silence. We stopped at a yam just south of Tlapan a little after dark. There was quite a mix of people there. Most were merchants, but there were a few soldiers and some ordinary travelers. Father spoke only a few words to the keeper, an ancient Otomi, then retired for the night after our meal. He recommended that I not tarry either, since we would be leaving early the next morning.

I sat at the table for a while and listened in on some of the conversations around me. The loudest talkers were the merchants, all of whom seemed to have gotten the best deal on the finest goods from the farthest reaches of the world after the greatest effort on their part. The soldiers said little and eyed everyone suspiciously. The travelers spoke quietly to each other, the men discussing the weather or the crops or their skills and the women discussing their children or grandchildren. I decided there was nothing to learn here and went to bed.

We rose quite early, before daylight, and set out after a very light meal. As the sky lightened, we rode north along the already-crowded road. We reached the causeway to Tenochtitlan before the sun rose above the mountains in the east. Tenochtitlan looked otherworldly. A mist covered the water under the causeway, making it look as though we were crossing the clouds to reach a city in the sky. The houses and temples of the city were shades of gray in this light, and above the city were hundreds of still-dull feather banners floating gently in the light breezes. Then the sun rose above the mountains and suddenly the city was bathed in sunlight, which it reflected back with blinding intensity. The floating banners erupted in brilliant colors as the sunlight touched them. Above it all, the painted temples rose crowning the city. It was a remarkable sight. Then the mist burned off the water and soon the lake was filled with innumerable boats moving in all directions laden with goods and people.

There were guard posts on the causeway, but I was so mesmerized by the city, I barely noticed them. They all knew my father and simply waved us through. When we reached the city, we stayed on the street that became the causeway. The houses along it were of dressed stone and painted white. There were ruder houses of mud and thatch barely visible along side streets and the numerous canals. There were also many of the chinampa gardens at the southern and western edges of the island city. The street took us right to the central temple square. It had changed over the years since Grandfather had described it. A high, merlon-topped wall decorated along the base with sculpted stone feathered serpents surrounded the whole. The temples had to be rebuilt periodically because of settling and earthquakes. They were always made larger and occasionally a new one was added. My father's lack of interest precluded asking him about the various temples, but I found out later.

As one entered the square from the south (the Eagle Gate), the temple of the god Texcatlipoca was on the right, the temples of the goddesses Xochiquetzalli (patroness of painters and weavers) and Chicomocoatl (goddess of vegetation) were on the left, and beyond them in the southwest corner of the plaza was the temple of Tonatiuh, the sun god. Next on the right was housing for the priests, and on the left an open space where there had originally been the skull rack for the severed heads of sacrificial victims. Next, at the center of the square, were, on the left, the twin temples of the gods Tlaloc (painted blue) and Huitzilopochtli (painted red) atop the tallest pyramid and, on the right, the blue truncated pyramid of the god Tengri with the simple stone slab (also painted blue) on which incense constantly burned. The former had large stone braziers and serpent heads at the corners. Behind the temple of Tengri was the ceremonial ball court. Farther along there were more priest housing on the left and the temple of Quetzalcoatl on the right. The latter was a round structure with a conical thatch roof on top of an elevated platform. The entrance to the temple was carved in the shape of a snake's mouth. Finally there was on the left, the Temple of the Knights (dedicated to the Eagle and Ocelotl warrior orders which had been revived about ten years before) and on the right, the temple of Cihuacoatl (goddess of the Xochimilco tribe). The northwest corner of the plaza contained the calmecac of the priests and Tenocha nobility, and in

front (south) of it the two small groves called the Tentalpan and the Tozpalatl. The former grove was used in an annual hunt ceremony; the latter contained the spring that was at the site of the first temple.

We left the plaza passing through a double row of eight columns leading to the northern gate and turned left along the serpent wall, then turning right at the northwest corner of the temple plaza on to the road leading to Tlatelolco. The Tenochtitlan market, west of the Temple precinct, was visible and clearly bustling. The road to Tlatelolco was broader than the others. It led us to another causeway crossing the short distance to the other island.

As we approached the northern island, two tall warriors, who clearly had to be from the north, manned the guard post. I thought they might be Leni lenape, but my father assured me they were Ocheti shakowin. There was a different feeling on the northern island. There was a business air to the place. Goods of all description were being hauled in all directions by boat and by cart. People had serious expressions on their faces as they hurried to and fro. In Tenochtitlan there was more of a swagger in people's step, and no one seemed to be in a hurry. There was significant commerce in progress but no sense of urgency like in Tlatelolco. It was odd since the people looked the same and were so near each other geographically.

The road led us to the Tlatelolco market, a virtual hive of activity. I thought I would have a hard time finding the sandal merchant, but then I noticed that all like merchandise was in one place. My father went straight to the teoxihuitl merchants to sell his present from the Xinesi. The merchant he picked did not bargain at all, but immediately paid him a rather generous amount (yes, he had also been cured by my father). The payment was in the form of feathers, gold dust and chocolatl beans. We left the market and came upon the temple complex. The Tlatelolco main temple was also a twin shrine atop a tall pyramid, but they venerated Texcatlipoca and Huitzilopochtli. I noticed the complex was smaller and was falling into some disrepair. Only the principle temple was in good condition, the others were not, and a few appeared to have been at least partially dismantled for their stones.

The palace of the Khan faced the temple complex across a small plaza. The palace was quite large and elegant and consisted of a single square building raised on a platform some ten feet above the level of the street. We did not go into the palace, but went around to its north side to a complex of buildings surrounding a large open area where there were a number of young men practicing their weapon skills with wooden swords and oli-tipped spears and arrows. My father guided me to one of the buildings on the far side of the open space. There on a platform at the top of the steps leading into the building was a man of medium stature absorbed in the efforts of the neophyte warriors. He was an older man, but seemed to be in excellent shape and powerfully built. At the moment he was scowling menacingly at the scene before him, but my father did not hesitate to interrupt him.

"May I have a word with you, Acolmiztli?"

"What?" he turned angrily, then, recognizing my father, broke into a big, incongruously toothy smile. "You may have as many words as you need, my healer."

"This is my son, Karl, also called Cacalotl," he indicated me. "His fate leads him to wish to join an Ordu and take part in the endless southern campaigns. He has just returned from several years among the Ani' Yun'-wiya and I'd like you to help him acquire enough martial skills to at least have a chance of returning in one piece."

"How old are you boy?" he looked me over appraisingly.

"Eighteen, sir," I replied.

"You're a little old. I hope you don't have too many bad habits yet. It is easier to train them younger before they've had the time to ruin themselves. You are tall, that could help or hurt, gives you more reach but makes you a bigger target. Still, if you listen and obey, you will be a good warrior. Do you think you can do that?"

"Yes, sir."

"I will do all I can for your boy, my healer." He turned back to my father. "I know he will make you proud."

"Thank you, my friend. I knew I could count on you."

My father gave him all the proceeds from the sale of the teoxihuitl, asking him to dole it out for me, as I needed it. He protested that it would be too much and my father told him to use whatever was left over anyway he saw fit. He was somewhat uncomfortable about such a largess, but then asked if he could use it to help some less fortunate friends, and my father assured him he was free to use it any way he wished. He just wanted to make sure I wouldn't be a burden on him. He then took him aside for a few words out of my earshot. I suspect he was telling him not to be easy on me. Then he returned to me for some parting advice.

“Pay close attention to Acolmiztli, he is a great warrior and has survived many campaigns. Otherwise, try to stay out of trouble. Be careful of the Tenocha. They are full of shortsighted intrigues. Do not think yourself superior to your fellows, but work with them. Cooperation and friendship will serve you well on campaign; in fact, it will save your life. Finally, avoid at all costs the women who sell their favors. Many of them carry a dreadful disease that I have been unable to cure. It is readily transferred to their clients and I have been unable to cure them either. Save your manhood for true love, you will never regret it.”

He said the last with such conviction and intensity that I knew he spoke truly. I also knew he spoke of his first wife, not my mother. Still, I did not fault him for that since one true love in a lifetime was the most one could hope for. As to the prostitutes, he needed not fear, I had no interest in them. I found their lascivious posturing repulsive and their red-stained teeth nauseating. I suppose this was because among the Ani' Yun'-wiya the women were always modest, gracious, kind, and dignified. They carried themselves with an air that demanded respect and even veneration. There was nothing like a wanton woman in Itsati, so when I first saw one at the Snake Ordu, I found her repulsive and so have I found all such ever since. I suppose this is rather unfair of me, but I have discovered that people are indelibly marked by their tribe's ways and only eschew such propensities with great difficulty.

I assured my father I would behave and wished him a good journey. He wished me luck with my training and promised to look in on me on his return within the year. He turned to go and I turned to Acolmiztli. He looked at me steadily for a moment, then abruptly turned and beckoned me to follow him. He led me into a large open room empty except for two rows of rolled-up pallets against the wall with small bundles of carefully folded clothes next to them. We went through the room to a smaller room beyond it. It was filled with fake weapons like those with which the young men outside were practicing. We left this room and crossed a small open space and entered another building. He bid me wait and went into his own room to deposit my father's largess. Then he returned to me.

“Well, young man, your father tells me you are called ‘Cacalotl’ by many. Does that name meet with your approval?”

“Yes, sir”—I shrugged—“one could have received worse names.”

“Indeed, crows are very smart birds. They work together and quickly see through all the stratagems used against them. Yet, they uproot and eat freshly planted centli instead of waiting for it to mature and give them a full meal.”

“It is only a name, sir. I do not make any effort to emulate the bird. My dream guide is not a crow.”

“Well, Cacalotl, that large room we just went through is your sleeping quarters for the next year, unless we are on maneuvers. Your clothes are not too fine, but they are not suitable. Go to the market and get more practical attire, like that of the others, then return here and turn in your clothes. I will store them until your time with us has ended. Here are a few chocolatl beans. They should cover all you need. Don't tarry, come straight back.”

I bowed respectfully and turned back, retracing our path to the large room. Examining one of the folded bundles, I saw that they only contained one change of clothes and an extra pair of sandals. The clothes were cotton, but of a sturdy weave rather than of a comfortable weave. The sandals were of the more rugged variety. I carefully refolded the bundle and looked at the pallet. It was rough but durable. I went out glancing over my new companions on my way to the market. They were a mixed lot, but all were from the surrounding cities and valleys. I hurried to the market and quickly purchased what I needed. I had to do some haggling since the merchants were quite willing to take advantage of my youth. I purchased the sandals from Oztooa, but made no attempt to contact him. I returned to the large room, found a bare spot against a wall, set down my pallet, then

carefully folded my change of clothes and placed them next to it. Then I changed into the new clothes and folding up the things I had been wearing. I returned to Acolmiztli.

I found him waiting in the open space in front of his room. I held out my clothes and the remaining chocolatl beans. He grinned and returned the beans to me, congratulating me on not being robbed by the merchants. He put my clothes bundle away, then led the way to the practice field. He wanted to see what I could do. First we went to the spears. He was not interested in whether or how far I could throw them; he wanted to see if I could use one in hand-to-hand fighting. He picked up one of the oli-tipped spears and bid me pick up another. I picked one up and tested it. It was just like a spear except for the tip. One of the old Ani' Yun'-wiya warriors had shown me how to use the spear this way, so I was ready and parried his blunt thrust. He smiled wickedly, and thrust again. This time my parry threw me a little off balance but not so much that I couldn't hold on to my spear when he slammed my ribs with the butt end of his spear. He thrust again and I jumped aside and thrust at him. He stood his ground, spun his spear, and sent mine flying into the air above me.

He set down his spear and led me to the bows. They were the simple bows rather than the compound ones. I tested one and found it well made. I took up one of the arrows and shot it at the straw target set up at some distance. I hit it right in the middle of the target mark. Then one of the others picked up one of the targets and began to run toward me using evasive movement. I drew another arrow and again hit the target.

Without a word we moved to the swords. They were expertly made of a very hard wood, but were blunt with no edge or point. We each picked one up and began to duel. My strength alone kept the contest going as long as it did. More than once the sword should have gone flying out of my hand, but I was able to hold on to it. I managed to get in a few glancing blows on him, but he finally wore me down and disarmed me. He set down his sword and bid me follow him. We went back to the platform where he was when I first saw him.

“You are a credit to those who taught you Cacalotl. You are better than most that come here. Now let's just see how advanced you are. Look at the neophytes and tell me what you see that any of them are doing wrong.”

I was puzzled by this task, but I started looking around and saw a few obvious beginners banging away at each other with their swords making no attempt to score any telling blows. I saw another one who always dropped his shield before he delivered a blow. Another one attacked with reckless abandon. I pointed these out to him.

“Good, you have a decent eye. But look closer do you see anything wrong over there?”

I looked where he indicated. Two of the men were engaged in an epic struggle with their swords. They seemed very evenly matched. One was stronger but not very skillful; the other was skillful but not very strong. Then I noticed that the stronger one seemed to be holding back a little rather than being less skillful. I looked carefully at the two combatants and noticed that they bore a familial resemblance. I told Acolmiztli what I saw.

“Yes, they are brothers. You are right about the stronger one; he makes the other look better than he is. I am well pleased with you, Cacalotl. I think you are good enough to help with instruction. But first you will have to prove yourself to the others. Work on your spear fighting the rest of the day.”

I went over and began to duel the others who were working with the spears. I did quite well against them, but learned a little from each contest and by the end of the day felt ready to take on one of the instructors. He looked at me and smiled. I was disarmed in a few minutes. He graciously suggested I was probably tired and would do better in the morning. I spent the evening reviewing the duel in my mind and figuring out how he disarmed me. We cleaned up in the steam house and, after an ample and nourishing evening meal, retired.

The next morning after a modest meal, I returned to the spears and again challenged the instructor. I had figured out how he disarmed me and was not going to let him do it again. In fact, I had thought up a way to use his ploy against him. As I suspected, he tried the same move again and I tried my counter. He was surprised, but not disarmed, instead we struggled mightily for some time before I got in a lucky blow, which cost him his footing and his fall disarmed him. He jumped up and clapped me on the back.

“Excellent work, my friend. I am Chiquatli from Tlacopan. Who are you?”

“I am Cacalotl from Cuauhnahuac.”

“A crow has beaten an owl. Tell me, how did you figure out my ploy so quickly? It usually takes the recruits weeks to defeat it.”

I explained that I had a good memory for detail and just went over the duel in my mind until I saw what he had done. I showed him my counter and he showed me some other moves. We spent the rest of the day working on new moves and countering strategies. The recruits watched us in awe. Toward the end of the day, Acolmiztli came over and took us both on at the same time. After a very long struggle, he disarmed us both. But he was well satisfied with our efforts and worked with both of us until dark. He told me to continue working on the spear and instructing the recruits for a few more days.

At the end of a few days, I was able to battle Acolmiztli to a draw with the spear and defeat all others. He bid me go work on swords. I applied myself diligently to the sword, but it was not my best weapon. I could defeat most of the recruits, but only after a struggle. I made very little headway with the instructor, Tlilcuetzpalin of Culhuacan. After many days I was able to more easily defeat the other recruits, but would still lose to Tlilcuetzpalin although after a longer struggle. He tried to show me what I was doing wrong, and I could see it well enough, but could only gradually adjust. He told me that most warriors have trouble with one weapon. He confided that he was only marginal with the bow.

After the better part of a month, I was made an instructor and moved to a smaller although equally spare room with the other instructors. We were allowed a cloak, so I had reason to return to the market at last. I decided the time was ripe to contact the rebels. I quickly purchased the cloak and went looking for Oztooa. He was not hard to find. His stall was still in the same place. I absently looked over some goods at another stall while watching him. He seemed to have not a care in the world but to sell his sandals. I began to wonder if perhaps Aztahua had misled me. Finally, I approached the man.

“Do you need a fine new pair of sandals, young warrior?”

“Actually, I am looking for the paper of destiny.”

“A strange quarry to hunt among the sandal merchants.” He visibly paled and nervously looked around.

“Xococ Yolotl was sure you could help me.”

“Ah, of course,” his relief was palpable. “Our mutual friend is a bold recruiter. Go to the house with the green door near the causeway to Tenochtitlan at midday on the second day of the Founding Festival. Good luck, young warrior.”

I left him immediately and returned to the training ground. There had been festivals in at least every one of the twenty-day months of the old calendar. Under the Khanate, that had been changed. Since most of the old festivals included human sacrifices, it was thought best to abolish them all. Now there were only four festivals. The first was the New Year Festival at the winter solstice. The second was the Khakhanate Festival in mid spring honoring the proclaiming to the Khanate of the Blue Sky by Kaidu. The third was the Founding Festival in midsummer honoring the founding of the Khanate of Anahuac. And the last was the Harvest Festival in the fall. All of the festivals went on for five days, and everyone who wished was free to take part in the celebrations. We recruits would be off for those days. The Founding Festival would begin in a few weeks. I could hardly wait.

Not long after my encounter with Oztooa, all the recruits were formed up and marched north across the causeway to Tepeyac and continued north to the site of Azcapotzalco. It had been cleared and turned into a great training ground. Here we trained for two weeks with the throwing spear and the bow. I was quite good with both. We also practiced with the bow from horseback. I quickly mastered that also and began to feel quite sure of myself. The recruits had a particularly hard time with it, however, and I and the other instructors had our work cut out for us. We returned to Tlatelolco the day before the festival began.

When we got back to our barracks, Acolmiztli called the instructors together. He urged us to keep an eye out for the recruits during the upcoming festival. We could order any of them confined to quarters should they engage in any drunken or lewd behavior. At the same time, he expected us to set an example for the others and would hold us accountable for all breaches of discipline and good order. After that he cackled and bid us enjoy the festival. He took me aside after dismissing the others and praised me for all my progress. He gave me a handful of the chocolatl beans to help me enjoy the festival. I thanked him and returned to my room. Chiquatli and Tlilcuetzpalin each urged me to join them on a visit to their families, but I was suffused with a greater mission, and did not want to leave the city.

The first day of the festival, I was surprised by the arrival of my sister Sarah and her family. They had come to visit the city during the festival and wanted me to join them. I was a little nonplused by this development, but managed to cover my surprise and feign enthusiasm. I was genuinely glad to see them, but I didn't want anything to interfere with my joining the revolution. We spent the day taking part in the dancing, watching the various entertainments, and feasting excessively. They prevailed on me to join them at the house of a relative of Tepeyolotl on the western end of Tlatelolco near the causeway to Tlacopan. His name was Miahuaxihuitl and his wife's name was Papan. Both were originally from Chalco like Tepeyolotl. Miahuaxihuitl was a merchant also, but no longer traveled much since he was of advanced years. They had never had any children and were always delighted to have visitors.

Miahuaxihuitl was a keen observer of people and regaled us with many stories of his experiences as a traveling merchant as well as his encounters with various notables in the capital. He gave us very insightful descriptions of all the Khans he had met. He revered my grandfather whom he considered the greatest ruler he had ever known. George, he felt was basically a good ruler, but his wife and her greedy relatives too easily manipulated him. John was a strong ruler and did much good including the removal from power of his mother's relatives (whom he despised). However, he was vain and arrogant. He was the one who built the huge palace. The current Khan, Henry, on the other hand, was a gentle, kind, generous, and thoughtful man. He had no guile much like his mother, a sister of the Tlatoani of Texcoco, Nezahualcoyotl. Unfortunately, he was much too trusting and patient and he is widely viewed as weak. His sons are not at all like him. The eldest, George, was as secretive as his father was open. He would be quite a change should he succeed Henry. The younger son, Theodore, was my age, and seemed to have the makings of quite a warrior, but no interest in palace intrigue. He would be going on campaign next year much as I planned to do. George had already returned from campaign and was reported to have gotten along famously with his cousin George, the Khan of Clouds. I had a feeling my father would not much like him.

The Tlatoani of Tenochtitlan were also a mixed bag. Chimalpopoca, the first he had known, was considered weak, much too dependent on the Khan. He seemed overwhelmed by the job and there was a rumor that his own kin had poisoned him. Itzcoatl was a son of Acamapichtli, the first ruler of the Tenocha, by a slave girl. He was a fierce warrior covering himself with glory in many campaigns. He had fought with the Mexica contingent in Grandfather's campaigns and had also served under Juchi and George. Not long before his accession, he returned from the southern campaigns where he had served in both the east and west. He had been with Kaidu when the latter was named the first Khan of the Green Mist. He proved to be a very strong leader and the Tenocha had begun to assert themselves during his reign. His nephew the current Tlatoani, Moctezuma, succeeded him. The latter and his half brother, Tlacaelel, had both distinguished themselves during the earlier southern campaigns. Both returned to the south several times and served in campaigns in both Khanates. As Tlatoani, Moctezuma had been quite the builder and was responsible for much of the current splendor of the Temple Precinct as well as a new palace and the general spate of stone housing which gave Tenochtitlan its splendid aspect, making it the envy of much of Anahuac. He seemed to rely heavily on Tlacaelel and the two have recently been much given to secret meetings and intrigues. No one knew what they were plotting. He felt Tlacaelel was the one who needed to be watched.

The Tlatoani of Texcoco, Nezahualcoyotl, was greatly respected by all who knew him. He was a capable engineer who designed and built the new improved aqueduct from Chapultepec to Tenochtitlan at Moctezuma's request. He was also a gifted poet, if one liked Nahuatl poetry. Further, he was a very honest, straightforward ruler, much beloved by his people. I mentioned his gift of Cuauhtzin to me and Miahuaxihuitl

was not surprised, since he was also known to be quite generous. He had heard good things of his predecessor, Ixtlilxochitl, but had never actually met the man. I found myself wondering if Nezahualcoyotl would want to join the revolution. Of course, I realized whether or not he did, it would not be my place to invite him. I wondered if Moctezuma and his brother would prove to be a part of the revolution. Miahuaxihuitl had never met any of the Khans in the south or the Khakhans in the north.

The next day we again participated in the morning festivities; then, while the others went to the market, I claimed the need to run an errand for a while but promised to join them in the market as soon as possible. I could barely contain my excitement as I hurried down the road toward Tenochtitlan. As promised, there was only one house with a green door near the causeway. As I approached, I could see a man lurking around on the roof and Oztooa leaning against the doorway. He smiled conspiratorially as I reached him and opened the door without a word. Inside there were about thirty men ranging in age from fifteen to about sixty milling around in a large room. I didn't recognize any of them, but it looked as though they were all Tenocha from their swagger. Their reaction to me was quite varied. Some clearly were hostile, some were glad to see me, and some were indifferent, as though I was of no consequence. It was the younger ones who welcomed me.

In due course, Oztooa joined us and called us to order. He thanked us all for coming and said that we were fortunate to have a special guest. He opened the door to a side room and an older (perhaps sixty years old), dark, brooding man with cold, penetrating eyes entered the room. There was a gasp of recognition from many of the assembly as he began to address us. He had a rather resonant voice but was deliberately restraining it so it would not carry beyond the room. He said he could tell some of us knew him, but from now on we would refer to him only by the name Ehecoatl (the Nahuatl word for whirlwind). He knew each of us by name and might call upon us to perform certain tasks at any time. We were one of many revolutionary cells throughout Anahuac. We should discreetly recruit like-minded patriots from among all the people of the plateau. If possible, we should not hesitate to approach visitors from the far reaches of the Khanates. The more widespread our cadre of revolutionaries, the greater were our chances of success. Our group would meet here at noon on the second day of each festival. If we should see a red banner flying over the house that day, it would mean the meeting was canceled and we would be contacted later. It was unlikely that he would address us again at one of our meetings, but he wanted us to know him by sight should he ever have to call on us for a special service. Otherwise, Oztooa, the owner of the house, was the leader of this cell, and his orders must be obeyed without question and without hesitation. We must know that once in the revolution there was no way out except death or success. He wanted to talk briefly to each of us alone. He returned to the small room and we all formed a line and waited our turn. Meanwhile Oztooa served a small snack.

In due course I entered the room. Ehecoatl was sitting on a chair on a raised platform. It was intended to be high enough that he could still look down on us as we stood before him. As it happened, I was too tall for the ploy and he had to raise his gaze to meet mine. This clearly bothered him and he told me to sit down. Once he had his desired vantage, he began to stare at me with his cold, hard eyes. Among the Ani' Yun'-wiya it was considered bad manners to stare at a person, but among the Mexica it was considered a weakness to avert your eyes from such a stare. I steadily met his gaze in silence for a while; then he smiled without warmth.

"Do you recognize me?"

"I do not, sir."

"Good. I was puzzled to hear that a member of the Khan's family had joined us. What is your motivation?"

"I want the Khanate dissolved so that the various tribes can rule themselves as they wish."

"Really?"

"Yes, I believe all people should be free to choose their own rulers and to develop their own culture."

"Interesting. Where did you acquire such noble sentiments?"

"I lived with the Ani' Yun'-wiya for several years. A great warrior named Oganaya suggested to me that the Khanate had been bad for the people, interfering with the will of his god and forcing the warriors to fight far from their homes against an enemy who has done them no wrong."

“I remember Oganaya. He was a brave and smart warrior. I had no idea he harbored such thoughts. Is he still alive?”

“No, he died a few years ago.”

“Should our revolution succeed, what would you have us do with your relatives?”

“I thought perhaps exile in the south.”

“What would prevent them from gathering an army and trying to retake power?”

“I suppose that is possible, but I would think the other Khanates would be too busy fighting revolts of their own to help put down a revolt in Anahuac.”

“Did you find widespread unrest in the north?”

“No, but there was some and I think once the idea of self-determination got abroad, there would be widespread revolt.”

“That remains to be seen. What do you expect from the revolution?”

“Just the satisfaction that I had taken part in overthrowing a tyranny.”

“What if we found it necessary to ‘exile’ you as well as your relatives? Would you still join us?”

“Yes. I don’t expect anything but satisfaction from this struggle.”

“Interesting. One only hears such selfless enthusiasm from the young. But it can be most useful. It would be best if you do not do any recruiting. You would best serve our cause if you could ingratiate yourself with your relatives in the palace and let us know if there is any indication that they suspect our activity. You can always report to Oztooa in the market. Do not come here for any more meetings and should you ever see me again give no indication you have ever met me and make no attempt to speak to me. Instead see Oztooa in the market every few weeks and inform him of your progress. You will be an integral part of our revolution. We will be counting heavily on you. Do you understand your mission?”

“Yes, sir. I do.”

“Good. Your code name will be Oganaya. Anyone who addresses you so comes from me.”

“I will remember.”

He dismissed me with a wave. It was so strange that there was no warmth at all in the man. He seemed to be devoid of feeling. It made me wonder what sort of a life he had led, but as a loyal revolutionary, I wouldn’t dream of questioning anyone about him. I bowed slightly in taking leave and left the room. I sought out Oztooa and thanked him for accepting me and giving me a chance to take part in our great revolution. I explained that Ehecoatl thought it best if I report to him directly in the market rather than come to the meetings, so I should probably leave at once. He agreed and graciously walked me to the door. I hurried back up the street to the market barely able to contain my excitement over my special mission.

With some effort I found my relatives and took great pains to act as though nothing had happened. I enthusiastically participated in the rest of the festival. On the evening of the fourth day of the festival, I asked Sarah if she had ever been in the palace. She said she had gone there with our father once as a young girl, but had never been there since. I asked if she had seen the feather headdress and cloak of our grandfather that was on display there. She had not and asked where I had heard of it. I told her about my visit to Panuco and my stay with Yquingare. It turned out that she and Tepeyolotl had met Yquingare some years before when their travels took them to Panuco, but she had not mentioned her relationship with the Raven. She was glad I had seen the representation of Grandfather, for she had been quite impressed by it. I asked if she thought it would be possible for us to see the cloak and headdress sometime. She turned questioningly to Tepeyolotl and he smiled broadly and assured us he would arrange it all for the next day.

The next day, the last day of the festival, most of the planned festivities were in the evening, so the whole day was unstructured. Most people enjoyed visiting or just wandering around the market, but Tepeyolotl took us

straight to the palace. We climbed up the stairs to the raised platform. He presented the guard at the top of the stairs a small piece of paper with some writing and a seal on it. The guard looked at it and waved us on. There was a large open space in front of the palace. We crossed it and approached another guard at the bottom of the stairs leading up to the palace. He examined the piece of paper very closely before letting us pass. We climbed up the few steps to the palace entrance. It was a very large building made entirely from highly polished carved stone. On either side of the door there were representations of the various animals whose name was used by an Ordu in the Khanate. The first two were, of course, the eagle and the ocelotl. The images were very lifelike rather than the usual more symbolic representation, and beneath the image was inscribed, in Mongol, all the campaigns in which the Ordu had taken part.

The doors to the palace were huge; each was about fifteen feet high, six feet wide and two inches thick. They were made of a very hard wood, perhaps the same wood as the practice swords, and were elaborately carved with a representation of a raven. The guards at the door also examined Tepeyotl's paper very carefully. One of them told us to wait and opened one of the doors and went in for a short time. He soon returned with another man, clearly his superior, who smiled broadly at Tepeyotl and invited us all into the palace. The doors were closed behind us after we entered. The entrance hall proved to be a huge open room with no furniture, but with various artistic wall hangings and statues set around the walls. Opposite the entrance, there was no wall, only a few pillars holding up the second floor. Beyond the pillars there was a large interior courtyard surrounded by the palace. The courtyard had fruit trees, shrubs, flowers, and even fountains, benches, and a walkway.

Our host turned out to be Tlauquechol, the head of the palace guard, and an old friend of Tepeyotl. As boys they had been playmates in Chalco. He was delighted to make my acquaintance and, hearing that I was training under Acolmiztli, urged me to give him his regards. It seemed Acolmiztli had also trained him and he assured me I was in most capable hands. He took us around the room explaining each of the statues and wall hangings. The statues proved to be representations of all the Khans, not only of Anahuac, but also the other Khanates. He explained that some were perhaps not very accurate since they had already died before the task was undertaken, but much effort had been made to seek the approval of those who had known them in life. I thought Grandfather's image was quite good, better than the one in Panuco. I studied the images of my uncles, George and Theodore, whom I had never met. George looked rather like my father, but Theodore looked more like Grandfather. I stared in wonder at Kaidu's image. He looked powerful. Kuyuk had been made to look dissipated (no doubt on purpose) and Juchi looked rather heroic. Jelme looked completely inscrutable while Batu looked very much like Juchi. I returned to my relatives and studied John and Henry. The former was perhaps the handsomest of all, but he looked rather arrogant. The latter looked almost gentle. The only other one that interested me was the current Khan of the Clouds, since my father despised him so. He looked rather impassive, but otherwise was a good-looking fellow.

When Tlauquechol was finally able to pry me away from the statuary, he took us into the room on the right. In this room were memorabilia from the various campaigns in the south. One wall had a large map of the southern landmass showing the progress of the campaigns to date. I was totally captivated by this and ignored all else in the room. It looked as though I was fairly up to date on the campaigns, although there seemed to be more inland penetration in the eastern theater than I had thought.

Again I had to be pried away to enter the next room. Here was Grandfather's finery. The armor was quite amazing—it looked exactly like steel snake scales. The helmet reminded me of the entrance to the temple of Quetzalcoatl and I wondered if it had been patterned after the helmet. I noticed with pride that they would be much too small to fit me. The feather cloak and headdress were magnificent; the colors were still vibrant after all these years. They also had his original raven feather banner and his weapons. It was strange to have these things I had read about suddenly in front of me. There were also a few other things that had been gifts presented to him by various people. They were mostly finery: silks, ornaments, jewelry, feather work, and textiles, but they looked like they had never been used at all.

The next two rooms contained the memorabilia, armor, and weapons of George and John, respectively. Next was a large reception hall. It was lavishly furnished with decorative wall hangings and statuary. At the far end there was an elaborately carved wooden chair on a raised platform with smaller, but just as elaborate chairs on either side. It seemed the Khan and his sons used these. There were also strategically placed simple chairs

around the room. Several servants stood silently and motionless around the room at various intervals. This was the last room we could enter on the right side of the palace, so Tlauquechol led us out into the great courtyard and into the gardens. He led us around the periphery back toward the entrance hall. He mentioned that beyond the reception hall was a staircase and then a large bathroom. From the garden I could see that there was a second floor all around. It was there that the Khan and his family and any state guests lived.

As Tlauquechol took us past the entrance hall, he pointed out that the room on its left was a guardroom. Next were two rooms of barracks for the guards. Next were another staircase, then the kitchen, and then the banquet hall. Beyond the banquet hall there was a smaller dining room. The back of the palace contained small rooms for less-distinguished guests. He led the way to the kitchen and we were given a light snack, which we ate at the guards' table. We all thanked Tlauquechol for showing us everything and for the snack as he led us back to the entrance hall. Just as we entered the hall, a young man about my age entered from the room on the right of the hall (the one with the map) and seeing us, approached. He was shorter than me, but had a more muscular build. He was too fair to be a Mexica and wore a very friendly smile as he drew near. Tlauquechol bowed low and the rest of us followed suit.

“Tlauquechol! If I am not mistaken, it looks like you have at least one of my relatives with you. Isn't this the son of John the Healer?”

“It is, sire, along with his sister and her family.”

“I am your cousin, Theodore. I'm delighted to meet you at last. We never see your father around the palace unless someone is ill and he's never brought you along to meet us.”

We each introduced ourselves and Theodore gave all his attention to each of us as we spoke. He seemed totally without arrogance or even awareness of his position. He was pleased to hear that I was training with Acolmiztli and told me he would be joining us when we went on maneuvers with the Ocelotl Ordu later in the summer. To everyone's surprise, he insisted on spending the rest of the day with us and led the way out of the palace. He was a wonderful host and knew the best places to see all the final entertainments and the closing ceremonies. The closing ceremonies were interesting. They were held in the plaza in front of the palace. The Khan and his distinguished guests stood at the top of the stairs with the entire palace guard behind them. Theodore pointed out his brother George and the Tlatoani Moctezuma and Nezahualcoyotl. Theodore was able to get us quite close to them, so I took a good look. George feigned interest but was furtively looking around at everyone. His eyes even caught and held mine for a moment and it looked like he was smirking at me. Moctezuma looked fierce and not at all devious. Nezahualcoyotl looked serene and seemed to be really enjoying himself. Henry surprised me. He looked like the kindest, gentlest man I had seen since my grandfather. The first cold finger of doubt about the “revolution” began to poke at me.

The ceremonies included some special songs and poetry readings and then the banner of the Khan (the raven feather banner) was brought out and all the guards behind the Khan beat their swords against their shields to reenact the founding of the Khanate of Anahuac. I found the moment rather moving and my doubts began to grow stronger. After a great display of colored rockets, the Khan and his guests withdrew and the festival was over. Theodore joined us for our evening meal at the house of Miahuahuitl. The latter was most honored by his guest and Papan seemed almost giddy. After dinner I had to return to my barracks and Theodore accompanied me since the palace was on the way. I discovered he was also interested in southern campaigns and we agreed to meet on my next free day to study that wonderful map together.

After he left me and I continued the short distance to the barracks, I began to churn over the events of the day in my mind and for the first time acknowledged my second thoughts about the “revolution.” I really liked Theodore and wasn't at all pleased about having to use him and perhaps be responsible for his exile or even death. Seeing my grandfather's things made me wonder about working to destroy all he had worked to create. I had never really known my royal relatives, so it had been easy to plot to overthrow strangers. Now things had changed. I did not sleep well that night, but by morning I decided that it was too late to back out now. Over the years I have often wondered how different my life might have been had I dropped out at that point and told someone all I knew, but given who I was at that moment, I suppose what happened was inevitable.

I enthusiastically threw myself into my training and was quite pleased with my growing strength and ability. The recruits were coming along quite well also, and I took no little pride in their accomplishments. Late that summer it was deemed that the group was ready to go on forest maneuvers with the Ocelotl Ordu. We rose before dawn and with full gear and real weapons left the city again on the causeway to Tepeyac. We marched all the way to Tultepec, about forty-five li north of the city before we were allowed any rest. It was a small town with a dense woods north and west of it leading to the mountains some distance away. After a light meal we were allowed to rest while awaiting the arrival of the Ordu. We did not have long to wait.

We first saw a dust cloud in the east. It seemed to be growing wider and higher and heading for us. Then we heard the pounding of the hooves of thousands of horses sounding like a continuous roll of thunder. Finally the ground began to shake as the throng approached. We all jumped up, quickly formed ranks, and moved to one side. The Ordu seamlessly dismounted and shifted into infiltrative formation. I could see Theodore with the commander's staff, but we could only wave to each other. Soundlessly the Ordu moved into the woods. The men looked wraithlike since they were covered with dust from their long ride. We moved in behind them trying to keep up with them and at the same time emulate their silent movement. I was used to such movement from much training among the Ani' Yun'-wiya, but the recruits did not cover themselves with glory during this exercise. It's not that they went crashing through the woods, but they made enough noise to attract the stern glances of the warriors we were following. Finally one of the arban commanders came back and told us to fall behind if necessary but stop making so much noise. Acolmiztli bade me keep up with the Ordu and when they stopped, come back to the group and guide them in.

I had a little trouble keeping up with the Ordu, but made no sound and managed to keep them in sight. They did not stop until dusk. I noticed carefully the area and hurried back to find the recruits. It was dark before I found them and Acolmiztli decided it would be best if we slept where we were and moved out again at first light. We ate a cold snack and slept the sleep of the exhausted. Acolmiztli roused us all before there was any light and bid us eat quickly and prepare to move out. He put me in the lead to guide and as soon as the shadows began to lighten we started. As it got lighter, the noise disappeared and the pace picked up. I reached the spot where the Ordu had stopped, but they were already gone. I went ahead again to find them while the troop picked up its pace. I soon found that the Ordu had suddenly turned to the south and I placed a marker to indicate the change of direction. I finally caught up with them while they paused for a quick meal. They were surprised to see me and cheerfully waved. I waved back and turned back to find my men. To my relief they were only a few hundred yards behind me and had not missed my marker.

We arrived just as the Ordu rose to leave and had to eat our meal on the way. We were able to keep up after that and made no more noise. After two days we turned northeast and a few days later in the late afternoon emerged from the woods at the very spot we had entered. The men who had stayed behind with the horses had a camp already prepared and plentiful hot food ready for us. The commander of the Ordu had a Mongol name, Baidar, but he looked like he was from the valley. He was quite pleased with the exercise and invited Acolmiztli to dine with him. The rest of us ate with the Ordu. The recruits were teased about the noise they had made the first day, but it was clear they were accepted since they had finally caught up and learned to infiltrate. Theodore sought me out and told me that I had been mentioned to the commander as the one who had kept the recruits in touch with the Ordu during their first shaky days. He congratulated me on my achievement and invited me to visit him at the palace when we returned. He assured me we would get a few days off when we returned to Tlatelolco.

The next morning the Ordu mounted up and rode east to their camp. We gathered up our gear and turned south for the long walk back to the city. Acolmiztli said nothing until we had arrived at the barracks. He then called us to attention, praised us for our performance, and gave us three days off. We hurried to clean up. I was particularly happy we instructors had our own bathroom. We spent the rest of the afternoon leisurely cleaning off a week's grime. As I was leaving the barracks in the evening, a young serving man approached me.

"Are you Cacalotl, the cousin of the Khan?"

"Yes, I am."

"I am to take you to the palace at the request of Van (prince) Theodore."

I was pleased to be meeting my friend again, but apprehensive about having now to do my part for the revolution. I followed the servant silently to a side entrance to the palace compound. It was a rather hidden entrance; unless you knew it was there, you would never notice it. It opened into a narrow room that contained a stairway to the second floor. To my amazement he led me up the stairs and along a covered corridor to very large nicely furnished room near what seemed to be the northeast corner of the palace. He told me to make myself comfortable and Theodore would be along shortly. I sat back on a comfortable bench and fell asleep.

“Wake up, Cousin,” a cheerful voice broke into a strange dream. “You don’t want to sleep through dinner, do you?”

“Forgive me.” I staggered up. “I’m afraid your bench is too comfortable.”

“So it is,” he laughed. “But come, I like to eat in the kitchen with the guards rather than in the banquet room with the guests. Do you mind?”

“Not at all. I’m not really dressed for a banquet.”

“You know, I hadn’t noticed that before, but you are rather rudely dressed. Acolmiztli likes all his recruits to rough it. I don’t think we have anything that would fit you here. You are so tall.”

“I have better clothes at home, but I suspect I am dressed well enough for the kitchen.”

“Yes, you are. Come.”

We went down the corridor to the same stairs I had come up and at its base was a door that led to the kitchen. All the staff warmly greeted Theodore, as did the guards when he sat down with them. He introduced me to them all and they received me kindly as well. Tlauquechol was not with them that day. It seemed Van George had an assignment for him. Theodore rolled his eyes at this news and said that George was always up to something. After dinner, Theodore took me to the room with the map and we spent the rest of the evening sharing what we had heard of the campaigns. He was quite well informed and was able to flesh out some of my more vague information. It seemed that there was no major campaign under way in the Khanate of the Clouds, although one was planned for the coming year, and he planned to be a part of it. The Khanate of the Green Mist was now engaged in small campaigns into the interior, but planned another push to the south very soon. After a few hours of this, he thought it best we retire for the night, but promised to show me around the palace the next day. He guided me back to the large room which he informed me was mine during my stay. He bid me good night and I stripped and sank into the most comfortable bed I had ever known.

10

Tlatelolco, 91 K

(Mexico City, 1459)

The next morning I awakened early and looked around the room. There was a window overlooking the interior courtyard. Looking out it, I could see that I was near the left-rear corner of the palace. To one side of the room, there was what amounted to a private bath. We had them back in Cuauhnahuac, but not so elaborate or luxurious. Both my father and grandfather favored the utilitarian and simple. Even that was not in use among the Ani’ Yun’-wiya and the barracks were rather rudimentary in their comforts. The furniture was both elaborately carved and comfortable. There were rugs on the floor and decorative hangings of the wall. I was going to miss this room. In due course, a servant scratched at the door and bid me follow him. This time we went in the other direction down the corridor toward the back of the palace. He led me down a circular staircase and through a door into a large dining room. At the table were both Theodore and his brother George. Theodore rose to greet me, but George remained seated and again regarded me with a smirk.

“Did you sleep well?” Theodore asked as he motioned me into a chair next to him.

“Oh, yes,” I replied. “That is the most comfortable bed I’ve ever had.”

“Good. George insisted I introduce you to him, so I had you brought here. Don’t worry about your clothes; none of the rest of the family will be here. George, this is our cousin Cacalotl. This is my brother, George, Cacalotl.”

“That’s not really your name, is it?” George raised an eyebrow. “No, you were named for our illustrious ancestor, Karl the Raven, weren’t you?”

“Yes, I was, sir. I am called Cacalotl as a nickname, much as our ancestor was called the Raven.”

“How did you like the maneuvers?”

“I found them quite challenging. The Ordu is a marvel of skill and discipline. Our small cadre was much pressed to keep up with them.”

“Indeed? I heard you covered yourself with glory.”

“Someone has been most kind, sir. I was merely adequate.”

“I feel sorry for anyone who tries to take on the Ordu, don’t you?”

“Yes, sir. It would be a thankless task.”

“Well, it was good to meet you, Cousin. I’m sure I’ll be seeing more of you until you go on campaign.”

“It was an honor to meet you, sir.”

He seemed to be toying with me throughout our conversation and could not resist a backward smirk as he left. Puzzled, I asked Theodore if I had done something to anger his brother. He assured me that I hadn’t, but George was like that with most people. I shouldn’t let it bother me. Theodore wanted to show me around the palace, but first, he had a surprise for me after we ate breakfast. We ate a light meal; then he led me upstairs to his room. It was on the same corridor as mine, but was near the front of the palace and much larger and even better furnished. Waiting for us was a tailor who, over my protests, measured me for some better clothes and assured me they would be ready in the evening.

After the measuring, Theodore explained that he didn’t want me to be uncomfortable in the presence of his family because of my attire. So he thought we could take a ride today, and tomorrow, when I would be better attired, he would show me the rest of the palace. I thanked him for his generosity and thoughtfulness. He brushed it off and led the way downstairs again. We went down the circular stairs again, and at the landing opened a door, which opened on another staircase leading down into a basement area, level with the street outside. We went along a corridor, then turned down a narrow passageway leading away from the palace and came to a hidden doorway that opened into a stable area housing the palace horses. The attendants had two magnificent white horses (by custom, since the reign of John, all the Khan’s horses were white) all ready for us. We quickly mounted and rode out into the street. We left the city by the causeway to Tlacopan, and near its end, took the south fork toward Chapultepec. As we rode, we chatted about our very different experiences. He had not been sent north as I had, but had been sent to Texcoco to study. He had arrived just after I had left from my short stay there. He had enjoyed it but was envious of my stay among the Ani’ Yun’-wiya. He greatly admired the northern warriors.

We stopped in Chapultepec and climbed the small hill overlooking the lake. He remarked that the two islands were so beautiful from this vantage point. I had to agree. I told him about the day a few months before when I had approached the city from the south near dawn for my first view of it (that I was old enough to remember). We sat in silence for a while enjoying the view. Finally I decided to fulfill my “revolutionary” mission.

“Do you think there is any possibility of a revolt against the Khanate?”

“What a strange question!” He seemed completely bewildered. “I can’t imagine such a thing. We’ve brought order out of chaos here. It just wouldn’t make any sense. Where did you get such an idea?”

“Over the years, I’ve run into a few people who felt the Khanate had done more harm than good. I just wondered if you had gotten any such indication.”

“No, never. It’s hard to believe you found anyone like that. Were they all in the north?”

“Most, except for the band of rebels among the Huasteca.”

“No need for concern there. The Huasteca would revolt against their own families if it meant a fight. Anyway, all their neighbors would love to help us crush them.”

“Why don’t you? They think the Khan is weak because he has not moved against them.”

“Weak!” He nearly shouted the word. “He is so strong, he dares to be merciful; so sure of himself, he dares to be patient; so wise, he dares to be kind and generous. If they think him weak, they gravely misjudge him and they will regret it.”

“In truth, I found very little support for the rebels among the Huasteca along the trade road. Most declared their ignorance of any revolt and were generally alarmed that I would suggest its existence. I suspect, despite the claims of the rebel band that captured me, there isn’t much of a groundswell for revolution there.”

He asked me about my run-in with the Huasteca rebels and I told him what happened. We talked a while about them and the other peoples of Anahuac finding ourselves to be of one mind about most of them. We both agreed that the Maya (except for the Putun) were the most ungovernable, the Tya Nuu the most prone to revolt, and the Otomi the most inscrutable. He suggested that the Alcolhua, the Tepaneca, the Tlahuica, the Chalca and the Ben Zah were the least likely to revolt. I agreed with all but the last, since I didn’t know much about them. I asked him what he thought about the Mexica.

“The Mexica!” he chuckled. “As to the Tlatelolca, we need not worry. They are the closest thing to the Putun Maya in the valley. The Tenocha are another matter. It is odd how different they are from their supposed cousins, the Tlatelolca. Grandfather (Khan John) did not trust them at all and had spies in place throughout their various classes. Father is not quite so cynical, but my brother George is. When he is Khan, he will probably renew the spies.”

“Do you think that is necessary?”

“I don’t know. I’m glad I am not the oldest. I don’t want to worry about all that intrigue. I just want to become a great warrior and let others handle all the rest of things.”

“But you could become Khan, if anything were to happen to your brother.”

“I know. That’s why I pray for him every day. I hope Tengri will guard him diligently in all his ways.”

“You pray to Tengri, the Mongol god?”

“Well, it is convenient to call our God, Tengri. He is more like him than any of the local gods. Don’t you think?”

“I suppose so. Most of the people in the north also believe in one god. Of course, they also believe in many spirits and demigods and the Ani’ Yun’-wiya believed in a small woodland people, the Yunwi Tsunsi, who would help those lost in the woods and a spirit people, the Nunne hi, who could appear at will to help them.”

“Rather benevolent, something like angels, so you suppose?”

“Angels? I don’t remember them. My father was rather brief with my religious instruction. It consisted mostly in cautioning me not to adopt the beliefs of others.”

“I see. I don’t know where my father got all the details, but angels are powerful spirits that serve God. We can ask them to help us.”

“Interesting. But why go through the servants instead of directly to God? It sounds like an unnecessary bit of layering between God and us. Besides, if God is omnipotent, he doesn’t need servants.”

“I’m afraid you’ll need to pursue this conversation with my father. I really don’t know much about it.”

We left the theological discussion and turned to arms and soldiering, an area in which we were both fairly adept. He said his best weapon was the sword, although he was also quite good with both kinds of spears. He was only passable with the bow. Neither of us had any experience using either the regular or mini cannon. I told him we were the perfect complement, since I was the exact opposite. We decided to help each other with our weak spots when we returned to the palace. We mounted up and started back the way we had come.

We arrived at the palace in the late afternoon due to our leisurely pace. We turned the horses over to an attendant and reentered the palace through the hidden door. We went along the corridor in a different direction this time, and it ended at a large room full of weapons, both real and practice. We picked up two of the practice swords and he worked with me for a while. He was not exaggerating; he was the best I had ever seen with the sword. He showed me several of his techniques, but I could see that most of his moves were instinctive and thus very hard to teach. We also worked on the bow and I did see some improvement on his part. When we finished he led the way up some stairs that opened into a large bathroom. We had it to ourselves at this hour as we cleaned up after our workout.

When we finished, two servants had fresh clothes ready for us. The tailor had made mine for me that very day. They were made of the finest, softest cotton. I prevailed on the servants not to burn my old clothes, but clean them for me and return them to my room. That amused Theodore. He led the way out into the central courtyard. This time, we strolled along the path through the garden. There was a woman sitting on a bench in the middle of the garden. She had an air of quiet dignity about her and when she heard our approach she turned and smiled sweetly.

“Mother, I want to introduce you to our cousin, Cacalotl,” he said bowing before her. Then to me, “This is my mother, Chalchiuhtona.”

“I am honored to meet you.” I bowed.

“You are the son of John the Healer, of course.”

“Yes, madam.”

“He is a strange but very gifted man. I can’t say that I know him at all, but I can say I respect him greatly and am in his debt.”

“I can’t say I know him either, madam, but I, too, respect him.”

“I understand he is away again. I have also heard that your brother, Theodore, will be back soon.”

“I hadn’t heard. It has been a long time since I have seen him.”

“You boys must be hungry after your long ride. Come, dinner should be ready by now.”

She led us into the large dining room where the rest of the family was filing in along with a few guests. I was introduced to the Khan and to his only daughter, Christina. The former I had seen before, but from this vantage I could see his kindness and gentleness at first hand as he greeted me warmly. Christina was a few years younger than me and was a charming, friendly young girl, reminding me of my nieces (Sarah’s children). George greeted me politely, but still regarded me with a smirk. The guests were a mixed lot, mostly from the ruling families of provinces of the Khanate, but there was also a man from the north. He was perhaps in his twenties and was the son of the commander of the Alligator Ordu. I thought he was a Timacua, but he turned out to be of mixed parentage. His father was Calusa and his mother Taino. His name was Boal, which was Mongol. I asked him about his name and it seemed he was named for a man who had served under his father and had been killed defending him. It happened while his father had been on campaign in the Khanate of the Green Mist. He had been a jagun commander at the time and he had been sent back to bring up more supplies. They had been ambushed and were hard-pressed for a while before driving the enemy off. Boal was his father’s second in command and had taken a spear intended for him. I asked him if he had known Oganaya and he had not, but his father had and spoke of him fondly.

Most of the conversation around the table was about the dike, which was being built between Tepeyac and Ixtapalapa across the Lake. It would prevent any more of the flooding that had occurred some six years before. It would also reduce the brackishness of the water around Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco, enabling a significant expansion of the chinampa gardens in this part of the lake. It was quite a project. When finished, it would be nearly thirty li long. It was made of parallel rows of huge logs driven into the lake bed about sixty feet apart and filled in between them with rocks, gravel, and dirt. At given intervals, there were sluice gates that permitted the

movement of water traffic. The project was expected to be finished soon, perhaps within the year. All felt it would be a boon to the mushrooming population of the two islands.

One of the guests, Coatleztli, the son of the governor of Xochimilco, said that he had heard that there was a lot of resentment around the valley about the worker levies used to build the dike. Some of the cities felt they shouldn't have to help build something that would be of no benefit to them. The Khan was genuinely surprised to hear this and asked why no one had said anything to him. Coatleztli suggested that the grumbling was not against him, but against a project that would only benefit the Mexica. The Khan thought that was rather churlish, since it would ultimately make the Mexica less dependent on others for food and help in time of flood. Coatleztli reminded him that the Mexica were not exactly revered in the valley. He shrugged and said he could understand that, so far as the Tenocha were concerned, since they did not exactly endear one, but surely the Tlatelolca were not despised. Coatleztli shook his head, and said the Tlatelolca were envied for their wealth and the Tenocha despised for their arrogance. I shot a look at George during this exchange. He was listening intently and still smirking. Theodore, on the other hand, was obviously quite bored and was anxiously awaiting a chance to leave the table.

Once everyone had finished eating and the chocolatl was served, the Khan turned to Theodore and me and said we could be excused if we wished. Theodore thanked him and rose quickly. I also rose and thanked the Khan for his hospitality. Then we both bowed and left the room carrying our chocolatl. Theodore led the way through the banquet hall and into the kitchen where we sat down with the guards. Here he really seemed to enjoy himself joking with the men and trading stories. It was interesting to see this. He was an intelligent, well-educated young man, but was more comfortable in the company of rough guards than those that would be considered his peers. As it happened, a couple of the guards were great storytellers and they were more fun than the Khan's guests, but I was surprised that Theodore would be so sure I would share his preference.

During the course of the evening, I found I could spin a good tale myself. I told them an old Ani' Yun'-wiya legend about the boy who mollified the Sun's anger after many adventures and complications. After a few hours of tales, we turned in for the night. When I reached my room, I readied myself for bed, then lay down and did some soul-searching. Thinking of Khan Henry, Chalchiuhtona, Theodore, and Christina, it was hard to justify my taking part in any revolution against them. I was almost about to abandon the whole sordid business when I thought of George's smirking face and realized that he would be the next Khan. If the system resulted in such as he ruling the Khanate, it should be abolished. I would simply have to do all I could to protect the rest of my cousins.

The next day, Theodore came for me early and, after a pleasant breakfast, we began our tour. Since it was still a little early, he decided to show me the basement first. We went down the stairs and corridor toward the corral, but stopped before we reached it and went through a door on the right down another corridor. It led to a row of storerooms. They held dried food: meat, grain, and fruit. Where the corridor turned left, there was a huge storeroom full of weapons: swords, spears, bows, and arrows. Near the back of the room was a stairway leading up to the guardroom right next to the entrance hall. Next was a very large storeroom, but it was locked. Theodore couldn't recall what was in it, but suspected it was just more weapons. The corridor turned left again leading to first the Khanate's archives (it held all the official correspondence and documents), then one more storeroom (root vegetables), and a workroom where things were fixed. The corridor ended in the weapon room we had used the day before. On the far side of that room was the corridor leading back to the corral. Along this corridor was a room, which was known as George's workshop. He had been working on some sort of project in there and insisted that no one be allowed in the room. He alone had the key. I wondered that the Khan would allow this, but Theodore said George was working on a surprise for the Khan and the latter didn't want to spoil it. I was immediately suspicious, but said no more about it. The final room was a storeroom for riding gear. We went back up the stairs continuing on up to the second floor.

At the top of the stairs, we turned down the corridor along the back of the palace. Theodore explained that all the rooms were guest rooms much like mine, only larger. We continued to the end, where a door on the right revealed another corridor. The first room along this corridor was George's. We did not enter. The next door revealed a stairway. Next was the Council Room, a large lavishly decorated room with elaborate chairs arranged in a large oval. Next was a large library furnished with shelves full of books. Theodore showed me that the

books were arranged according to language. On the far right were the books of the old picture writing: Nahuatl, Maya, Tzotzil, Ben Zeh and Purepecha, mostly histories and poetry. Next were most of the same books both translated into Mongol and rewritten in the original language using the Uighur script. Next were the books Grandfather had written from memory in Hanjen and then the same translated into Mongol. Next were books written by various authors in various languages on various subjects and their Mongol translations. Next were language dictionaries of all the languages in the Khanate, with their Mongol equivalents. Finally there were recent reports from the various governors and Ordu commanders of the Khanate. In a place of honor in the library was my grandfather's book in the old language. I asked Theodore if he had read it. He replied that his father had read it to him and his siblings when they were children. He had never learned the old language. George did know the old language, however. That did not surprise me.

While we were still in the library, a door opened and the Khan entered. Theodore explained that the door led to his father's room. Henry was delighted to see us in the library and asked if I enjoyed poetry. I had to admit that I preferred histories. He nodded but asked me to listen to one poem he found and tell him what I thought of it. It was in Nahuatl.

"The river passes, passes, never stopping. / The wind passes, passes, never stopping. / Life passes, never returning."

"Rather fatalistic, isn't it, sir?" I suggested, not sure what I was supposed to think.

"Which people do you suspect wrote that?"

"Is it originally Nahuatl or a translation?"

"Good question. It is a translation."

"The most fatalistic people I know are the Otomi. Is it theirs?"

"Excellent. You have a very good mind young Karl. I hope you put it to good use. You may come here to read whenever your duties permit. I'll let the guards know."

He left the library and Theodore clapped me on the back, congratulating me for figuring out his father's puzzle. He admitted that he had no idea who wrote the poem, and moreover, he didn't care. He laughed at his own remark, but I was intrigued that there was such a thing as Otomi poetry and wondered if they also had any histories. Theodore didn't think so, but we looked on the shelves anyway and didn't find any. It was obvious to me that Theodore was ready to leave so, being a good guest, I suggested that we repair to the map room again. This delighted him and he led the way. We spent the rest of the morning with the map.

After a midday meal, we spent the afternoon in the weapons room again working on our weaknesses. Then we cleaned up again and joined the family and guests for dinner. To my surprise, none of the guests were the same as the night before. The most honored guest was the Tlatoani of Texcoco, Nezahualcoyotl, who had come with a few of his children, among them, one of his sons, Acapipiltzin, who was about a year older than me. The latter was to go on campaign shortly and had come to take leave of his aunt and uncle and cousins. He sat with Theodore and me, and we talked about going on campaign, while the others talked about more mundane matters, especially the dike.

Acapipiltzin would be going with a whole tumen. They were due to go right after the Harvest Festival. They would be traveling by land all the way, so they planned to go across the mountains toward the south and proceed along the southern coast where the terrain tended to be dry, and they would not reach the jungle of the isthmus until the early winter when it was the dry season. He suggested we would probably be leaving at the same time next year if we were going with a tumen. Theodore thought we would probably be going on our own and would likely go by boat in the early spring. Acapipiltzin agreed that that would be easier, but he was looking forward to the long march with the tumen.

We did not leave the table early this time, but remained talking until the Khan rose. He excused himself and left. The rest began to depart, and we decided to go look at the map to trace out Acapipiltzin's line of march. Before leaving, I stopped and took the opportunity to thank Nezahualcoyotl again for giving me Cuauhtzin.

“You still have the little rascal? Is he here with you?”

“No, sir. My father felt his noise would be inappropriate. I do miss him, but he is in good hands.”

“He had the most amazing vocabulary of Otomi insults. You did us a big favor taking him. He was an embarrassment.”

“The only one who understands him is our servant Tetl, who is much amused by his salty tongue. There are few Otomi in Cuauhnahuac.”

“Indeed, and your father rarely entertains. You were the perfect choice for the bird, especially since you seemed to have a rapport with animals. Do you still?”

“Yes, sir. I do. It is one of my few talents.”

“Good. Listen to them; they have much to teach you.”

I pondered that last statement on the way to the map room. We spent the rest of the evening with the map. After tracing Acapipioztzin’s route, we also traced the various trips we had taken over the years. Mine were the most interesting. We all turned in eventually, and I was again left with my misgivings. It was clear to me that any revolt at this time was most unlikely to succeed. The Tenocha could hardly overthrow the Khanate by themselves and I had little reason to believe anyone was in league with them. It was obvious Nezahualcoyotl would not take part in any action against his own sister’s family, and the night before, Coatleztli had suggested that most of the Valley despised the Tenocha. Furthermore, with all their duplicity, I had no reason to believe they would honor the principle of self-determination for the several tribes. Still, I had committed myself to their cause, and it would be dishonorable to turn on them now. I felt caught in a trap of my own making. In due course, Nezahualcoyotl’s final words came back to me, and I thought of my spirit guide. I had long neglected him and found it difficult to contact him now. I decided I needed to get away from everyone for a few days and reestablish contact with him. It would have to wait, however, for I would have to return to the barracks the next day.

Comfortable as the bed was, I did not sleep well. The next morning I arose early more from custom than anything else and put on my rough training garb. I went down to the dining room and found Acapipioztzin and George there. I joined them and, in due course, Theodore also arrived. He said how much he enjoyed having me visit the last few days and hoped I could come back soon. I thanked him for his kind hospitality and his help with my sword skills. When we finished eating, I wished Acapipioztzin a safe journey and a good campaign and expressed the hope that I would see him the following year. I thanked George for his hospitality with my tongue firmly in my cheek. He regarded me with his trademark smirk and nodded my dismissal. Theodore led me to the side door facing the barracks and, reminding me I could visit anytime I wanted, wished me well as I left.

I slipped back into the routine quickly enough and impressed everyone with my improvement with the sword and my general intensity. After a few days, however, Acolmiztli called me over at the end of the day’s practice. He told me to clean myself up and report to his quarters. Puzzled, I did as he requested, in due time, tapping on his door. He opened it and ushered me in. There, to my complete surprise, was my brother Theodore. The latter jumped up and grabbed me in a bear hug. I was startled by such affection after all these years, but it was quite sincere and seemed to have some urgency. Alarmed, I asked if all of the family were well. He assured me they were and bid me be seated. Acolmiztli excused himself and left us alone.

“Karl, I came as quickly as I could. It is you I am concerned about.”

“Me? Why?”

“I was in the desert to the north some days ago and came across an old man who was dying. I stopped to help him. I carried him into some shade and gave him some water. He was too far gone to save, but he looked at me with that distant look of the dying and said that my little brother needed me more than he did. With that he died. I came as quickly as I could.”

“But I am fine. He must have been delirious.”

“Karl, one of your most endearing traits is your inability to lie convincingly. Why don’t you tell me what is troubling you and let me help you.”

“You are most kind to want to help, but this is a problem of my own making and I alone must deal with it.”

“Sometimes talking to another can make it easier to find a way to deal with a problem.”

“Perhaps. Tell me, if you have committed yourself to others on a course of action and later find that course is mistaken, would you turn on the others or see it through to its conclusion?”

“Can you just walk away from it, neither turning on anyone or taking further part in it?”

“No, I can’t.”

“Then you must take the decision that serves the greater good.”

“That is hard to determine.”

“The course that would harm the fewest.”

“That, also, is hard to determine.”

“Can you not tell me more? I will not tell anyone else without your leave. I want to help you.”

“I cannot put you in that position. But I do appreciate your wanting to help me. It is something I need to deal with on my own. When I get some leave again, I will go consult with my spirit guide.”

“I’m sure I am to help you with this. I will stay in Cuahnahuac until the situation is resolved. You can always reach me there if and when you need me. Remember, I want to help and I am sure I can help.”

“Thank you. But enough of this, come and join us for dinner and tell me all about your travels. I thought you were in the east.”

He joined me for dinner with the other instructors and regaled us with tales of his experiences. He prevailed on me to tell about my time in the north and we spent a pleasant evening. He slept in the barracks with me that night and, the next morning, left for home. Once more, he admonished me to get in touch with him if I should need his help or just want to talk. After a few weeks the Harvest Festival was almost upon us and Acolmiztli called us all together around noon.

“You have all done quite well. Those of you who are still here have done me proud and I’m honored to be associated with your training. There is nothing more you can learn here. You will all be expected to report to the Ocelotl Ordu two days after the festival. There you will complete your training. You will have to learn to do all you have learned here on horseback. I am dismissing you early so that you can go visit with your families during the festival and report to the Ordu rested and ready for action. Dismissed.”

Again Acolmiztli called me aside and gave me some chocolate beans for spending during the festival. I thanked him and, after cleaning up quickly, left the barracks. I wandered down toward the eastern end of the island and engaged a boat to take me across the lake to Texcoco. We arrived in midafternoon and I walked through the city leaving it by a road leading north. I came upon a yam a little after dusk and spent the night in relative comfort. I purchased a little food for the road and continued north. I decided to see the old site of Teotihuacán, that Grandfather had mentioned in his book. I wasn’t exactly sure where it was, but I had a fairly good idea and felt I could ask along the way. It wasn’t long before I wished I had secured a horse, but I was determined to make it on foot.

Late in the afternoon, I came upon some people working in the fields and asked them where the old city was. They assured me I was on the right path and would be there shortly. Indeed, before long, I could see the large mounds that were the pyramids appear in the distance. I arrived at the base of the larger pyramid late in the afternoon. I drank a little water then climbed up to its top. I sat down on the apex and, closing my eyes, felt a surge of energy pass through my body. Clearing my mind, I sought out my spirit guide. I awoke the next morning, drank a little water, continued my fast, and again sought my guide.

In the late afternoon, I finally broke through the wall my neglect had built between my guide and me. I sought and received his guidance. I must have fallen asleep again, for it was pitch-black when I awakened. The stars were brilliant overhead, tiny fires in a nearby village were just visible, and I was really hungry. I ate some of my food and slept until dawn. I rose, ate a little, climbed down the pyramid, and set off southward toward Texcoco. For the first time in a long time, I felt completely at peace.

11

The Tenocha Revolt, 91K

(Mexico City, 1459)

When I reached Texcoco, I went straight to the palace. I presented myself to the guard and asked for Acapipoltzin, explaining that I was his cousin. He was startled to hear of my relationship and ushered me into the entrance hall and presented me to the commander of the guards. The commander was also surprised to hear that the son of the Tlatoani had such a strange-looking cousin. He asked me exactly how I was related. When I explained my “relationship,” he gave me a sidelong glance and asked if the family actually knew me. I insisted that some of them did and named those I had met a few weeks before. He explained that Acapipoltzin was with the Ordu to the south of town, but the others were here. He had a servant announce me and stayed with me, keeping a close eye on me.

The entrance hall of Nezahualcoyotl’s palace was quite different from that of the Khan. It was quite a bit smaller and had no statuary, but had plants and decorative wall hangings. On the other hand, the palace itself seemed to be larger, with many more rooms, and no interior courtyard. There were extensive gardens behind it instead. In due course, the servant returned to announce that the Tlatoani himself would receive his “cousin” right away. The commander shrugged and returned to his duties, while the servant led me to Nezahualcoyotl. He was sitting in a chair in a small study reading an old book when I was ushered into his presence. He waved me into a chair and finished his reading before looking up at me and smiling.

“Well, what brings my ‘cousin’ here?”

“I am sorry to bother you, sir. I wanted to see your son and borrow a horse so I could get to Cuauhnahuac before the festival.”

“That would be quite a ride in one day. But why didn’t you go directly from Tlatelolco? I’m sure you could have gotten a horse from your real cousins.”

“I do apologize for claiming kinship, but I thought it would be the best way to gain admittance to the palace. The reason I ask for the horse here is because I walked to Teotihuacán two days ago and rather than lose time being rowed back to Tlatelolco, I thought I would ask here.”

“Have you been to Teotihuacán before?”

“No, but my grandfather spoke of it in his book.”

“I have read all your grandfather’s books save one. If he mentions the City of the Gods, it must be in that book.”

“It was in the book in our old language.”

“You can read that language?”

“Yes.”

“I have seen the book in the Khan’s library. What does he say about the city?”

“He said that it was the largest city he had ever seen in the ‘new’ land and that if one stands on the apex of the larger pyramid, one is strangely revitalized. He also said that he would go there whenever he was in the area.”

“Did you find the apex revitalizing?”

“I did.”

“I have also found it so. But I keep you from your mission.”

He pulled a rope, which signaled a servant to enter. He told the servant to see that I was given a fresh, well-rested horse immediately. He suggested to me that I spend the night with Acapipoltzin and the Ordu and set out the next day for Cuauhnahuac. I promised to look in on him, but thought I should ride through the night since I was anxious to get there. He shrugged and told me to tell his son to be sure to be at the palace the next morning.

I followed the servant to the stables and a horse was quickly prepared for me. I mounted up and rode through the city toward the south at a good clip. Once out of the city, I picked up the pace. Not far from the city, guards from the Ordu stopped me. I asked them to take me to Acapipoltzin, since I had a message from his father. He greeted me warmly but wondered why I was delivering messages from his father. I explained the situation and gave him his father's message. Then I bid him an enjoyable festival and he bid me a safe journey. I rode off to the south.

It was already late afternoon, but I was determined to go as far as I could before stopping. The truth was, I was quite tired from my long walk that day. I thought of stopping at Chalco for the night, but decided that would be too far out of my way. Instead I headed for the causeway at Cuitlahuac. It would get me on the south side of the lake just east of Xochimilco. It was already dark when I crossed the causeway, but I went a little farther until I reached a yam a little west of Xochimilco. I ate a good meal and urged the keeper to get me up at first light with a fresh horse and keep the other horse until my return in a few days.

It was still dark when I mounted up the next morning, still munching some sort of meat, vegetable, and chili mixture in tlaxcalli bread. It was quite good, although a little fiery for breakfast. Dawn was lighting things up behind me as I rode west. It was full light by the time I turned south on the road to Cuauhnahuac. I kept up a good pace, although eventually I had to slow down since I could tell the horse was tiring. We were climbing, after all. I stopped near midday at a tiny yam and traded horses for the last leg of the journey. I finally arrived at home in the late afternoon. Just before the house came into view, I heard the unmistakable shriek of Cuauhtzin's greeting. As I rode up, both Tetl and Theodore were in front of the house to meet me, and Cuauhtzin swooped over to perch on my shoulder. The horse was startled by the bird, but too tired to react strongly. I dismounted and embraced my brother and my friend, Tetl.

Tetl took the horse to the corral and Theodore walked into the house with me. Cuauhtzin remained attached to my shoulder. I sat down on a chair while Theodore thoughtfully secured some fruit and a wide-mouthed shallow pot for Cuauhtzin. I shared a piece of the fruit with Cuauhtzin and Theodore brought some chocolatl for us to drink. Finally he sat down across from me.

"You look so much better since the last time I saw you, Karl. You must have contacted your guide. How can I help you?"

I quietly told him the entire story from the beginning, my talks with Oganaya, all the others I met and my subsequent involvement in the "revolution." I also told him how I came to have misgivings and finally concluded I had made a serious mistake. Then I told him how I had gone to Teotihuacán and with much difficulty reestablished contact with my guide. Finally I explained that my guide told me to turn myself into the Khan, but not to betray the others involved. Theodore remained silent through my discourse, and a little while longer. Then he spoke.

"You are in worse trouble than I thought. Your guide's advice is brave, but hard. I think I see how I am to help you. You should turn yourself in to George and no one else. In fact, you should be alone with him when you do so."

"George! He is the worst of them all. He is the only member of the family I would not mourn. He constantly regards me with an obnoxious smirk. He'll likely torture me to death slowly himself."

"No, he won't, as long as you are alone with him when you tell him. There is much you do not know about the man. He is extremely bright and even more clever. I'm sure he is well aware of your involvement in the plot and is no doubt equally well aware of breadth of the conspiracy and the identity of most of the others who are involved. He will try to get you to betray them anyway and will be angry with you when you refuse. But there is one service you can perform for him before you see him and it will go a long way toward turning aside his wrath."

“What might that be?”

“Are you personally aware whether the Khan suspects that there might be a conspiracy against him?”

“From all I’ve heard, he can’t imagine such a thing.”

“Excellent. Tell that to your contact before you see George.”

“That will please him?”

“Yes, but only tell him after he suggests you turn on your ‘friends.’ ”

“How do you know George so well?”

“I was with him on campaign in the Khanate of the Clouds. I saved his life from a fever. I will not hesitate to remind him of the debt, to save your life. I don’t think it will be necessary, but just in case, I will go to Tlatelolco with you, ostensibly for the festival, but mostly so I can make sure he sees me.”

“Do you think I’ll be allowed to go on campaign next spring?”

“Oh yes, I’m sure you will. I’m not sure George will let you return, however.”

“It won’t be up to him unless the Khan dies.”

“Never underestimate him, Karl. He is ruthless. Whatever you do, watch out for him.”

“I will do as you say.”

Just to be sure, I consulted with my guide that night before I went to sleep and he concurred with Theodore’s suggestions. He urged me to be strong. The next day was the first day of the festival, but we stayed and enjoyed a relaxing day at home. I was not sure if I would ever see Cuauhtzin again, so I gave him a lot of attention, which he greatly enjoyed. Early the following morning, Theodore and I set out for Tlatelolco. We talked of many things along the way, especially our family. In the late afternoon, we parted company as he went on north toward Coyoacan and I turned east toward Xochimilco. I spent the night at the same yam as before and the next morning set off with the Tlatoani’s horse. I arrived in Texcoco just after noon and turned the horse in to the stable. I did not enter the palace, but left a note for the Tlatoani, thanking him for the use of the horse, and to Acapipioztzin, wishing him a safe trip with the Ordu, and then I went straight to the dock. With some difficulty I found a man willing to take me over to Tlatelolco, but only at twice the usual fee. I arrived at the capital in the midafternoon and headed straight for the market. I found Oztooa in his stall and told him in an undertone that I had been able to befriend my cousins and the Khan suspected nothing. He seemed pleased to hear that and told me to keep him advised more frequently. I said I would try, but I was being sent to the Ocelotl Ordu. He shrugged in resignation but suggested that I might be of service there.

I left the market and went straight to the palace. I was admitted readily and I went to the guardroom. I found Tlauquechol and asked him if he knew where George was. He replied that he was probably in his room getting ready for the events of the evening. He added that Theodore had been expecting me for a few days and wanted me to join him when I arrived. I told him I had to see George first, but promised to seek out Theodore afterward. He gave me a strange look.

I went directly to George’s room by the route least likely to cross anyone else’s path. I went through the rooms to the right of the entrance hall, climbing the stairs beyond the reception hall bringing me right to his door. I knocked on the closed door. His voice came back tinged with annoyance.

“You’re early. But come on in anyway.”

“You were expecting someone?” I asked as I entered.

“You!” He was surprised. “What brings you here? Lost your way?”

“No. I need to talk to you. It is important and it won’t take long.”

“Well?” He seemed bored.

“I have been part of a conspiracy to overthrow the Khanate. I have come to regret my involvement and am turning myself in to you.”

“Why?” His look darkened and hardened.

“The Khanate is better than any alternative likely to evolve from the conspiracy.”

“Really. How good of you to say so. Who else is involved?”

“It would not be right for me to say.”

“Maybe if I helped you. Tlacaelel, Moctezuma, Oztooa are any of these names familiar?”

“It would not be right for me to say,” I repeated.

“What was your part in the conspiracy?”

“To find if the Khan suspected anything.”

“And what did you report?”

“That he did not.”

“How long ago did you report that?”

“Just before I came here.”

“Are you expected to report to the Ocelotl Ordu?”

“Yes, two days after the festival.”

“See that you do. Also, see that you no longer involve yourself with the treason. I’ll do what I can to keep you out of this. Now go present yourself to my brother. He’s been waiting for you.”

“Yes, sir.”

As I quickly left George’s room, I was completely astonished at his reaction to my confession. He hadn’t even bothered to return to his smirk as he dismissed me, but still wore the dark, hard look. I was certain I would be spending a long time in a cold dark cell awaiting execution or at least exile, but instead it was as though nothing happened. Theodore (my cousin) was delighted to see me and asked why it took me so long to get here. I said I had had some personal business to take care of, but was now at his disposal.

We had a great time for the rest of the festival. Theodore insisted on visiting Miahuaxihuitl and Papan again, much to their delight. As it turned out, my brother Theodore was also there and the two namesakes renewed their acquaintance. I managed to find a moment alone with my brother to tell him how the interview with George turned out. He was relieved but not surprised.

This festival was something like the Khanate Festival, although the emphasis in the entertainment was more local. The ending ceremony was a sort of general prayer of thanksgiving for the harvest led by Khan Henry. It was rather eloquent and Theodore whispered to me that the Khan had written it himself. Then perhaps a dozen banners representing various fruits of the harvest were raised to great cheers and spontaneous dancing. I supposed it must have been a good harvest that year, but I really had no idea.

The day after the festival, Theodore (my brother) bid me farewell and returned home. Theodore (my cousin) joined me for the trip to the Ocelotl Ordu, since he also was to report there. He would be on the staff, of course, while I would be a mere soldier. Still, while we were off duty, we could fraternize. It was a pleasant trip up to the north end of the valley. The Ordu was near a small town called Tolcayuca, about 120 li from Tlatelolco. We could have made it in one day with a hard ride, but since we didn’t have to be there for two days, we took our time stopping frequently at small towns along the way and spending the night in a yam.

The yam was run by a middle-aged Tepaneca, who was delighted to have a son of the Khan as a guest. The other guests included a few of the usual mixed lot, but most were soldiers and some of my fellow trainees, all of whom were headed to the Ocelotl Ordu. Theodore was in his element, having a grand time trading jokes and stories with the others. I could see that he was really well liked by the men and had no trouble seeing why. The

next morning, we looked like a jagun when we left the yam. A change came over Theodore. He rode at the head of a troop and suddenly was all business. I remained by his side and we talked occasionally, but it was clear he was in charge of this "troop" as though he was leading us into battle. I was impressed. We reached the Ordu by midday and were immediately organized and given assignments. I saw no more of Theodore for quite a while.

The new recruits were placed in a training group. First we were all evaluated as to our weapons skills on and off horseback. While I and the other former instructors were equally skilled both ways, most of the recruits were not. We who were skilled enough were immediately assigned to an arban, while the others were kept in the training group. In the arban, we learned all the maneuvers we used in battle, both on horseback and on foot. By the time of the New Year Festival, we were a formidable force. I was not surprised to find that the Ordu was not dismissed to celebrate Festivals, or anything else for that matter.

On the first day of the New Year Festival, I was on guard duty along the southbound road along with a few others of my group. A lone horseman approached us on the road and we rode out to meet him. He appeared to be a dispatch rider from the capital. He smiled at us when we reached him and asked if he had finally found the Ocelotl Ordu. We replied that he had and sent him on his way. I was a little puzzled that he would ask that since we had been here for a long time now and surely the capital knew where we were. I guessed that perhaps the rider was not familiar with the area and the message was of no consequence.

When we returned to camp after being relieved, we found it a hive of activity. It seemed the dispatch rider had brought us orders to ride north over the mountains to quell a revolt in Tulancingo. We were to leave at first light. That really surprised me and I sought out Theodore. He proved hard to find since he was very busy making preparations. When I finally caught up with him, he was glad to see me and gave me a letter that had come with the dispatch. I put the letter aside for later and explained my misgivings about the dispatch. He immediately saw my point and took me to the commander of the Ordu.

Baidar listened intently to me, then asked one of his staff if the dispatch rider was still in the camp. He was told that the rider was and Baidar asked that the rider be brought to him. Baidar sat down and wrote a note saying that he had received the orders and was on his way north. He told us to wait out of sight when the rider arrived. Baidar told the rider to take his message to the Khan at first light. The rider saluted and left. Baidar called us back and explained that he had to be sure there was something wrong with the order, so he would send a fast rider east to Tulancingo to see if there was any disturbance there. Meanwhile, he would send another man to follow the dispatch rider and see where he went. The Ordu would move north at first light as though the orders were genuine.

When I got back to my group, I had to scramble to get everything ready for the next morning. I forgot all about my letter. We were all up and mounted before the eastern sky began softening into dawn. We headed north while the dispatch rider and his shadow headed south. Tulancingo was only about 120 li away, but the terrain was so rugged, it would take us two days to reach it. The fast rider, however, would be there and back in a day if all was well. We moved along the road at a steady clip for as long as we could, but eventually, the road narrowed and became steeper. Dusk found us stretched out for about two li along the road just beyond Tezontepec. Late in the night, the fast rider arrived and reported to Baidar. The next morning, we reversed our path and picked up the pace. There was no trouble at all in Tulancingo.

I suddenly remembered my note and took it out to read. It was addressed to Oganaya and ordered me to make sure Theodore did not survive the excursion to Tulancingo. I was also to see that it took us a long time to return to the valley. I put the note away, deciding I would have to give it to George when I saw him. We burst out of the mountains in the late afternoon and by nightfall were well beyond our old camp.

The next morning it rained, making it an unpleasant ride, but Baidar was pleased, because it meant that our presence would not be obvious from afar. Near midday, the man we had sent to shadow the dispatch rider returned and reported that the rider had gone straight to the palace of Moctezuma, not that of the Khan. We picked up the pace and by late afternoon were approaching Tepeyac. Here we ran into a startled dispatch rider who was riding to call us to the capital. We galloped for the causeway to the city and our lead elements surprised the rebels who were moving to barricade it.

Baidar ordered us to fan out into the capital and wipe out any rebels we met. He and Theodore, with four jaguns, headed straight for the palace. When they arrived, they saw a remarkable sight. A force of several hundred Tenocha was battering the door to the palace when it was suddenly flung open and a sheet of continuous flame streamed out engulfing the attackers. Those not killed outright fled in panic only to be cut down mercilessly by the Ordu. George's secret turned out to be a weapon once described in detail by my grandfather in one of his books. It looked like a wagon made of metal, out of which was pumped by hand, a flammable liquid that was ignited as it left the wagon. It was a devastating weapon.

My jagun was sent to the western part of Tlatelolco where we surprised small groups of pillaging Tenocha and put them to the sword. Eventually we worked our way to the causeway leading into Tenochtitlan. It had been fully barricaded and the drawbridge removed. This only delayed the inevitable, however. Armed volunteers from all the cities and towns around the lake swarmed into Tenochtitlan while the Ordu commandeered every boat available and soon had several pontoon bridges across the small canal. We rushed over the bridge nearest to us and fanned out all over the city cutting down anyone who stood against us. Finally the palace of Moctezuma was surrounded, rushed, and those not killed were bound and dragged through the streets to the palace of the Khan.

When the prisoners were presented at the palace, I happened to be there. I noticed among them none other than the man known to me as Ehecoatl. He was bloodied but not bowed. His eyes shot defiance at his captors. I heard that Moctezuma had died defending his palace, but his brother Tlacaoel had been captured trying to escape. I asked which he was and Ehecoatl was pointed out to me. I did not see Oztooa among the prisoners, but I did recognize one or two others that had been at his house. George came out of the palace and a roar went up from the palace guard with the beating of swords against shields. We were a little surprised at that since only the Khan was saluted in that way.

He stood at the top of the stairs and looked down in contempt at the prisoners. His face was twisted in disgust as he looked at each one in turn. Only Tlacaoel returned his look with as much or even more loathing. George did not flinch but met his look steadily. Finally he gave an order to his guards. A rope was put around Tlacaoel's neck and he was dragged away. He was dragged behind a horse through all the streets of Tenochtitlan along with the body of his brother Moctezuma until there was little left of them, and that was burned and the ashes used for fertilizer. The rest were led away to be beheaded.

When all this was done, George summoned his brother and Baidar to join him. He spoke to both of them briefly. Theodore ran immediately into the palace. Baidar turned to us. He informed us that Khan Henry had been treacherously murdered and we would now acclaim the new Khan, George. We all dutifully beat our swords against our shields and shouted at the top of our lungs. George looked pleased by the salute. Baidar next ordered us to patrol the capital and make sure that the general pillaging going on in Tenochtitlan did not spread into Tlatelolco. We would not restore order on the other island for three days. After that, if any were still alive, we would protect them from further depredation.

I was a little shocked at the harshness of the sentence. I could see across the causeway that a lot of long-standing grudges against the Tenocha were being settled with interest. Any that tried to escape to Tlatelolco were turned back to meet their fate. I could not believe all the Tenocha were involved in the plot and thought the punishment much too harsh. Finally I was relieved and went to the old barracks that had been turned over to us as our camp. I just lied down as I was, too tired to clean myself up, and too sick at heart to eat a meal.

The next morning, I was awakened and told to report to the Khan immediately. I asked my commander if I should clean up first and he assured me that it would not be wise to keep the Khan waiting. I hurried over to the palace and presented myself at the door. I was waved in and, finding Tlauquechol, asked him where the Khan was since he had sent for me. He gave me another odd look, too odd to characterize, and sent me to the reception hall. In the hall, I found George seated in the Khan's chair and conferring with Baidar. I approached and saluted. George eyed me coldly, but Baidar smiled when he saw me. I waited while they discussed the final details of the occupation of Tenochtitlan. I heard Baidar mention that the treasury of Moctezuma had been secured and was under strong guard until order was restored to the city. It would then be transported to the

palace. When they finished talking, Baidar saluted and left. George eyed me silently for a while. Then he ordered the servants to leave the room. We were alone.

“Well, Cacalotl, you continue to surprise me. I am given to understand that you are the reason the Ordu arrived here so quickly. Did you recognize the false courier as one of your fellow conspirators?”

“No, sir. I merely thought it strange that a courier from the Khan would have trouble finding an Ordu that had not moved in months.”

“Very astute. So you really did abandon your little conspiracy?”

“Yes, sir. They sent me a note with the same courier, but I forgot about it until we were on our way back. When I read it, I thought it best if I give it to you. Here it is.” I handed him the note.

“Oganaya? Isn’t that a northern name?”

“It is Ani’ Yun’-wiya, sir. The name of a warrior I met who harbored misgivings about the Khanate. He was known to the man I knew as Ehecoatl who was the leader of the revolt.”

“Ehecoatl? I suppose that was Tlacaelel?”

“Yes, sir. He was pointed out to me yesterday and I recognized him.”

“You present me with a problem, Cousin. I was going to have you executed for treason once the revolt was launched, but there have been some complications. First of all, they made their move before I expected it; my informant was compromised and killed before he could tell me. Secondly, your repentance was obviously sincere and it is well known in the Ordu, thanks to my brother, that you saved us from a difficult situation. Finally, I owe your brother my life and he has had the temerity to remind me of the debt. Therefore, this is how we will handle the situation. You will be promoted to arban commander and be ‘allowed’ to immediately go on campaign in the Khanate of the Clouds. You will go alone and you will not dawdle about the countryside. You must present yourself in Tamalameque in one month. You will not return until and unless I specifically order you to do so. Understood?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Good. Here is your insignia of rank.” He handed me a blue sash. “Now, get out of my sight.”

I quickly left by the door to the courtyard and hurried to the entrance hall. Tlauquechol congratulated me on my promotion as I left the palace and I thanked him. I returned to my unit and informed my commander of my “promotion” and “reassignment.” He nodded, although he seemed a bit puzzled. He told me to report to Baidar about my new assignment. I went and cleaned up first, since I knew there was no need to hurry yet and I was really filthy. Once clean, I presented myself to Baidar and told him of the Khan’s orders. He clapped me on the back and congratulated me on getting my much-wished-for assignment. He confided that George had told him how anxious I was to go on campaign. I thanked him and he gave me a pass to leave the city and orders to go to the Khanate of the Clouds on campaign. He told me to present the latter to the commander of the training Ordu on the plain, east of Tamalameque. I would be directed there from the capital. I mentioned that I was told it was southeast of the city, but he said it was moved every few years. I asked if I could visit Cuauhnahuac before I left, and he said I could.

I wrote a note to Theodore expressing my sorrow over the death of his father and explaining my “orders.” I told him I hoped to meet him in the Khanate of the Clouds the next year. I gave the note to a member of the staff and, mounting up, rode out of the city by the causeway to Tenayuca since Tenochtitlan was still off-limits. I rode until dark and found the same small yam where I had changed horses a few months ago. There was unseemly excitement about the sacking of Tenochtitlan among the guests. I was much clapped on the back and toasted as a member of the Ocelotl Ordu. I tried to be gracious, but retired early pleading pressing orders. They probably suspected I was going to arrest someone in Cuauhnahuac.

I left early and rode hard the rest of the way home. I arrived at midmorning to the usual shriek from Cuauhtzin. Theodore and Tetl came running out surprised that I would be home so soon. I explained what my orders were while fussing over Cuauhtzin. I told them all that had happened of which I was aware. I had no idea of how

Khan Henry had died. I found out some time later that one of the servants had been a Tenocha spy. He was to have killed the guard and opened a side door to the conspirators. Since George had not heard from his spy in a few days, he doubled the guard and the servant was unable to carry out his assignment. He ran to the courtyard where he found Khan Henry and George talking and pulling out a knife, plunged it into the Khan and turned on George. The latter pulled out his sword (which he always carried) and made short work of the man. At least this was the official story. I found it odd that only George was present at the strategic moment and only he survived to tell the story. You would think he would have wanted to keep the man alive for questioning. Besides, I remembered the servant in question, and found it hard to believe he would have plunged a knife into anyone. But I have no proof.

I spent a pleasant two days with my brother, Tetl, and Cuauhtzin. I was quite sure I should not bring the latter with me. I didn't want his life shortened on my account. Tetl promised to tell my father what happened when he returned and Theodore said he would go with me part of the way so he could visit Sarah and Tepeyolotl in Chalco before he returned north to his family. He also promised to visit me in the Khanate of the Clouds if he could. I should have been excited about going on campaign and seeing new things and places, but I wasn't. It was too hard to forget what an idiot I had been and how I would not be allowed to return home because of it. Cuauhtzin's plaintive wail as we left that morning perfectly echoed my feelings.

12

Trip to Tamalameque, 92 K

(North Central Colombia, 1460)

Theodore and I rode at a fairly good clip and were near Xochimilco when it grew dark. We stopped at a yam for the night. There was still a lot of excitement and pleasure among the patrons over the fate of the Tenocha, but there was already some grumbling that the Ordu had ended the plundering rather roughly. This time I was given a few dirty looks instead of claps on the back. We turned in early and left at first light. We arrived at the outskirts of Chalco near midday. I bid Theodore farewell and asked him to greet Sarah and her family for me as well as his own family when he finally reached them. I hurried on, stopping briefly near Amecameca to exchange horses for the ride over the trail between the two volcanoes, Iztaccihuatl and Popocatepetl. There was snow in the pass and it was quite a cold run from tree line to tree line. It was fully dark when I reached the yam where I had encountered Aztahua the year before and been guided to the revolution. I was not surprised to find he was no longer there. I asked the new proprietor, an Otomi, what had happened to him. The proprietor said that his employer, the new Khan, had recalled Aztahua to the capital. If it was possible, I felt even more foolish.

I left early the next morning, determined to make the best possible time down to the coast so I would be able to take a little more time going through places new to me. By riding hard and changing horses frequently, I was able to reach Cempoalla in four days. Once I reached the coast, the terrain was much easier and the roads better, enabling me to make it to Coatzacoalcos in two days. One more day of hard riding got me to Xicalanco by the late afternoon. This was the seat of the governors of the Maya lands and I decided to look up the governor and see if Tlapac had returned home from the north.

The governor's palace was rather modest—little more than a large house. When I presented myself at the door, the guard saluted me and ushered me in the door. Once inside the palace, I announced myself to a servant who went to alert the governor. Looking around, I could see that the palace was a miniature version of the palace of the Khan of Anahuac with a small courtyard in the middle and only one story surrounding it. Amazingly, there were even statues of each of the governors. I studied the representation of the fabled Smoking Mirror, my grandfather's friend. It must have been done late in his life, for he looked tired. Still, he had a good, strong face without coldness or meanness. I wondered how good a likeness it was. As I studied it, a voice broke into my reverie.

"I always try to live up to his example. It is no easy task. I am Chlalcoatl, the governor."

"I am Cacalotl, son of John the Healer. It is an honor for you to receive me."

"There is nothing my grandfather would not have done for yours. How can I serve you?"

“You are too kind, sir. I am on my way to the Khanate of the Clouds to campaign and thought I’d stop by and see if your son, Tlapac, was here so we could renew our acquaintance.”

“He wrote to me of you. He was most impressed with you and will be sorry to have missed you. He won’t be back for a few weeks and I can’t imagine you’d want to wait.”

“I can’t, I’m afraid, I must report to the training Ordu in just over two weeks.”

“Well, perhaps I can help you after all. There is a merchant leaving by boat to Xaymaca tomorrow. He can take you with him and, once there, you can catch a ride on one of the Koryo ships to the Khanate of the Clouds. You will never make it by land in two or three weeks.”

“That is most kind. Are you sure the merchant won’t mind?”

“It is not his place to mind. You are an officer in the Khan’s army. It is an honor for him to take you. Come, you will join me for dinner and spend the night here. I’ll send a message to the merchant and he will call for you in the morning.”

He guided me to the bath, subtly reminding me of my current state of disarray after my hard riding, left me in the hands of some servants, and withdrew to send the note to the merchant. I handed over my clothes to be washed and vigorously cleaned myself. When I was done, I was given some loose, cool garments to wear. I was led to the dining room and Chlalcoatl introduced me to his wife Ix Ykoki (a Maya), his daughters, Atototl (about fifteen years old), and Cuiauhxoçhitl (about thirteen), and his other son, Tlilatl (about ten). There were also a few guests who were mostly local merchants. Not surprisingly most of the dinner conversation revolved around the abortive revolution of the Tenocha and the accession of the new Khan. I only offered the official version of events, in no way alluding to my role, and gave only politic, noncommittal opinions of the new Khan. I had learned. I was excused early since I had to get up with the dawn the next day. My room for the night was much more modest than the one in the Khan’s palace and the bed was a sort of netting suspended between two walls, the hamaca my grandfather had grown to really enjoy. I could see why; it was quite comfortable.

I rose early and found my uniform all clean and folded up for me. I dressed quickly and left the room. A waiting servant guided me to the kitchen and served me a light meal. I was waiting outside the door of the palace when the merchant presented himself with a long-suffering look to pick up his passenger. When I informed him I was his passenger, he blanched and stammered his insincere apology. I waved it off and followed him to the harbor.

The harbor was quite large and all of dressed stone. It was really very full of boats, all of which looked the same. The merchant, a Putun Maya with a Nahuatl name, Cipactli, guided me easily and surely to his boat. It, like all the others, was a dugout canoe, fashioned from a very large tree. It was about forty-five feet long and eight feet wide. At its center was a covered area under which was all the merchandise he was carrying. Spread out on either side of the covered area were thirty rowers both sitting and standing, paddles in hand, waiting for our arrival. As soon as we stepped on board, their paddles dipped into the water in unison and off we went.

Cipactli was carefully looking over his goods, so I kept out of his way to one side, near the rear of the covered portion, thus enjoying some shade. We stayed in the lagoon, just offshore the long barrier island until we reached its end; then we turned into the channel and put out to sea. We went out far enough to avoid any surf (not that there was much) and yet stayed well within sight of land. Near midday, the rowers paused in shifts to eat a very light meal. I wondered that they were able to row all day on such fare, but that night, when we put into shore at a seaside village, they were given a good meal. I ate modestly and offered to help guard the boat that night. This pleased Cipactli and he warmed up considerably. The next morning, the rowers were again fed quite well (although everything was cold leftovers from the night before). We set off again as soon as it was light enough to see.

Cipactli became quite loquacious that day. He chatted at length about things that meant nothing to me. He told me about various merchants he didn’t trust, where one might find the best prices for skins, feathers, chocolate beans, etc., how the rainy season had lasted longer than usual this year and delayed him at least a week, how hard it was to find good rowers and reliable help, how worried he was that the market in Xaymaca was already flooded with the goods he was bringing, and he might be wiped out. He was a crashing bore.

When he finally ran out of blather, I asked about our route to Xaymaca. He explained that we would hug the coast of Uluumil Kutz, stopping briefly at a few of the larger towns to trade, until we reached the large island off the eastern coast, Cozumel. We would rest there for a day while he consulted with the chilán (seer) who would tell him if his crossing to Cuba would be safe. Then, if all was well, we would cross to Cuba and hug its southern coast until we reached the large peninsula near its eastern end, at which point we would sail south to Xaymaca. After that he would turn southwest and reach the coast of the mainland near the lands of the Paya. He would then follow the coast westward back to Xicalanco.

Actually, this trip was quite boring as far as scenery goes also. After the first day or so, we ran out of jungle and from then on, all one could see on the shore was endless dry shrub land. It was hard to believe anyone lived there, but we passed many small villages and every night we put into one all along the coast. I tried to mingle a little in the villages, but my height, strange appearance, and uniform tended to put the locals off. Only in one village was there a difference. We were almost halfway along the northern coast when we put into it. It was called Dzilam. There I was greeted by a middle-aged man with some frightful scars on his face and arms. He introduced himself to me as Ah Chel, just recently returned from campaign in the Khanate of the Clouds. Not surprisingly, my father had saved him some years before. I asked if it was when he got his scars.

“Oh no, young sir, that was much later. I wish he had been with us then, I would not look so repulsive. I heard he was quite skilled in preventing scars also. But he saved me from a fever.”

I was beginning to think my father’s expertise lay in curing fevers, but was interested to hear that he was able to prevent scarring. I hadn’t known that. It would seem I would have to learn about him from others, or learn the right questions to ask him when next I saw him. I can’t say I was looking forward to seeing him again since my recent debacle in Anahuac. Anyway, Ah Chel was a cheerful diversion. He even joined me for my guard duty. He told me which commanders to avoid (as if that was up to me) and which to seek out. He warned me to be diligent in the training Ordu, for the commander of it was quite a martinet. He also gave me the names of some of his friends that I could count on should I run into them and even told me the best place to go in Xaymaca should I have need of a woman and a good meal. I thanked him for all his advice and promised to greet any of his friends that I might meet. He told me to save some of the enemy for him since he would be back in a year.

He was a pleasant fellow, but the only such one I encountered until we reached Cozumel. The town we sought was near the southwest end of the island. We reached the town in the late afternoon and put in to the port. Cipactli ran off to look up his seer and check out the market. I got out and walked around the dock a little. The men secured the boat and started fixing their evening meal. As I walked along, I came upon an old man with a big smile on his face, sitting down on the dock, dangling his feet over the side, and staring absently out to sea. Intrigued at finding a happy Maya, I greeted him. He invited me to join him.

“Forgive me if my Nahuatl is not very good. My name is Ah Poot. I was just sitting here looking at my mistress and very much enjoying the sight. Is she not beautiful?”

“There is no one in that direction, sir.”

“Of course there is, young man, right before you. Open your eyes.”

“You mean the sea?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Are you a fisherman?”

“I am. And one of the best, thanks to my mistress.”

“It is an honor to meet you, then.”

“That is most kind of you, young man. You must join me for dinner.”

He jumped up with more vigor than I would have expected and, taking my arm, propelled me down a side street past a line of rather rude houses to a ramshackle hut that was in serious disrepair. He was not at all concerned with the condition of the hut, but went right in and began to stoke up the fire and ready a large fish to cook. The fish was cleaned, cut up the middle, and spread out on a stick frame with the skin away from the fire. It cooked

quite quickly and he served it with tlaxcalli breads and a fiery sauce he had stored in an old jar. It was delicious. While we ate, he rhapsodized on the sea and all his wonderful times there. I asked him if he could tell if there would be a storm out at sea.

“Of course, my mistress always reveals her moods to me. I wouldn’t dream of disturbing her when she and the wind are in the throws of passion; it would be unseemly.”

I had never heard a storm described that way before. I told him that we would be going to Cuba in a day and asked if the passage would be safe. He smiled and said not to worry; the wind would not be in the area for at least a week. That was a relief, as I did not relish being out on the open ocean in a storm. I had a lot more faith in an experienced fisherman than any sort of seer. I asked him if he had a family. Since his name was Ah rather than Na, he was likely a widower.

“Oh yes, young sir. I have three sons and four daughters. All are married and have families of their own. One of my sons lives nearby as do two of my daughters.”

“Why do you not stay with them?”

“I like the way I live. I would not enjoy sitting in a corner of one of my children’s house waiting to die. When it is time for me to die, I will go out to my mistress and she will take me.”

“You wish to die at sea?”

“It is only fair. All my life I have taken my sustenance from the sea. In death I should return something to her.”

“It sounds like a lonely death.”

“How can you be lonely when you are with your mistress.”

“Tell me Ah Poot, why are you such a happy man?”

“I am in good health, at peace with my family and my neighbors, and everyday get to visit my mistress who gives me her bounty to take care of all my needs. Who would not be happy?”

“But most of your people seem rather dour or sober and you seem to always smile.”

“Many people have many concerns to keep them from being happy. I have none. You do not seem to be happy, my son.”

“It is hard to rejoice when you find out you are a fool.”

“But you are young, it is the time for foolishness. I was a proper fool at your age. Wisdom must be sought, earned; it does not fall out of the sky.”

“You are most kind. But my stupidity is at least partially responsible for some deaths and the replacement of a good man by an evil one. And, I am now on my way to an indefinite exile.”

“Some foolishness has greater consequences than others. Bear your troubles with courage and strive to do better. It is all you can do. In time, you may be allowed to return. Just as evil men replace good ones, so also, good ones replace evil ones. As to the deaths, we all eventually die and who can say anyone is to blame or that death is such a bad thing. I have no fear of it.”

“Really?”

“Yes. I feel I will become a part of my mistress and always be with her from that moment on.”

“You don’t believe you will wander about in Xibalba (the Maya underworld) after you die?”

“No. My mistress will not allow her lover to thrash around in a dark cave. She will accept me and I will become one with her.”

I thanked him for his hospitality and encouragement and offered to return the next day and help him repair his house. But he wouldn’t hear of it. He urged me to look about on the island and enjoy its beauty while he was out fishing, then rejoin him the next evening for dinner. I returned to the boat and took my turn at guard. The

old man had cheered me up considerably and I looked forward to seeing him the next evening. From his rhapsodizing about his “mistress” I had to assume he had not had a good marriage. Of course, it would have been rude to ask about it.

Cipactli had received good news from his seer and was in a fine mood the next morning. He told me we would stay on the island another day and leave in the morning, so I was free to wander about as I wished. I put on some loose cotton clothes and walked along the dock again and then continued on walking along the shore. I found a fairly secluded stretch of beach on the eastern shore of the island and stripped down and enjoyed bathing in the surf for a while. Then I went inland a bit and found a pond of fresh water. I rinsed myself off, washed out my clothes, and set them in the sun to dry while I sat in the shade. Once they were dry, I put them on and continued north along the eastern shore for a short distance. It was getting quite hot in spite of the breeze, so as soon as I saw a decent trail inland, I took it. It took a couple of hours to traverse the island and while there was plenty of shade, there was no breeze and myriad insects. It was a most miserable walk. When I regained the town, I went to the market and paid for a bath. The people who ran the bath offered to wash out my clothes and give me something for my insect bites. I accepted gratefully. When I finished cleaning up, I put on my still-wet clothes and wandered about the market a little. There was quite a variety of goods available even though it was not a large market. I picked up some fresh fruit to share with my fisherman friend.

I found him in the same place as the day before wearing the same big smile. He greeted me warmly as soon as he saw me and led the way to his hovel. He fixed fish again and we ate it as well as some of the fruit I had bought. I told him about my wanderings of the day and he spoke of his catch. Finally it was time to part and I thanked him again for his advice and his cheer as well as his hospitality. He shrugged it off.

“If I have given you some comfort, I am glad. Let me give you some more. I spoke to my mistress about you. She told me she would watch out for you and no harm would come to you while you are in her care.”

I thanked him again and asked him to thank “his mistress” for her kindness to me. As I left, I was sorry I would not see the old man again. He was right, though, I have never been in any danger while on the sea. I remember also thinking that this man had been kind and generous with me even though he didn’t know me and wasn’t in debt to my father. I hoped there would be more such as him in the world.

The following morning we left at first light. We retraced our path along the shore as far as a tiny island just off the northeastern tip of the Uluumil Kutz peninsula, and then we turned out into the open ocean toward Cuba. The men took turns rowing and resting day and night until we reached the coast of Cuba. I was told that the current was pushing us north, so we had to row south of east. We headed right for shore and rested up a day, then continued along the coast of the big island, stopping to trade at some of the larger towns until we reached the peninsula that pointed west. We spent the night on shore near its tip, then set out at first light due south into the open ocean. This time the current pushed us first east along the coast of Cuba, then west as we neared the mountainous island of Xaymaca. We arrived at a fine port on the northwestern part of the island. As we approached the shore, I could see some of the large Koryo ships anchored out in the bay. We rowed fairly near one of them and I could see that it dwarfed the merchant dugout.

When we reached the dock, I thanked Cipactli and wished him great success in the market. I then went into the town and looked for the governor. I learned that the governor was in a town inland, but there was an official in charge of the port. I got directions to his house. He turned out to be a retired minghan commander, a Dzitsiista named Hishkowits. He proved to be related to my sister-in-law, Mahwissa, Theodore’s wife. He was a tall, powerfully built man, perhaps fifty years old. He was most cordial and assured me he could get me passage on the next Koryo ship that was headed to the Khanate of the Clouds. Meanwhile, he prevailed on me to stay and tell him what was going on in Anahuac, since there had been many rumors lately. I gave him the official version, but I did add a few details about the crushing of the revolt by the Ordu. He pressed me for my role in the fight, since it was obvious to him I was too young to have any rank. I had to tell him about my promotion, although I tried to make little of it. He chided me.

“Do not be self-conscious of your accomplishments. It is not arrogant to recount them with pride. It is arrogant to think you need accomplish no more. Retell your deed simply and directly and make sure it isn’t the only deed you have to tell.”

Hishkowits urged me to enjoy the island for a few days while waiting for the next ship. I took one of his horses and rode into the interior of the island along a small river that emptied into the bay. It proved to be a beautiful ride. There were streams, pools and waterfalls, rolling hills and mountains, tall trees, fruit trees, bushes, and flowers, and wonderful, friendly people. When I returned, I congratulated Hishkowits on his posting. He laughed and agreed that it was worth all the misery of thirty years of campaigning in the Khanate of the Green Mist. I tried to ask about the campaigns, but he was always quick to change the subject. After a few memorable days, I was rowed out to one of the Koryo ships in the bay.

I scrambled up the side of the ship and was greeted by its master, Kang Son. He was of Koryo ancestry, but had been born in the Koryo settlement on the bay near the mouth of the Albayamule River. I noticed that about half of the large (two hundred men) crew was also Koryo; the rest seemed to be from the Southeastern Cities with perhaps a scattering of Timacua and Pansfalaya. There were also a few mixed bloods. Kang Son graciously showed me around his ship. It was about four hundred feet long and perhaps fifty feet wide amidships. There were six masts, two that could be removed in bad weather. The sails were made of slatted canes that could be reefed in horizontal folds. There were also large oars that could be used when the wind failed. Four anchors were attached to the truncated bow. The cargo hold consisted of twelve watertight compartments, so that most of the cargo could be saved in the event of a breach in the hull. It was steered by a central sternpost rudder that the crew adjusted by means of a large lever on a lower deck. The middle deck had the living quarters of the crew and any passengers. There were also tubs in which fresh vegetables and herbs were grown and pens with various animals for the table, although the cargo holds contained both grain and dried meat or smoked fish as well as trade goods.

It seemed I would not be the only soldier aboard. There were about a hundred others who were on their way to the southern campaigns. Kang Son told me that he and the other Koryo captains had agreed to transport and feed all the soldiers in return for a monopoly on all trade between the Khanate of the Blue Sky and the two southern Khanates. He did not appear to be put out by the bargain, but rather mentioned it with satisfaction. I asked if he ever sailed along the eastern coast of Khanate of the Blue Sky. He had not, although some of the others had. There was a strong northward flowing current off the east coast, and some dangerous shoals that had not been fully mapped. However, he had heard that there was a plan to build a settlement in the Great Bay that would build ships to ply the eastern coast.

Kang Son returned to his duties and I became acquainted with some of my fellow passengers. I only befriended two of them, Buzwaewae, an Anishinabe, and Sikopitai, a Siksika. Both were several years older than me and were of my same rank, arban commander. They were also both very tall, towering over the Koryo and most of the others on board. We seemed to hit it off immediately and became fast friends. Both of them had been on campaign in the Khanate of the Green Mist for four years where they earned their promotions, had returned home, and wandered about for couple of years, ran into each other and decided to try campaigning in the Khanate of the Clouds, since they had heard rumors that the next campaign would be against a great empire, instead of the endless small tribes in the Green Mist. I had not heard anything of an empire in the southern landmass and asked them about it.

They told me that there was a tribe along the coast just south of the Khanate's border called the Chimu. They had many great cities and a large army. I told them that I had heard they were at least organized, but no one ever told me they were a "great empire." They suggested that perhaps it was just a rumor spread to secure more recruits after that last miserable campaign in the jungles east of the great mountains. I told them what I had learned of that campaign from Tathtowe and mentioned that we might meet him, since he had said he would likely return for campaign against the Chimu. I also shared what I had heard from Ah Chel. They told me a little of their experiences, but they had no idea of the big picture, only of their own small parts and, frankly, the telling was rather confusing.

We left the port the day after I boarded. The crew used the huge oars to pull away from the shore; then the sails were raised and we headed west, then south around the end of the island. Then we seemed to be aiming east of south since the winds and current tended toward the west. It was amazing how stable the large ship was compared to the small merchant boat that had brought me to Xaymaca. There was some motion of course, but we were not buffeted by every little passing wave. After several days of very smooth sailing, we could see the

mountains of the Tairona take shape and grow in the southeast. We steered away from them aiming instead for the mouth of the Yuma River. We sailed up the river a short distance to the bustling new port called Yumabalikh on the western bank, where we debarked.

A representative of Khan George (of the Khanate of the Clouds) was there to meet us. He welcomed us effusively and led us to a large house where we were given a big meal and allowed to relax until the next day. In the morning, he returned with enough horses for all of us. We mounted up and he led us south along first the west bank of the river until nightfall; then we crossed a large pontoon bridge to the east bank, spending the night near a small town before continuing up the river the next day along the east bank. We rode along at a good easy pace on excellent wide roads made of crushed rock pressed into the soil, and camping at night at special sites near yams. The road occasionally left the river because of very marshy areas or to avoid some of the river's more capricious meanderings. The vegetation changed from scrub to marsh to jungle to forest to grassland as we followed the river upstream first south then southeast, then south again, finally reaching Tamalameque on the sixth day. We rode through the city, which was very large, larger than Tlatelolco and Tenochtitlan together, and spread out toward the northeast from the east bank of the river in the midst of an extensive grassland dotted with lakes. We stopped at a large military camp several li east of the city, in the midst of a prairie along a small river. To the east were the sheer massifs of the mountains filling the horizon as far as we could see. Here we were turned over to the camp commander, Cuauhpopoca.

It was a Nahuatl name, but he didn't look like he was from Anahuac. As it happened, he was from a people called Sinu. They had surrendered quickly on the very first campaign by my uncle George. I was surprised that someone from such an unwarlike people would have risen to such rank. He was every inch the commander, however. He nodded at and dismissed our guide, then ordered us to dismount and corral the horses, then return. We quickly complied and he looked us all over with a most unfriendly scowl. When he finished, he ordered us to run to the eastern edge of Tamalameque and back in an hour. If we were not back in an hour, we would not eat dinner. He then went on to describe the welcoming banquet he was having prepared for us. It sounded unbelievable. It was.

After weeks of travel and six days of riding, we were all tired and some of the men were not in very good shape. Still we all ran out of the camp in good order. Before we reached the city we had spread out considerably. I was quite pleased to see that all my "little war" practice had paid off and I was with the small group in the lead, as were my two friends, Sikopitai and Buzwaewae. On the way back it was apparent that some of the men were in very poor shape. Some were walking and some were sitting by the side of the road gasping. About half of us made it back in the allotted time, but the "banquet" turned out to be a very ordinary soup and some of the local bread. True to his word, none of those who arrived back even slightly late were fed that night. Ah Chel had warned me.

13

Training and Campaign, 93 K

(North Central Colombia to Northwest Peru, 1461)

Cuauhpopoca called us together the next morning after a cold but substantial breakfast. He explained that he was fully aware we were all quite skilled with the various weapons of the Ordu, so he had no intention of wasting anyone's time repeating the training we had already received. What he planned to do was enable us to keep up with the other tumen on campaign in a terrain not necessarily familiar to us. To that end, we would have to be able to march and ride long distances through the jungle, up the mountains, through the high mountain basins, and along the harsh, dry shore. We would have to do this with minimal water and food, and after a long, hard march or ride, we would have to be able to fight in hand-to-hand combat. Not that any such situations were likely to arise, but if they did, we would have to be ready.

When he finished addressing the whole group, he called out the officers and talked to us apart. He explained that as we knew, we were responsible for the men under our command. Therefore, we would be assigned our subordinates and would have to see that they completed the ordered exercises in the allotted time or join them in their punishment. The standard punishment would be no dinner (the only hot meal of the day). He would give

us about a week to whip our men into physical shape. In our group there were ninety-three soldiers, six arban commanders, two jagun commanders, and one minghan commander. Cuauhpopoca put the minghan commander, a Matlatzinca from Tecaxic named Michpili, in charge of organizing us any way he saw fit.

Michpili was a grizzled, old veteran who had kept to himself during the trip here and whose forbidding aspect caused the rest of us to give him wide berth. He proceeded to show us how he had earned his rank. He announced that since there was almost a hundred men in our group, he would demote himself to jagun commander for training purposes. The arban commanders would each be assigned ten men, and the jagun commanders would get eleven men and, if it made them feel better, could call themselves arban neg (eleven) commanders for training purposes. He reminded us that our performance on the run of the night before had shown clearly that too many of the men were out of shape. He had developed a fondness for eating dinner and had no intention of letting anyone cause him to miss it. Therefore, we would be whipped into shape this week or die.

It was a brutal week. Michpili ran us ragged every day and every evening we had to run from the camp to the eastern edge of Tamalameque and back in an hour. It was only about nine li each way but after all the forced marches, hard rides, infiltration maneuvers, and long swims, it was not easy. To make it worse, it wasn't enough that I could make it; I had to make sure my ten men made it. This required me running behind them and urging them on at first with words of encouragement, but eventually with the tip of a spear. By the end of the week, my command hated me, but had no trouble making the run. I noticed that most of the other arban commanders resorted to the same tactics with similar success. Michpili was pleased with our results and almost smiled.

Things did not get easier when we returned under Cuauhpopoca's thumb. He added us to the rest of his training Ordu as a distinct unit, maintaining our current organization. Now our misery would have a lot of company, for there were about twenty thousand or the equivalent of two tumen in training. From time to time, a jagun or a minghan would be deemed ready and sent on to the forward staging area. Meanwhile, fresh recruits arrived almost every week, usually in a group of a hundred or so, but occasionally there would be a larger group. Just before my jagun left, a group of five thousand arrived.

Our "exercises" proved to be brutal marches toward objectives some distances away. At first there seemed to be an attempt to give us a taste of only one type of terrain at a time, but that did not last long. Our first task was a march on foot 250 li up the Yuma River and back. It was a fairly level march, but even though this was the dry season, it was very muddy and most of us made use of the river at the end of each day's march. When we arrived back at the training camp, we were given wooden swords with red paint and split into two groups for a pitched battle. The paint would indicate who was "killed" in action. Thanks to my training with my cousin, Theodore, I proved very hard to "kill."

The second task was an infiltrative march through the jungle to a small hill about 225 li north-northeast of the camp. We were to arrive at the bottom of the hill from all sides simultaneously at dusk in five days without any of the "enemy" (a few dozen specially trained scouts) detecting our presence. I am pleased to report my group was among the few that made it. Most of the others were detected and turned back. Our reward was another mock battle to take the hill. I was "killed" in that action. Some sneak got me in the back while I was dispatching someone else.

The rest of the "exercises" tend to blur in memory, but a few of the worst included a 150 li march over the mountain chain east of the camp to a spot on the other side and a pitched battle, a 270 li march due west from the camp across the Yuma, through a jungle over some low hills across a maze of lakes, rivers, and swampy grassland with patches of forest or jungle to an island in the middle of a lake and another battle and finally, the worst, a 600 li ride to the coast and a "battle" followed by a 360 li march along the coast through sand dunes, dry, thorny scrub, jungle, and finally, the edge of the Tairona Mountains to reach a Putun trading settlement and another "battle." Then we returned by crossing the Tairona Range from its northwestern edge to its southeastern terminus (some 240 li) and two "battles," one among the highest peaks and another at the end, where we met our horses for the ride back. We were actually allowed to rest a couple of days after this "campaign."

By late summer, my jagun was deemed sufficiently trained, and we were mounted up, loaded with provisions, and unceremoniously sent south with maps, but no guides. Michpili was not at all put out but merely led us out

of the camp and turned us south. Except that we used the roads, this was very much like another “exercise.” He drove us hard necessitating our using all four of our horses each day. As we went up the Yuma Valley, the mountains on either side of us gradually closed in and the road began to climb. Eventually, mountains loomed in front of us, and we turned west between a high mountain and a higher volcano to pick our way through a treacherous pass which took us above the tree line for a very cold while and then back down to another valley, which we also followed south. All along our route we would only stop at supply depots that were strategically placed along the way about a hard day’s ride apart. We never entered any of the towns or villages along the way. I thought that odd, but didn’t feel comfortable enough to ask Michpili about it, and Buzwaewae and Sikopitai had no idea why. Eventually, I found out that the road we followed was called the military road and was purposely routed away from all the towns and villages, although branch roads connected them to it. This was for purely practical reasons so that the army could reach its objective without any distractions.

Eventually our new valley also ended in mountains and we picked our way through another brutal pass that led us to a narrow valley that soon joined a broader one whose river flowed northwest. We crossed the river and continued up a branch valley and another pass that brought us to what was pointed out as the ruins of Cayambe, the town destroyed by the forces of which Necowee had been a part. It was hard to tell there had been anything there—it was now just a grassy knoll. We continued retracing Necowee’s journey except for the battles or the people, since the road still avoided all the towns and villages. We would occasionally pass a merchant caravan, or a few individual travelers. I noticed that Michpili had eased off on the pace once we reached the high valleys and it was a good thing. It was very tiring there for both men and horses. Of course, the depots were closer together also.

Finally after passing through the land of the Canari we left the military road, turning southwest and following a river valley down toward the coast. Before we reached the coast, however, we turned south and arrived, in what should have been near mid fall, at the huge camp that was our staging area. It proved to be in a cul-de-sac open to the north and formed by hills not sixty li from the coast. It was a little dry for autumn and warm, but not hot. The vegetation was mostly scrub, but there was enough fodder for the horses. True to the old Mongol ways, crops (mostly for the horses) had been planted on the abandoned fields on the south side of the surrounding hills along a stream and were already harvested. It seemed that, in this area, there was only enough water for planting during what we would consider winter.

Michpili presented himself to the commander of the expedition, Khan George’s oldest son, Henry. Henry, a short, solid man with a perpetual frown, did not even look us over, but turned us over to his staff to disburse. We were spread around as needed. I ended up in a tumen made up mostly of Maya. Knowing their usual mission, I began to think I was being set up, but I didn’t know the man who sent me here and he didn’t know me. Still, I was not exactly pleased. The commander of the tumen was a Hotcangara (of all things) named Hayjaay. He had taken on the dour aspect of the Maya and was just as taciturn. The commander of my minghan was a Mixteca named Suchix. He was very intense and thoughtful. I had the feeling he would not make any rash mistakes. The commander of my jagun was Ah Tatal, a Maya. He was characteristically sour until I gave him Ah Chel’s greetings (he had been one of the people the latter had told me to look up). He then became my best friend, going out of his way to be kind. He was delighted to hear that Ah Chel would be joining us eventually.

There were five tumen in the staging area and a sixth was still being put together. Once it was complete, we would move out. Among the other tumen was the one commanded by Acapipioltzin. I made no attempt to renew our acquaintance because of the disparity in our rank, but he noticed me sticking out like a banner among the much shorter Maya in my jagun and sought me out to ask me about the Tenocha revolt. He also asked if I wanted him to get me transferred to his tumen, but I demurred, thinking it would be an insult to my new commanders. He wished me well on the campaign and mentioned that my cousin Theodore would likely get here before we started. I wasn’t sure I wanted to renew that acquaintance either since I felt responsible for his father’s death. I would have to, however; one can’t avoid one’s relatives, especially when one is so easy to spot in a crowd of short Maya. Anyway, I really liked him and suspected George would not have told him about my “involvement” in the revolution.

While we waited, I found that Michpili was given command of a minghan under the command of Henry’s younger brother, Ignace. Sikopitai was also under Ignace but in a different minghan. Buzwaewae was in a

different tumen, under command of Essabo, from one of the Southeastern Cities. We spent most of our time in further training, but we were able to spend a little time on our own. I rode to the coast with Sikopitai and Buzwaewae on one occasion, but found it to be a mangrove swamp. We were ordered to stay away from the towns and villages when we were on leave. Supposedly, this was to prevent the Chimu from knowing about our attack before it happened. I would have been rather surprised if they weren't well aware of our presence near their border in such force. I suspected there was some other motive for keeping us away from the locals. But then I had become very suspicious.

By late "autumn" enough trained men had come in to form the sixth tumen including my cousin Theodore and Ah Chel. The latter was shunted immediately to our tumen where he was assigned to our jagun but not my arban. He enthusiastically clapped me on the back and congratulated me for my "luck" at being assigned to the Maya tumen. Oddly enough, he was not being facetious. Theodore spotted me when our tumen was marching back from a short training exercise. As I mentioned before, it would have been hard for him not to spot me towering in a sea of Maya. He also offered to have me transferred to his tumen, but again I refused and he nodded approvingly. I asked after his mother and sister.

"Mother is adjusting, but she spends a lot of time in Texcoco now with her brother's family. Christina is often with her. George has still not moved into father's room. He said he would wait until he has married. That should be soon now, in the winter."

"Really? Who?"

"An odd choice. Her name is Chabi; she is the daughter of the Khakhan. No one in our family has ever married into the family of the Khakhan. George has never even met or seen her, but he was going to Khanbalikh this fall to marry her. I'm sure he knows what he's doing, but I don't."

Much as I liked Theodore, I could see that he had no guile in him. It was obvious that George wanted to cement relations with the Khakhan and saw this as a golden opportunity to do so. I rather felt sorry for Chabi (very misplaced sentiments as it turned out), but said nothing along those lines. I just murmured the usual banalities one is expected to say at such times. Instead of pursuing family business any further, I asked Theodore when he thought we would move on the enemy. He quickly warmed up to that topic.

"Actually we should be on our way in two days. The spies have returned, and not only are the Chimu unaware of our intentions, they are not even close enough to detect them. The northern part of their territory is mostly a desert except for the river valleys and they communicate with the northernmost of the valleys only by sea. We are only sending one tumen against those smaller settlements. The rest of us will proceed along the mountains until we are below the desert; then we will swoop down on them from the mountains in three places along the river valleys that flow from the mountains to the sea. All of their cities are along these valleys. We haven't made the assignments yet, so I don't know where you'll be going. We'll be divided into Ordu of two tumen each except for the coastal tumen and the tumen that will attack just below the desert. It will wait after clearing the valley until it is joined by the coastal tumen. After each Ordu clears its valley, it will proceed south until all the Chimu land is taken."

"What about the people in the mountains on the way?"

"Oh, they will be allowed to join us or fight us as they wish. It should help to throw off the Chimu even more about our intentions. Of course, we will not be finished once we have conquered the Chimu; we also have to conquer all the mountains east of the Chimu."

"Isn't that a lot of territory for one campaign season?"

"I don't know. It depends on what we run into. New tumen will be sent down to join or relieve us, as they are ready. If necessary, we will continue for more campaign seasons. Our cousin Khan George wants to conquer all the mountains and coast in his lifetime and plans to campaign until he has."

"Or rather have his sons campaign until he has."

“Oh, I’m sure he’ll join us for part of the campaign. His sons think he will be with us to take the surrender of the Chimu ruler.”

I was angry with myself for letting that remark slip out about our mutual cousin, the local Khan. If I had said that in front of anyone else, I could find myself in more trouble. Sarcasm would be the death of me one day. Theodore asked me if I wanted to be introduced to our cousins Henry and Ignace, but I demurred thinking it best to stay away from the commanders.

True to Theodore’s word, we set out the second day. The tumen under Essabo was sent southwest to the coast; the rest of us turned southeast and began to wind our way up into the mountains again. As we moved away from the coast, we found ourselves in something of a humid forest, which, as we climbed higher, gave way to a drier forest, large patches of which had been cleared for cultivation. We regained the military road and followed it south until its end near a small town belonging to a people called the Calua. The town leaders took one look at the five tumen on their doorstep and surrendered without any hesitation. We pressed them to give us guides to lead us to the other tribal towns and split into smaller groups to visit them all. None of them resisted joining us. We set up a new staging area and depot at the end of the military road and sent word north to send our supplies there.

The next tribe we encountered was the Ayawak’a. They had larger villages and were a larger tribe, but were also not inclined to resist us. We again split up to ensure the lack of resistance was shared by all their towns and villages. It was. It seemed that both tribes had fully expected us to come and, having heard what happened to those who resisted us in the north, had decided not to ask for trouble. They both contributed a small number of auxiliary troops that were used mostly to bring up supplies from our staging area depot.

The next tribe we came upon was the Wan-ka-pampa. We were warned to expect trouble from them since they were known to be constantly fighting among themselves. The first town we encountered did not resist, but rather the chief tried to recruit us to destroy their neighboring town. Henry refused, but promised to wipe them out should they refuse to join. Delighted, he offered to send a messenger to demand their surrender to us. Again Henry refused, but did request guides to lead them to the other tribal towns and villages. These were quickly produced and we split into minghans to visit them. My minghan visited a rather large town some distance south of the town. We fanned out to form a semicircle north of the town while the guide was sent in to tell the chieftain he would have to join the Khanate. The guide returned hurriedly to announce that the chieftain refused to have anything to do with us and was mobilizing his forces. Suchix moved us back to just in bowshot of the town and we readied our bows and waited. Soon a mob of perhaps fifteen hundred men moved out of the town toward us. They were armed with spears, clubs, maces, and some slings. They tried to organize themselves in front of the town before charging. We continued to watch them mill around forming battle lines. Finally, their apparent leader harangued them for a few minutes, then urged them forward. We quietly remained on horseback and prepared our arrows. Just before they were in sling range, we let loose our first volley. The effect was staggering, but they were no cowards and, stepping over their fallen comrades, continued at us. We backed away while continuing to fire into them. Meanwhile our flanks spread out and soon we had them surrounded and were firing into them from all sides while staying out of their range. Seeing their situation, they tried to return to their town, but we continued to move with them. Finally, we formed a semicircle between them and their town, and the few survivors threw down their arms and tried to surrender.

I recalled, that in my grandfather’s day, we never took surrenders, but with them all on the ground groveling before us, we all looked to Suchix for orders. He looked at them with disgust and spat on the ground. He ordered us to form into ranks and sent for the guide. With some difficulty, because of the language problem with the latter, Suchix told him to order the survivors to gather all of our arrows and return them to us. If just one was missing, they would all die. When they received this order, they all got up gingerly and set about the unpleasant task as quickly as possible. Then Suchix told the guide to bring the man who refused to deal with us before him. The guide went into the town and returned with an old man of very haughty demeanor who was clearly furious with the outcome of his decision. Suchix took one look at him, then swung his sword and cleanly severed his head. He then ordered the guide to find the man’s successor and ask again if they wanted to join us. He soon came out followed by several strange animals laden with gifts. The gifts were transferred, unopened, to the backs of packhorses. Their animals looked rather like woolly deer or tall, long-necked sheep, but seemed to

us, too frail to be suitable pack animals. We took back our arrows and rode through the town in single file. The houses were mostly of dried mud (although some were partly stone) with thatch roofs, a door covered with a blanket, but no windows or smoke holes. They looked dark and dingy with little discernible furniture. The people stayed out of sight while we rode through the town.

After leaving the town, we continued on our way to other villages and towns. None of them offered any resistance. We rejoined the rest of our tumen near the southern end of the area controlled by the Wan-ka-pampa. Many of the other minghans had encountered resistance also and had dealt with it as successfully as we had. We rested for a few days before we continued south. I noticed that the seasons were even more confused here. While it seemed to me it should be midwinter, the people were cultivating their fields of mature crops as though it were midsummer. I remarked this to some of the others, and they were also puzzled, although Ah Tatal pointed out that the sun indicated that it was summer, since the days were getting shorter, not longer as one would expect in the winter. He had no idea why it should be that way here, however.

The next people we encountered were called the Wampo. They were on both sides of a river junction. Eventually the northern fork was named the Wan-ka-pampa since that tribe controlled most of it and the southern fork was called the Wampo since they controlled it. After the two forks joined, the river was ultimately called the Palta after a people that lived all along that stretch, but more of them in their turn. The Wampo had a sort of strongpoint at the entrance to their territory. It was situated on the western side above a narrow spot in the valley where they could theoretically stop invasions. Actually, one could easily bypass the strongpoint since the valley was not really narrow enough to be effectively blocked. The strongpoint was fully manned. Henry ordered one of the tumen to deal with the "fort" while the rest of us filed down the valley. The task was given to the tumen under Theodore's command. He merely surrounded it well out of sling range and brought up the cannon. These caused complete panic after a few rounds exploded inside the fort, and the defenders tried to flee down the valley. The few who managed to surrender were allowed to live. After that debacle, there seemed to be a general mass flight southward away from us, so we were ordered to ride ahead and surround as many of the refugees as we could and hold them.

My tumen was first in line, so we rode hard up the valley finally positioning ourselves some sixty li south of the fort. As the refugees reached our position, they were turned back. Other tumen had strung themselves out along the east and west side of the valley and the other two were marching south. We bagged several thousand of them from various towns and villages between us. As we tightened the ring around them, a few tried to fight their way out only to be cut down. Most tried to stay out of bowshot. A few tried to float down the river to escape us but these were mostly picked off from shore with arrows. Once they were hemmed into a tight pack, Henry sent the survivors from the fort to ask their leaders if they wished to surrender or die. They quickly surrendered and were ordered to return to their homes.

We continued up the valley finding it completely deserted except for those too old or sick to flee. We ignored them and continued on our way. At dusk we were not yet at the end of the Wampo River, so we pitched camp with guards posted at close intervals. We were not disturbed that night or any other night. Instead, after several days of wandering up the Wampo River among the deserted towns and villages, we came upon another stone "fort" on the west side of the valley set up on a steep mountainside. It was fairly well placed since all approaches except for the rear would entail a very steep climb. Two of the tumen were formed in a semicircle below the fort well out of reach of the stones they occasionally rolled down on us. A third tumen moved north until they were out of sight, then climbed up the ridge and moved back south along the ridge line ending up above the fort. They set up a few of the cannon and began lobbing shot into them from above. The other two tumen waited nearby because we were sure there were more of them than those in the fort. To their credit, the defenders in the fort did not panic but rather sortied out to attack the tumen above them. The sorties were quickly driven back. Finally, they began to slip over the walls and head down toward our waiting tumen below. We backed away and gave them room to form their battle lines after they had scrambled down from the fort. There were only about three thousand of them. At the signal from their leader, they began to charge us and were mowed down quickly with arrows. The handful of survivors was ordered to return to their leaders and tell them to end the resistance before they were wiped out. They ran off toward the east and over some hills. We camped where we were and waited to hear from them.

A couple of days later, a procession was seen approaching from the east. I had to go on patrol before they arrived but heard later that among them were most of the chiefs of the Wampo, who ruled in a sort of loose federation. They had decided to see what their options were before continuing their resistance. Once the benefits of joining us were explained to them along with the specter of the consequences of refusing to join, they withdrew to consider their response. They spent much of the rest of the day arguing back and forth among themselves, but by the end of the day returned to announce that they would join. They were ordered to supply us with a token force to help move our supplies. We found out that their territory included a few small river valleys to the east of this one, but Henry could see no point in visiting all their towns since the leaders had come to him.

At this point we left behind the tumen commanded by Henry's brother Ignace. Once the rest of us were in place, it would be moving down a river called the Lambayeque to attack the Chimu settlements just south of the desert. The rest of us continued south picking our way over some high mountains to reach our next quarry, a people called the Q'asa-marka. They could not have been in much contact with the Wampo since they were completely surprised at our descent that morning from the mountains right above their principle city, which we quickly surrounded. They sent out a negotiating team to buy time while they scrambled to put together a defense of the city.

When the team arrived before Henry, it was discovered that they spoke the same language as the Chimu with whom they were also allied. We had several interpreters who could speak that language (Yunga) fluently, so communication was easier than usual. I was well out of earshot for any of the negotiations, but Theodore filled me in on what happened a few days later. The Q'asa-marka were given the standard choice. They immediately began to complain that we had not announced our intention in advance so that they could have had enough time to consider their options fully and prepare a suitable reply to our ultimatum. Henry replied that since they were obviously stalling to give their leaders time to raise their army, he would make it easy for them. If they surrendered the city, all those who wanted to try their luck in battle would be permitted to leave and we would await their return with all their forces right here in front of the city. Should they prevail in the battle, those of us who survived would withdraw and never return to their valley again. Should we win, the survivors would be allowed to join us or die. He then dismissed them with orders to reply by midday.

At midday the ruler of the city came out to surrender the city and lead most of the young men south. Henry and his staff and personal guard took up residence in the house of the ruler. The tumen were encamped around the city. The remaining people in the city were told that as long as they refrained from any treachery, they had nothing to fear. There were hot springs around the city that many of us got a chance to enjoy while we were waiting. Patrols were sent out along with spies to see what the enemy was doing. It eventually filtered back several days later that they had marshaled their forces and those of an allied people to the south, the Huamachucu and should be ready to advance on our position soon. I kept expecting treachery of some kind from them, but was completely wrong. Eventually their lines advanced to within a few li of ours in front of the city and the patrols could find no sign of any forces sneaking up on us from any other direction.

Before dawn the next morning, we were up and advancing toward the enemy. By first light we were within bowshot of their lines, which were just getting organized. As usual, our artillery was set up about three hundred yards behind our main line. The four tumen were spread out in a line across most of the width of the valley somewhat overlapping the enemy lines. They had managed to raise an army a little larger than ours, but they were arranged in close ranks on the west side of the river, the wider side. We had a pontoon bridge across the river near the city and had two minghan on the eastern side. Once the enemy was in place, the leader of the force stood in front of them and began to harangue us. Henry put up with it for a few minutes, then ordered a modest shower of arrows be loosed on the man. He fell with several in him. The enemy was stunned at this and hesitated but eventually the second-in-command ordered them forward.

As usual, we fired into them as we backed away. The minghans on the other side of the river lined up along the bank and fired into their flanks. Meanwhile, we began to spread out along their left flank also. They tried to get their slingers in front to answer our arrows, but they didn't have the range and fell under our bows. Finally we reached the cannon. We stood behind the artillery and fired arrows into them as they advanced. As soon as they were well within range of the cannon, the first volley was fired. The valley shook with the retort as huge holes were torn into their ranks. They stopped at once, stunned and dazed, only to receive a second volley. They

dropped everything and ran pell-mell to the rear. By now, half of our forces had slipped behind them and they were surrounded. Seeing the hopelessness of their situation, they threw themselves down on the ground and surrendered.

It proved difficult to find a leader among the survivors, but ultimately capitulation was effected not only for the Q'asa-marka but also for their allies, the Huamachucu. It took a while to sort things out but, by late winter (which should have been late summer), we were ready to move on the Chimu.

14

Conquest of the Chimu, 93 K

(Coast of Peru, 1461)

As we readied for the invasion of the Chimu, another tumen arrived from the north. It was put into camp in the valley of the Q'asa-marka to guard our rear and supply lines. Meanwhile, Theodore and Acapioltzin's tumen were formed into an Ordu under command of the latter and prepared to descend the Xequetepeque River, which began just over a ridge west of the valley of the Q'asa-marka. The last two tumen (including mine) would remain under Henry and proceed down the Chicama River to attack the Chimu capital, Chan Chan. This river and its nearby southern neighbor, the Moche River, had their sources closer to the lands of the Huamachucu. Messengers were sent to make sure that all three invasion forces (including the Ordu under Ignace in the north) were poised to attack simultaneously.

The rainy season was five months away as we were getting into position for our campaigns. We were told by the Huamachucu (and it was confirmed by our spies) that it rarely rained in the lands of the Chimu. They planted during the rainy season to take advantage of the runoff water from the mountains. That gave us the double advantage of attacking when they needed to harvest the last of their crops in and not being hampered by rain-soaked terrain. We delayed starting until the scouts reported that the Chimu were, indeed, still harvesting. Since the rainy season was still some months away, we, of course, set out on the slippery trail up over the mountains in a gentle but steady rain. I hated to think what we would have had in the rainy season. Our tumen was in the lead and, naturally, my jagun was in the van. We were on foot, leading our horses, because the trail was so slippery. Scouts had been sent ahead to reconnoiter. They soon returned to report that the crest of the trail was now defended by a fair-sized force of the Chimu. Ah Tatal sent one of them on to inform Hayjaay and the rest to find alternate routes over the mountains. He then halted us while he went to confer with Suchix.

Before long, Hayjaay was among us with his minghan commanders in tow. He ordered half of the minghans to take charge of all the horses and continue ahead very slowly, while the rest of us scrambled up the mountains on either side of the trail and attacked the defenders from a better position. This was a brutal climb. We had to inch up rain-slick, steep mountains only partly covered with vegetation while fully equipped. Being the tallest and most experienced with climbing mountains (from my youth among the Ani' Yun'-wiya), I had the dubious honor of being the first one up. We had moved somewhat to the north of the trail and the enemy was not in sight at this point. I soon ran into one of the scouts and he led me to the enemy. From my vantage point, I could see that I was above and behind them. They had rolled boulders across the trail to block it and a large (several hundred) force of slingers was poised to strike at the strategic moment, each with a significant pile of stones at his feet. I could not see our forces on the trail from this angle and, as yet, there were none of our men south of the trail. I sent the scout back to urge the men to move quickly forward while I looked over the lay of the land. I soon found a good spot where we would be able to fire arrows into them from behind and still have some cover from their stones.

The men began trickling in and I started positioning them. Suchix soon came up and, after looking over my disposition of the men, nodded with approval. More men kept coming up, among them an exhausted Ah Tatal, who had to rest a while to catch his breath. At last, I noticed (barely, because of their skill) that the men were also in place south of the trail. We waited until the slingers had selected a stone and were just starting to swing their slings; then we loosed a telling salvo of arrows into their ranks. The salvo was devastating, but the survivors bravely stood their ground and hurled their stones at us while trying to find some sort of cover.

Meanwhile, a force of their swordsmen came running up the trail and scrambled up the walls of the trail to get at us.

A fully recovered Ah Tatal gathered up a little over half of us and rushed to meet this threat. We formed a line protecting the flank of the others and waited for the enemy to clear the crest of the hill. As they reached the top, they stopped to gather strength before coming at us. Ah Tatal waited until he felt the odds were interesting enough, and then led us in a charge. Our numbers were almost equal when we attacked. I thought that rather stupid, but found it typical of the Maya tumen. I felt we should have loosed a volley or two of arrows at them while they were gathering strength, but I wasn't in charge. Anyway, we closed with them and they fought ferociously, but their wooden swords, helmets and breastplates, hide shields, and quilted cotton armor were no match for our steel swords, armor, and shields, and we were soon driving them back whence they came. Just as we reached their staging area at the crest of the hill, a volley of spears launched with atlatl surprised us. Those of us with quick enough reflexes were able to deflect these with our shields. We then put aside our swords and took up our bows again to meet this new threat. The enemy soon was retreating back down the trail.

The surviving swordsmen had already started back as soon as they regained the trail. It looked as though none of the slingers got away. The rest of the tumen swarmed over the rock barrier and dispatched any of their wounded. The force south of the trail scrambled down to the trail and started off after the enemy. Suchix came over with the rest of our force and they fanned out to help tend our wounded. I was unharmed, but Ah Tatal was badly wounded by a spear. Ah Chel came up and was devastated to see his old friend. He looked at the wound, then looked up at me and shook his head. Thanks to our raw silk shirts the spear pulled out cleanly. It was made of some kind of hard wood with a fire-hardened point. Suchix saw Ah Tatal and stooped down to give him some encouragement. Two of the men in my arban were wounded, but neither wound was life threatening. I helped dress their wounds, then returned to the vigil with Ah Tatal. He did not last long. Almost forty of the men died and about a hundred were wounded. Hayjaay came up and saw that the dead and wounded were put on wagons for the descent down the trail after the enemy.

As we got under way Hayjaay called together the arban leaders from my jagun. He told us that we had to choose one of our numbers to replace Ah Tatal. Whoever we chose would then have to make sure that his arban elected his successor. We withdrew to ourselves and I immediately suggested Ek Nah a very brave man who was also a fine warrior. He shook his head.

“It is you, Crow, who should replace Ah Tatal. You were the first of us in the climb today, you arranged us for the ambush, you did not hesitate to attack the enemy, and you are the easiest to see.”

This last remark got a big laugh from the others and they all agreed clapping me on the back and giving me the red sash of a commander of a jagun. I was a little surprised that they had such confidence in me, for I was easily the youngest of them, but at the same time I was rather pleased. I saw to it that the other positions were filled and was generally congratulated and clapped on the back by the rest of the tumen. Suchix was genuinely surprised when I presented myself to him with the red sash. But he shrugged and gave me my marching orders. We would now bring up the rear of our tumen.

One might think that now that I was a more major officer, I would be more aware of the Ordu tactics, but actually, the commander of the Ordu called all the shots and if he consulted with anyone, it would only be with someone whose opinion he valued. I was, however, able to piece together what was planned after the fact by judicious questioning. Of course, I must also point out that if the commander happened to blunder into success, I am sure he would insist it was exactly as he planned, while if his carefully laid out plans ended in disaster, it would of course be due to his mislaid trust in some designated advisor.

Be all that as it may, Henry, the commander, was reported to be livid that the enemy was waiting for us along our route as though they were informed of our line of march. I thought it rather naive of him to think that the Chimu had no spies of their own. In any case, being quite conscientious, he took what he felt to be remedial action. He designated about half the scouts as “infiltrators.” They would not report back, but would lie in wait for and eliminate any of the enemy's spies. The others would continue in their usual duties. He then studied the maps again and decided on a ruse. Both of the nearby rivers could lead to the Chimu capital, since it was between them. The original plan was to use the northern river, the Chicama, that was larger and watered a

broader valley as the invasion route. He now decided to split his forces. He would send our tumen up the Chicama Valley with the orders to take our time and seem to have trouble advancing against the enemy and taking their several strong points (fortified hills). Meanwhile, he would take the other tumen into the hills and at the right moment (once the preponderance of their forces were aligned against us) descend on the other valley, the Moche, and smash his way to the capital (Chan Chan). He would then turn north against the forces aligned against us if the loss of their capital was not enough to force them to capitulate.

The Chicama was formed by the conjunction of two smaller rivers, which in turn were formed by still smaller rivers. We entered the valley from the southernmost branch of the northern river and both tumen followed it down to the conjunction with the middle branch. At this point, our tumen continued down the river while Henry took the other tumen up the middle branch and out of view. We ran into our first strong point south of the river near the junction of the two rivers to form the Chicama. It was a well-located strong point on a large hill overlooking the whole valley. It was necessary that we reduce it before they could see that the other tumen wasn't just clearing out the middle branch valley. We quickly surrounded it just out of slingshot range. The "fort" was made mud bricks like most of the Chimu structures. We simply concentrated our cannon on the most-level side, the east, and fired shot into the wall, which dissolved in a cloud of dust. Startled, the enemy took a few volleys of arrows until they recovered enough to rush us. There were only a few dozen defenders, so we cut them all down easily.

There was a small deserted village south of the strong point and south of it was the southern river. We sent patrols up the river and its branches, but found them also deserted. Once the patrols were back, we returned to our advance down the river. The valley was quite broad near the conjunction of the two rivers, over three li wide. We continued our movement slowly, constantly sending patrols up each branch valley, no matter how small, until we reached the next strong point. Actually, there were two of them. The main one was south of the river on an isolated hill rising nearly two thousand feet above the valley floor. The other one was north of the river and looked as though it had been hastily thrown up to stop our advance in tandem with the other one. It was situated much like the first one we had encountered and proved to be just as easily reduced. We attacked its northeast wall with a volley of shot and quickly leveled it. The enemy bravely sortied out, but in such small numbers that they were easily wiped out.

We now turned to the other "fort." The highest point surrounding it was on the slopes of the mountains to the south, but it proved to be too far away for the shot to reach the walls of the fort. Hayjaay decided this made it an ideal place for us to seem to have trouble. He had the artillery fire a few test shots at the fort and then made a big show the next few days of moving the cannon to another spot and firing again in vain at the fort. Finally, our scouts reported that the enemy had taken the bait and a large force was moving toward us from the south. The artillery was moved back up the valley while we seemingly milled around in confusion and indecision beneath the enemy fort for two more days until the relief force came into view. They did outnumber us, but not by much, so it was very difficult getting the men to withdraw up the valley in feigned disarray. The men in the fort came out and jeered us as we moved away. The relief army picked up the pace in pursuit.

It always amazed me that this simple tactic could work again and again, but it did. We led them up the valley to where our cannon were waiting. We formed a line in front of the cannon to screen them from the enemy's view. They came up on the run, but seeing that we had turned to fight, they stopped and rearranged themselves into their usual battle line, the slingers in front followed by the spearmen and finally the sword and club wielders. We waited graciously until they were sorted out and then after some haranguing by their leader, they charged. We neatly stepped out of the way of our artillery, which fired a devastating barrage of grapeshot into them. While they paused to absorb this shock, we began to ride around them pouring arrows into their flanks. The second salvo from the cannon ended their resolve and they fled. We continued to pour arrows into their flanks until we managed to get ahead of them, surround them and cut off their retreat.

The standard practice was to stay out of range of their weapons and simply fire arrows into them until they were all down. But again, the Maya had their own ways. Without waiting for orders, they bolted forward to close with the still-significant enemy force. Seeing no alternative, I put away my bow and joined them. This bit of bravado cost us quite a few men and horses. My horse was speared out from under me and my quick reflexes saved me from being beamed by a club. In the confusion of a general melee, the difference in weapons is greatly

mitigated since backs and sides can be exposed. I decided to remain on foot and continued hacking away at the enemy until a club delivered a glancing blow to my head and I fell down unconscious. I learned later that my men surrounded me and protected me until I came to after a few minutes. I rose up shaking my head and looking around in confusion until Ah Chel shook me back to my senses and I snapped instinctively back into action. Before long, all the enemy were all down and we were tending our wounded and finishing off theirs.

The bravado cost us over a thousand dead and wounded. Among the seriously wounded was Hayjaay. He had to withdraw to Q'asa-marka to recuperate. Bisdah, a Kadohadacho who was on Henry's staff, replaced him in a few days. Meanwhile, we returned to the fort and Bisdah brought up a new kind of cannon, which had to be implanted into the ground at just the right angle when fired. It lobbed shell into the fort creating havoc and finally causing them to try to fight their way out of our cordon. This time, discipline held and we wiped them out without losing any more men. We turned back down the river. Now there seemed to be a general acquiescence to us among the people. The villages surrendered immediately and pledged undying loyalty to us, whoever we were. We came across a few abandoned forts on our way and finally reached a rather large town, which proved to be a sort of administrative center.

It was walled but not defended. We entered through the unattended gate and wandered through the town only to find it completely deserted. There were some fine examples of Chimu art that had been left behind. These consisted of very colorful textiles with rather abstract representations of people, creatures, and temples or some sort of buildings and many very fine ceramics, which were a little more realistic (usually) and quite varied in shape and color. There were also some small piles of flat copper pieces that were about three inches long and two inches wide at the ends with a tapered midsection (about an inch and a half wide). We learned later that they were called "naipes" and served as a sort of exchange medium. We did not disturb anything, however, and just moved through the town.

Bisdah decided that there would be no more organized opposition, so he sent one messenger to see if Henry needed any help and another to see how the campaign in the north was proceeding. Bisdah then scattered us to make sure there was no more resistance in the valley. We were split into jaguns for this task, and I was sent due west, directly toward the sea. It was not far to the sea, only about a few hours' ride. There I found a small fishing village that offered no resistance when we rode through it. We turned north toward the mouth of the Chicama and found another peaceful fishing village along the way. We then turned back west along the river and ran into a town near dusk. I rode the men boldly through the town. I could see some of the inhabitants furtively observing our progress, but no one moved to stop us. We reached the square in the center of the town and I ordered the men to make camp. If I had wanted to ensure the men's devotion to me, I couldn't have made a better decision. They considered it a truly bold move which convinced them that I was the right sort of commander. Actually, I was quite satisfied that the enemy had no fight in them and thought there was very little risk involved in camping in the town. Besides, the square was quite large and we would have ample room to maneuver in the event of any treachery.

Not only was there no treachery, but also, the town leaders approached us with gifts of prepared food after we had set up our camp. They used that strange-looking pack animal for meat as well as a small fat ratlike creature, deer, lizards, ducks, and other birds and seals, but mostly they ate fish and shellfish. They cultivated centli, beans, and squash like everyone else, but they also grew ground tubers. One called oca was like the usually yellowish ones in the north, although they were not limited to that color here, and another called chun-o that came in all sizes and shapes, but were generally white, gray, yellow, or bluish inside. They also produced groundnuts, chili, yocce, tomatl, and cotton as well as some strange but tasty fruits and a variety of herbs. We were quite well fed that evening, although we had a lot of trouble communicating.

The next morning, we left the town and returned to our Ordu camp. I reported to Suchix who nodded and told me to stand by for orders. I had the men dismount and relax but not set up camp. Most of the rest of the Ordu had returned and were waiting like we were. After a while, I got a message to have the men mount up and lead the way south. I got the men up and sent out an arban on each flank to scout. The other jaguns fell in behind us as we rode out. Suchix rode up and joined me. We spoke little although he did mention that Hayjaay would not be back soon, but seemed to be recovering. I thought it best not to ask him any questions, but I was wondering why we were headed south, since the northern Ordu had not yet joined us.

Not long after midday, we arrived at the camp of Henry's Ordu. It was just to the northeast of a very large walled city. The city proved to be the Chimu capital, Chan Chan. We were ordered into camp with Henry's Ordu, which we would now rejoin. Once we were camped, I looked up some acquaintances in Henry's tumen to find out what was going on. It seemed that their lightning strike up the Moche Valley had caused the Chimu king, Minchançaman, to surrender. We were waiting around until Khan George arrived to take the surrender. He was expected any day now. Until he arrived, we were not to enter the city or go anywhere else, for that matter.

In due course, Acapipioltzin's Ordu rejoined us and was put in camp. Once they were settled, Theodore looked me up, and congratulated me on my promotion. He told me that his force met a lot of resistance at first, but by the time they reached the first large city, Pacatnamu, all opposition had ended. It took them so long to join us because it took a while to visit all the towns and villages in the valley. He told me the other two tumen (Ignace's and Essabo's) should be in camp the next day. They had met very little resistance, but Ignace had a very large area to visit and Essabo had had to cross a rather large desert that proved to be hard on his horses. On the whole, Theodore felt the campaign had gone rather smoothly, but he was glad we would have a little respite while waiting for our cousin, Khan George, since his men were a bit ragged. Again he asked if I wanted to be introduced to our kin, but I still demurred.

It was actually two days before Essabo and Ignace rode into camp and almost a month before Khan George finally arrived accompanied by two more tumen. Theodore later confided to me that Henry was quite put out at having to wait around all this time to receive the Chimu surrender, but dared not let his father know. Ignace, on the other hand, had been injured in an accident and was quite glad to get a chance to recover fully before the big ceremony. All the tumen were formed up in ranks and made quite an impressive sight, but, of course, my tumen was on the western end of the line and we could see almost nothing of what was going on. We could just make out a small procession from the city moving toward the pavilion that had been set up for George, but nothing more. In fact, I never did get close enough to George during his visit to see what he looked like. At the time, I was mildly curious about him, but did not think it wise to approach him or his sons for that matter. Indeed, I had not really had a good look at the latter either.

Once again, Theodore reported the scene for me. The ground under the pavilion had been covered with rugs and George's chair was set up on a platform above the ground level. Two more chairs were set up on the ground level on either side of George for his two sons and the other tumen commanders were lined up standing on either side. The Chimu king, Minchançaman, had to approach barefoot and bareheaded with his head lowered until he reached the pavilion. Then he had to prostrate himself and crawl to within a few feet of the "august presence" at which point he had to grovel and beg sufficiently (with the aid of an interpreter) to be allowed to live. His attendants, all in similar disarray, had to remain prostrate at the edge of the pavilion. After an uncomfortably long time, George raised his hand to end the supplication. Then, after an even more uncomfortable silence, he finally whispered something to Henry, who in turn, told the former king that he would be spared, but would have to return to Tamalameque with all his family except for his son, Chumuncaur, who would be allowed to stay and help the new governor, my old tumen commander Hayjaay. Should Chumuncaur prove trustworthy, he would be allowed to govern his people in George's name. At this point, Minchançaman crawled over to the side and, once off the pavilion, got up and turned himself over to George's retainers. Then the hapless Chumuncaur had to crawl up before George and praise and thank him at length for his wisdom and mercy. When George signaled him to stop, he had to crawl back off the pavilion, then rise up with his head still lowered and lead the procession back to the city. Hayjaay was borne on a litter after them and set up in a palace.

On the whole, I was glad I couldn't see the spectacle. I'm not sure I could have disguised my contempt for my cousin George. Theodore and Acapipioltzin were both revolted by the show, but felt it would be very bad manners to let it be known. It would also have been, in my opinion, fatal, despite their rank in our Khanate. I felt sorry for Hayjaay having to govern these people after they had been so totally humiliated. I was glad to hear that one of the tumen, Essabo's, would be left with him for garrison duty. Once the show had concluded, George met with his sons for a while to discuss the continuing campaign. Then he met with the tumen commanders to exchange niceties and tell them absolutely nothing. In due course, after a few days, he left with a large entourage including the hapless Minchançaman and his family and whatever the Chimu had that was of

value to him. He was accompanied by the tumen that had been under Henry's command. It would accompany him to the Q'asa-marka Valley where it would replace the tumen in reserve there, which would now join the campaign.

Once George was gone, things began to move again. My tumen would be sent south to ensure there was no resistance along the southern part of the Chimu lands. We were to fan out and visit each town and village and make sure they understood the change of rulers. Enough interpreters were assigned to us so that we could split into jaguns for this task. Before we left, the outlines of the next campaign began to filter down to the tumen commanders. Henry would take four tumen, return to Huamachucu, and then turn south to take the rest of lands inland from the Chimu. Ignace would follow my tumen south, and when we all reached the end of the Chimu lands, we would return to the offensive and conquer our way farther south. Theodore and Acapipoltzin would be with Henry along with the two new tumen George had brought. Ignace would have his own tumen, the one that had been in reserve in Q'asa-marka and my tumen.

On the way to the Viru Valley, the next valley south of the Moche Valley, the jagun commanders were introduced to their interpreters. Mine was named Llapchillulli. He was from Chot, a town in the Lambayeque Valley in the north. He had learned a decent amount of Mongol, the official language of the Khanate of the Clouds, and was even trying to learn Nahuatl. He told me that his town was glad to see the end of the upstart Chimu dynasty, which had only conquered them a few generations ago. The original rulers, to whom he claimed some vague relationship, were descendants of the legendary Naymlap, who arrived on the coast, accompanied by attendants, a wife, and concubines on a fleet of rafts made of a lightweight, native wood. He had with him an idol made of green stone and called Yampellec after whom he named the valley. He founded his capital at Chot and set up his idol there. Llapchillulli regaled me with the forgettable dynastic history at length. The only thing I found interesting was the story of the last of the line, Fempellec. It seemed he moved the green idol causing a demon to appear to him in the form of a woman. He copulated with the demon and, as a result, rain (extremely rare along the coast) fell heavily in the valley causing much destruction and famine. The priests then seized him and drowned him in the sea. I had to admit, I had never heard anything quite like that before. I asked him if he had any idea from where this Naymlap had originally come. He wasn't sure, but suggested that the sea goddess or even the creator, Pachacamac, probably had sent him. We would find the latter's shrine just south of the Chimu border.

When the tumen reached the Viru Valley, we broke into jaguns, spread out, and began visiting the towns and villages. The routine was always the same. We rode through a town to their square and waited while Llapchillulli gathered the town leaders and told them the way things now were. They in turn would bow to me and we would ride on out of the town. I was on the eastern side this time and had the dubious task of riding in the roughest terrain and visiting the smaller villages. We met no resistance of any kind at all. Eventually we reached what our interpreters assured us was the last Chimu valley, the Guaura. Just as the jaguns were trickling in to reform the tumen, Ignace rode up with the rest of our Ordu. We rested two days, then launched our next campaign against a people called the Colli. It should have been around the winter solstice, but it was definitely the summer solstice here.

15

Conquest of the Central Highlands, 94 K

(Southern Peru, 1462)

The Colli were a small state in decline because of the expansion of their southern neighbors, the Ychma. They were confined to one of the coastal valleys, the Chillón. It was thought they might resist since they had a chain of strong points throughout the valley, but our crossing of their border was not contested, and when we presented ourselves at their ruler's fortress palace, they immediately surrendered. The door was thrown open and the ruler led out a procession heavily laden with gifts. As usual, we were not allowed to enter the city, but had to pitch camp while the ruler entertained Ignace and his staff.

After Ignace had been feted enough (several days), we were roused early again and headed south with my tumen in the lead, as usual, and on this particular day my jagun was in the van. Soon we were crossing into the

lands of the Ychma. When we reached the first town, we were neither resisted nor welcomed. We were ignored. It was as if a conquering army always marched through. Llapchillulli, who was still with me, told me that the locals had no idea we were conquering them, but rather thought we were merely headed to the shrine of Pachacamac to consult the oracle. I asked if armies the size of ours usually consult oracles. He admitted they did not, but pointed out that it was not yet apparent to them just how many of us there were since we were fairly strung out.

He proved to be right, because not long after we left the town behind, one of the scouts reported that we were being approached by a delegation consisting of some elites and their armed escort. I halted the men and sent the scout back to tell Bisdah, who was still our tumen commander. The delegation came into view, drew near, and halted in front of us. Two of the elites approached us warily. They were both short and rather stocky (one more so than the other) with darkish skin and the large hooked noses so prevalent locally. They were dressed in silk, testifying to the indefatigable fervor of our merchants. Their faces were a mixture of bewilderment and apprehension. The stouter one moved a little forward to address me, but stared open-mouthed at me for a moment before speaking. Their language was completely incomprehensible to me, but, fortunately, Llapchillulli was able to understand them.

“They want to know why we are here and why there are so many of us,” he translated.

“Tell them they will have to talk to my superior,” I replied. “He will be here soon.”

They withdrew to their escort to wait. Meanwhile more and more of the tumen rode up and fell into place on either side of my jagun. It was obvious the delegation was becoming more and more nervous by the minute. Finally, Bisdah rode up and I explained the situation. He snorted and told Llapchillulli to tell them the truth about our intentions and demand their surrender. When this message was delivered, the leaders gave their reply and Llapchillulli returned to us. He told us that the leaders asked permission to withdraw to their ruler and inform him of our demands. Bisdah dismissed them with a wave and they hastily retraced their steps. He then ordered me to continue on and turned back to confer with Ignace. I got the men going again and sent the scouts back out. At this point, Llapchillulli told me that they had asked him if there were any more strange-looking ones like me among us. They seemed to be relieved when he assured them I was the only one. I decided to let that pass without further comment.

When we reached the Rimac River, we began putting together our pontoon bridge. A small force on the other side of the river watched us with interest, but did nothing more. As we were lashing the last boats in place, the force hastily withdrew toward the south. We crossed the river and quickly fanned out to form a defensive perimeter while the rest of the tumen crossed. When the last of the men crossed the bridge, we took it up again. We advanced about two li south of the river to a high point where we set up camp. Sentries were posted, but the scouts reported no nearby hostile activity. The terrain was quite broken up, but our sentries were well positioned to see any movement. Nothing disturbed us that night.

We broke camp early and headed south again. By midmorning, we were approaching the town and shrine called Pachacamac. I asked Llapchillulli about the place. He informed me that the shrine was dedicated to the creator god, Pachacamac. In residence was an oracle who could give advice and predict the future. Both were greatly revered along the coast since Pachacamac would let loose earthquakes if he was displeased. The shrine had been here for many generations. It was above the town, which was closer to the ocean. It consisted of a terraced pyramid built on a hill in such a way that it was hard to tell where the hill ended and the shrine began. It proved to be built of dried-mud bricks like everything else along the coast. The temple was a small structure on the top that was only accessible to the priests of the cult. He doubted if Ignace would be allowed to see the god. I wondered what would happen to whoever told Ignace he could not see the god.

Fortunately for all involved, a procession of the priests came out to meet us and requested an audience with our leader. Ignace came up in his own good time while the priests waited patiently and we fanned out around the town. When Ignace presented himself to the priests, they all bowed down and announced that Pachacamac, himself, had told them we were coming and urged them to cooperate with us since he had sent us to bring order in the land. Ignace apparently shrugged and accepted their hospitality for the night. The secular leaders of the

Ychma also presented themselves to profess their allegiance to the new order. I was, of course, with my jagun guarding the southern outskirts of the town and Bisdah was sending patrols out to check for any treachery.

After dawdling outside the town for a few days, we were ordered to break camp and resume the march south. A day later, we saw a dispatch rider come up to Bisdah. The next thing we knew, we were ordered to change direction and move back to the Rimac River. Of course, no one bothered to tell us what was going on, but I noticed that it was only our tumen that was moving north, the others were continuing south. Eventually Suchix came along beside me (my jagun was in the middle this time) and told me we had been ordered to join Henry in the highlands. All he knew was that we would march up the Rimac and crush any resistance on our way to join him.

Once we started up the Rimac, Llapchillulli asked me if we would now march on the Atavillo. I replied we would if they were on the upper reaches of the Rimac. We reached them a few days later and they offered no resistance at all. It turned out, they had hoped we were just passing through on our way elsewhere. They were disappointed, but resigned when they learned our mission. Bisdah prevailed on them for guides and auxiliaries for our invasion of their northern neighbors, the Ocro and the Lampa.

We had moved well into Ocro and/or Lampa territory (it was hard to tell where the border between them was) and accepted the surrender of some of their towns before our scouts reported the approach of some enemy forces. The terrain of this region was what was what the locals called “puna”—coarse grassland that saw little rain. The enemy approached in a mass. They were armed with spears and clubs only, no slingers or archers. It looked like we outnumbered them also. The men wanted to close with them on foot to make the battle more interesting. Fortunately, Bisdah was not so inclined. We quickly surrounded them. They looked at us, no doubt noticing that they didn’t have a chance, and hesitated. There seemed to be a discussion going on among them for a while; then a small group of them detached and approached Bisdah. He sent for an interpreter. They wished to parley, but were given the usual ultimatum. They went back to their men and more argument ensued. Finally, a large group of them detached, laid down their arms and were allowed to pass through our lines. The remnant was only about a thousand or so.

Bisdah ordered the men to wipe them out with arrows, but that set off a general grumbling and one of the minghan commanders took him aside. He spat in disgust, but allowed the men their way. One minghan then dismounted and attacked the remnant on foot with spears and swords. Fortunately, it wasn’t my minghan that was so “honored.” The enemy was wiped out, but the minghan took at least three hundred casualties. I could understand Bisdah’s disgust. We were already well understrength, perhaps only about seventy-five hundred men in the tumen, and still several days from Henry’s Ordu, and he had to waste valuable troops to placate their sense of fairness. What made it worse was that fairness played no part in Mongol tactics and training. I had a feeling Bisdah would want to be replaced when we reached Henry.

The force we had encountered proved to be that of the Lampa. Those that had surrendered immediately complied with all of Bisdah’s demands. A few days later, we arrived at their capital to accept the obeisance of their ruler. Next we were led to the capital of the Ocro who also surrendered immediately. I was surprised that the latter did not resist or that the former didn’t have a larger army. From the look of their numbers, they each should have been able to field an army larger than our understrength tumen. It took us quite a while to maneuver around their lands since the terrain was rough and they were spread out over a considerable area. Eventually we turned north with auxiliaries doubling our number.

We found ourselves moving down a river that seemed to flow generally north. The tribe in this area was called the Pinco. They expressed no interest in contesting our progress or resisting our demands. Their ruler came to us and submitted his people to us. He also told us that our compatriots were fighting the Waylya who lived along a valley just to the west of theirs. They cheerfully offered to guide us there and provide us with more auxiliaries. They suggested we enter the Waylya territory from the southeast since they were fighting in the north and west. There was a trail along a river called the Pachacoto that was rarely defended and at the moment was not defended since the Waylya were occupied elsewhere. Bisdah agreed but insisted that the Pinco auxiliaries lead the way while the Ocro and Lampa forces bring up the rear.

I thought it odd that he wanted us between such potentially untrustworthy forces, but I could see his point. If we were being led into a trap, the Pinco would afford us some protection and the Ocro and Lampa were far enough in the rear so as not to hinder movement. In the event, he also sent out scouts to reconnoiter the flanks and front. My jagun was second on this march, so it was intact (scouts always came from the leading and trailing jaguns). Suchix was with the lead jagun so I was in the dark as usual. The trail was not an easy one. Not only were we rather high in altitude, sapping our endurance, but also, the dry, rough terrain was hard on both men and horses. The river was something of a gorge rather than a valley. The winding, narrow trail was above it on the south side. We were hemmed in by high snowcapped mountains on either side as well as in front of us in the distance. We camped along the trail in relative discomfort the first night after only making about forty-five li.

The next day, not long after we got started, we came across a very strange and beautiful plant. It was rather like a ball of bladelike leaves taller than a man. On the occasional mature plants, there was a huge towering column usually well over twenty feet high containing hundreds of spikes covered with a profusion of white trumpet-shaped flowers. They were a remarkable sight. I didn't quite understand why any plant would be flowering in the local winter. At least I think it was supposed to be winter. The Pinco told us this was a good omen since the plant (it was called puya) only flowered once in a hundred years, and it was unusual to see so many flowering at one time. I had a feeling they were grasping at straws, but the plant was a striking sight.

By late afternoon, we were surrounding a small town of the Waylya. They were not prepared to defend themselves due to their being quite short of men of fighting age at the moment. Since they surrendered, our auxiliaries were not allowed to sack the town, much to their disappointment. We camped around the town to prevent anyone from slipping out to warn of our approach. The next morning, we proceeded quickly north for several days accepting the surrender of one town after another until we reached a larger town that was not prepared to give up without a fight. Bisdah looked over the town and ordered the auxiliaries to deal with it. Before they even began, he ordered us north again. I rather regretted leaving the town to the mercy of the auxiliaries, but so it was.

Unimpeded by our escort, we reached another small town by nightfall. It surrendered, of course. The following day we continued north quickly and near midday invested their principle city. They were astonished to see us approach from the south but had no intention of surrendering. There were not enough of us to attack the city, so we merely besieged it. Two days into the siege, our auxiliaries finally began to file in, somewhat burdened by booty from their conquest. Bisdah placed them around the city and moved us north since the scouts had reported the approach of the enemy. Actually, it was more like the approach of a mob. Their army had been routed by Henry's forces and was fleeing headlong toward their capital with Henry in hot pursuit. At the sight of us blocking their path, many despaired and threw down their weapons in surrender, but a fair number of them continued on toward us.

This time Bisdah would not hear of any "fair" attack but ordered us to wipe them out with arrows. There was some sulking but the deed was quickly done and soon all resistance ended. Henry's forces came up shortly and after rounding up the prisoners, we turned back toward the capital. With some difficulty, we replaced the auxiliaries around the city and ordered them to begin the march south. Before long, an abject procession of elites trudged out of the city toward our lines. They surrendered and, as usual, feted Henry and his staff, while we camped around the city for a few days. During this time in camp, Theodore came by to see me. He was glad we were in the same Ordu again. We brought each other up to date on our activities. Henry had first expanded the eastern flank and conquered the Chacha, the Moyopampa, the Chillao, and the Casca-yunga, all in the highlands east of the Q'asa-marka and Huamachucu. Then he turned south against the Huacrachucu and the Conchucu before returning to the lands of the Huamachucu to begin the attack on the Waylya from their northwest. Resistance had been rather varied. It was limited among the first few tribes but began to grow as they moved south and was quite stiff from the Huacrachucu and Conchucu. The Waylya had stoutly contested Henry's entrance into their land, but once his forces broke through the passes, the action dissolved into desperate rear guard action. Had we not cut them off from their capital, he very likely would have had to reduce the city with cannon. Theodore also mentioned that the Chacha were rather light-skinned, although not quite as light as me. I found that interesting and hoped to see them one day. I told Theodore that it would appear Henry

was quite indefatigable in his conquests, unlike his younger brother Ignace, who seemed to favor a more leisurely pace. He had heard that Ignace was not really expected to get that far south anyway.

Theodore looked tired to me and I asked him if he was ready for some time off yet. He said that, while it was tempting, he understood that our next foe would be the best yet and he didn't want to miss out on them. He elaborated that there was a mountain-people called the Inka who were conquering their way in our direction. We should find their army just south of the Pinco. It seemed that they sent ambassadors ahead of their army to urge surrender to avoid unpleasant consequences. Henry captured one of their ambassadors in the capital of the Conchuco, and he had the temerity to threaten us with destruction if we did not surrender. The size of our army did not seem to give him pause either, although he was a bit discomfited by our horses. It was at that point that Henry sent for our tumen, just in case the Inka army was larger than our spies had reported. It also turned out that the Inka, too, used spies and Henry's scouts had intercepted a few of them as well. Now that he mentioned it, I was reminded of a few rather suspicious-looking characters we had encountered on our march who seemed to be observing us from a distance with much interest and remarked on it to Theodore. He felt it likely that we had also been observed by Inka spies and was surprised that they had not tried to fall on us before we could link up with the Ordu. I assured him that we had scouts out in all directions and no force was going to fall on us unaware.

Once Henry was ready, we began to retrace our steps south with the rest of the army in our wake followed by the remains of the Waylya army. My jagun was toward the back this time, so I could just relax and enjoy the ride. I wondered about the Inka. Llapchillulli was still with us, although he would be leaving us soon to return home since he was no longer of much use as an interpreter among these mountain tribes. He had never heard of the Inka, but he assured me that most of the mountain tribes in the south were tough fighters and not inclined to surrender readily.

Some time later, we were again moving through the lands of the Ocro and Lampa. We set up camp near their southeastern frontier and scouts were sent out to find the enemy. After a few days, they reported back that they could only find a small force (perhaps five thousand men) occupying a strong point a day's ride from the frontier. Henry was puzzled and sent the scouts back out again. He considered his options for a few days, then decided to attempt a trap. He assumed that the small force was a decoy, although he could not imagine how the main enemy force had eluded the scouts. He ordered my tumen to go and besiege the enemy strongpoint alone. The rest of the Ordu would follow us and camp a few hours' ride from the strongpoint and would fall on the enemy's main force as soon as it materialized to attack our tumen.

As we moved out the next morning (my jagun was in the middle), Suchix stopped by to tell me that Bisdah was not pleased by the assignment and had asked to be replaced, but Henry had refused. I asked if Bisdah thought we were being sent into a trap, but Suchix felt he was merely looking for an excuse to get away from what he called "the suicidal" Maya. I noticed that Bisdah had sent our tumen's scouts out, so perhaps there was more to this than Suchix thought. In any case, we reached the strongpoint near dusk and quickly invested it. The enemy made no sortie during that first night. The next morning, Bisdah and his staff went around our lines to look over the strongpoint. I took the opportunity to look it over also. It was not too impressive. It was obviously thrown up quickly and without much thought. The location wasn't bad; it was on a somewhat isolated hill that was truncated on top. Still, it was only about a hundred feet up from the valley floor. They had positioned large rocks around their perimeter, either for defense, or to roll down on us if we attacked. It was rather obvious that a few rounds with the cannon would reduce the strongpoint quickly, but Bisdah did not order up the cannon. Puzzled, I sought out Suchix and asked him what was going on.

"Bisdah has been ordered not to use the cannon against the enemy strongpoint," he shrugged. "Henry doesn't want to tip his hand until the main enemy force comes up."

"Are we going to attack them at all?" I asked.

"I suppose so," he replied.

We did nothing for a few days but surround their hill out of slingshot range. Bisdah kept sending out scouts, but none reported any sighting of the enemy. Some did not return, however, and that increased his agitation. On the

fourth night, I was making my rounds of my jagun's perimeter when I couldn't help noticing the eerie quiet. The men had turned in for the night and only the sentries were up. There was no sound from the men except for the occasional snore and no sound from the horses except for the occasional whicker, but there were none of the usual natural sounds outside the camp. I crept out to one of the sentries. He had also noticed the change and was on high alert. Unfortunately, it was a moonless and cloudy night and the darkness was unremitting. I doubled the sentries and reported to Suchix what I had noticed. He shrugged and said that perhaps our trap had finally caught something. If it had, I should tell him in the morning. I reluctantly turned in, giving instructions that I should be awakened at first light.

The next morning, we were enshrouded in a mist at dawn, which revealed little. I reinforced the sentries again, but no one could see anything. Suchix wandered over to where I was straining to see through the mist and observed that I need not worry any longer, a scout had slipped into camp and assured him that we were completely surrounded by a force that was perhaps three times the size of ours. I asked if he knew what Bisdah planned to do. He did not. I got the men up and ready. I assumed we would likely charge through them on horseback and fan out around them in our usual way cutting them down with arrows and keeping them busy until Henry came up with the rest of the men. I was wrong.

Within a few hours, the mist burned off and it was quite plain that we were indeed surrounded. The enemy soldiers were dressed like ordinary mountain tribe peasants except for a sort of helmet often with a red wool fringe decoration; more of the wool fringe was tied below their knees and around their ankles. They all carried a small shield with a geometric design on it, wore a plate of wood or metal on their chest and back and some of them seemed to be wearing cotton "armor" like that worn in Anahuac. They were close enough that we were within the range of their slings, and they all seemed to be armed and ready with them. I wondered what they were waiting for. I also wondered what Bisdah was doing. Looking over in his direction, I could see that he was studying the enemy and assumed orders would be coming at any moment. I looked over to Suchix and found him looking toward Bisdah also. Finally, one of the enemy leaders stood up on a little hill and began to harangue us. (Actually, I had no idea what he was saying, but it sounded like a harangue.) His men all stood quietly listening to him.

At last I noticed some movement from Bisdah. He seemed to be giving orders to messengers to take to the minghan commanders. Then I noticed the horses were being gathered and brought to the northern part of our lines. Finally, I got word from Suchix of our orders. We were to stampede our horses to the north through the enemy lines and remain behind to fight on foot. The horses would only be guided by a single jagun from the northernmost minghan. I couldn't believe such stupidity. I was certain that the only survivors would be from that lucky jagun. It wouldn't be mine; our minghan was just south of the northernmost. The horses were soon in position and Bisdah gave the men the signal to start. The enemy leader was still lecturing us, but his lecture ended abruptly as a rain of arrows descended on him just as the horses set off.

Immediately a rain of stones came down on us from all sides. Our shields deflected these quite well although an occasional stone found a target. We responded more effectively with arrows, deadly at this close range. Seeing their disadvantage, their leaders sent the enemy charging against us. They came at us swinging a strange weapon made of as many as five weights of stone, wood, or copper wrapped in leather and attached to each other by a leather cord. (I found out later that they called it an aillo.) They threw this at our feet and drew their clubs as they closed with us with the hope of entangling us so they could easily kill us. It might have worked, but we simply stepped ahead of the fallen, and they quickly cut themselves free with their swords or knives. Soon we were engaged all along our lines. It was clear we were getting the best of it, but we were still outnumbered badly, and we began to fall back into more compact lines. Soon the enemy in the fortification sortied out and we found ourselves fighting on an internal front as well. We continued to sort ourselves out into an almost bow-shaped line which gradually became a pinched circle.

The enemy's weapons were not nearly as good as ours, but their sheer numbers slowly wore us down and I could see that, after only about two hours of fighting, we were down by almost half. I found myself glancing to the north to see if our relief column was in sight, but they were not. More and more men fell, but our organization held. Glancing around, it looked like Suchix's minghan was down to a jagun after four hours of fighting, and still the relief did not come. The enemy kept expecting us to surrender, but we continued

desperately and seemed to be taking quite a few of them with us. Finally, in sheer exhaustion, they drew back from us and sent an emissary to discuss surrender terms. Bisdah ran him through with his sword, and the battle was rejoined. This time they charged with spears. These were not hard to parry with our shields, but weariness was telling on the men. I don't know how I was able to keep deflecting blows and delivering sword thrusts, for I was completely numb with exhaustion. I noticed the enemy soldiers were chewing something that seemed to have renewed their strength considerably. Many more of our men were falling in this attack. After about another hour, there was a shout from the enemy and they suddenly pulled back and ran for the fortification as our reinforcements finally arrived and swooped down on them.

They did not reach the fortification, since we had wandered some distance from it during the battle, and fast as they were, they could not outrun horses. I looked around at the remnant of our tumen. There were perhaps two hundred left standing. Most, like me, were barely able to move. Our dead littered the ground along with the enemy. I sank down in exhaustion and looked around to see if any of my jagun still lived. I couldn't see any of them. I couldn't see Bisdah or Suchix or Ah Chel either. I hoped they were simply unrecognizable as I'm sure I was.

After about half an hour, I rose up and began to look to the wounded. My jagun had, indeed, been wiped out. Bisdah and Suchix had also been killed. I was the only living jagun commander, although there was a wounded minghan commander. Ah Chel was badly wounded and I stayed with him until he died. Two arban commanders also survived, both slightly wounded. When the final tally was made, there were 143 of us left, not counting the jagun that had broken through with the horses at the start of the battle.

We were ordered to form ourselves in ranks and Henry and his staff rode by us to honor us. He passed by closely enough that I could finally get a good look at him. He was as short as my father but was stouter with a darker complexion and almost black hair. He seemed rather serious and looked each one of us in the eye as he passed. I noticed he gave me a strange look and then the ghost of a smile as he passed by. Our tumen was then ordered to return to the capital to be honored by the Khan himself. When the show was over, I sought out a stream to wash myself and found that, not surprisingly, I was covered with bruises and welts. We were given the position of honor in camp that night behind Henry's tent. Theodore sought me out once he had finished his duties.

"I can't tell you how relieved I was when I saw you still standing as the Inka disengaged. I can't understand why Bisdah sent away his horses and fought on foot."

"Neither can I," I replied. "Perhaps he had a death wish."

"Cousin, tell me honestly, do you want to return to the capital with your tumen, or would you now join my staff?"

"If my jagun was still in existence, I would go, but if I have a choice, I would just as soon stay with you. I can't imagine you making such idiotic tactical choices."

"Excellent, come with me now."

"I should tell the acting commander of the tumen."

"Don't bother, I'll send him a message. Let's pack up your equipment and get you over to my tumen at once."

I was a little surprised at his hurry, but I went along with it. Much as I loved and admired the Maya, I never wanted to be a part of their tumen again. There is not a suicidal bone in my body. Of course, I was convinced that there was more to this debacle than any Maya death wish, but I had finally learned to keep such opinions to myself. Theodore set me up right next to his tent and promoted me to minghan commander, exchanging my tattered and stained red sash for a green one. Of course, I wouldn't actually command anyone, but I could be called on to do so if needed. He took very good care of me, giving me very light duties and insisting that I join him for meals. His meals were much better than I had been used to and I began to fill out a bit. I told him about the substance that the Inka had been chewing and he explained that Henry had found out about it a while ago, but had hesitated in giving it to the men. It was a leaf from a plant called locally the coca, which was chewed with a bit of lime powder. The juice seemed to give one much endurance. Henry had just recently decided to let

the men use it, mostly because of the altitude-related exhaustion that had been afflicting the men. It would give us an edge against the Inka and the other local tribes who all freely used it. Theodore didn't feel he needed it, however. I mentioned that it had been available in Tamalameque, but I didn't realize what it was for.

We stayed on the battlefield only long enough to bury our dead. The enemy dead were left to the scavengers. Among these was a very large vulture with white and black feathers called locally a "cuntur." It was a very impressive bird. We destroyed the little Inka fortification and started south again. I was pleased to note that Theodore's tumen was not in the van.

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The Inka Campaign 94 K

(Southern Peru, 1462)

As we rode south, Theodore told me that my brother Theodore would soon be visiting me. I asked how he knew. He said that his brother had written him a letter mentioning it. He added that his poor brother had somehow gotten the idea that I had been killed in action and had urged him to comfort my brother on his arrival. He had been quite worried when he got the letter, since it arrived while my tumen was besieging the Inka fortification and he thought that perhaps George had become prescient. He was very pleased to have gotten off a note to assure him of my continued good health and the heroism of my late tumen. Still, he was very glad to have me with him where he could keep an eye on me.

This was very interesting information. I would, of course, be glad to see my brother when he arrived, but it was obvious to me now that it was no mistake I was in the Maya tumen or that Bisdah made the suicidal stand. The Maya were always considered expendable and it was expected that few of them would return. Apparently, their commanders were expected to do all in their power to see that expectation was realized. All things considered, it was reasonable to assume that, since I stuck out prominently among them because of my height, I would surely die with them. I would have enjoyed seeing the expression on George's face when he received Theodore's reassuring letter. However, it was obvious he wanted me dead and it was a good thing I was in Theodore's tumen. I was still sure George loved his brother more than he hated me.

Returning to less sinister subjects, it was a little difficult to figure out the Inka imperial organization, but it seemed that we had entered their northern province called Huanuco, after a tribe of roughly that name that predominated in the province. There were also elements of a few other tribes in isolated spots, as if they had been put there on purpose. We met no more resistance in the province, but then we went directly to the provincial capital instead of visiting each village.

We quickly invested the capital, but it proved to be deserted. A closer examination revealed that it was a city that had recently been laid out and was still very much under construction. There was a large plaza in the center of the city with a platform in its middle. On the eastern side of the plaza there were palaces and a temple all of finely fitted stones with thatch roofs. On the northern side of the plaza, there was more housing, but this was of stone set in mud, also with thatch roofs and in varying stages of completion. Farther north, outside of the city was a village near terraced mountains just green with young crops (it was now early spring here). To the west of the town, we found storage buildings. Many were empty but some contained the chun-o tubers, called papas in Quechua, dried for storage. There was a fortification not far from the capital, but it was still under construction and had also been abandoned.

We finally rounded up a few of the locals and, with some difficulty, discovered that the Inka had only recently conquered the Huanuco, and the locals were quite willing to switch sides since we were winning. They also warned us that the Inka still commanded a large army and would try to destroy us. Henry assured them that we could handle anything the Inka might send us and urged them to return to their villages and tend their crops, for we would not disturb them in any way as long as they remained loyal to us. They went off much cheered and I heard that eventually most of the villagers did return home to tend their crops.

As we approached the next province, we were having some difficulty with scouts. Too many of them were not returning. There was little ground cover in this area, but the rough terrain provided ample opportunity for

ambush. Henry became more wary and tried to recruit locals to scout for us. This yielded better results, but information came in more slowly since they did not ride horses, and, of course, there was always the possibility that they might give us false intelligence. Still, we continued southward slowly, finally crossing the unremarkable border into the next province, Cincay-Qoca, after about a month.

This province seemed to center on a large lake called Cincay Qoca (Lynx Lake in the Quechua language which seemed to increasingly dominate in the highlands). Living mostly in tiny scattered settlements on the plateau about the lake and on islands in the lake was a small tribe with a totally incomprehensible language that had been named after the lake by the Inka. They were a pastoral people, in general, herding flocks of the lama and the smaller versions called alpaca, although they also raised some centli and the papa. They offered us no resistance and expressed gratitude that we had rid them of the hated Inka and, of course, promised undying loyalty to the Khan.

We encountered elements of the Tarama tribe in the eastern part of this province as well as in the province to the south named for them. They also herded to some extent, but mostly farmed in the valleys east of the Cincay Qoca Plateau. They also proved to have settlements on the slopes of the eastern mountains that descended into the jungles, but it was some time before we found out about these, since there was no real tribal organization among the Tarama, just small, discrete and independent villages. They, too, were not sorry to see the Inka driven out and offered to lend us guides to lead us on to the next province. Henry accepted the offer, warning them of the dire consequences of any treachery.

The next province was very different. It was called Wanka after the dominant tribe. They were a mostly agricultural people, living in densely populated towns and cities in the river valleys south of the Cincay Qoca Plateau. They were delighted to see us and quickly volunteered their young men to help us rid the world of the Inka. They did not seem to have any dominant organization, but were many separate subgroups that in the past had formed shifting alliances to fight among themselves. They had even been unable to unify in the face of the Inka invasion and thus had fallen to them easily. They also promised to guide us through their lands. As usual, Henry warned them against any treachery, but they loudly protested their loyalty to their deliverers. It all sounded rather hollow to me, but it was prudent of them to defer to the largest army.

It was while we were passing through the lands of the Wanka and were, in fact, camped outside their capital, Haton Xauxa, that my brother caught up with us. He rode up with the supply train and made straight for Theodore's tent. He reasoned that Theodore would know where to find me. When he saw me come out of the tent, he grabbed me with a bear hug and squeezed the breath out of me. He then stood me away a little to have a look at me, and then hugged me again. He told me that he had come as soon as he was told that I had been assigned to the Maya tumen. I had written to my sister Mathilde when I had reached the encampment of the Ordu a few years ago and told her how things were going. She had no idea I was in any danger and had only mentioned my assignment to Theodore when he was visiting her last year, innocently asking if he knew anyone in the Maya Ordu. He had sent a letter of protest to George immediately and then set off to rescue me. He congratulated me on my survival and my promotions. He admitted that he didn't think I would do that well in the army, and he was very proud of me. He added that he was sure our father was also proud of me. He blamed himself for not accompanying me so he could make sure I was not compromised. I reminded him that I was only given short time to report and he could not leave his patients on such short notice. Besides, I was well aware what George had in mind for me so I planned to stay very close to his brother.

"That is very shrewd of you, Karl," he told me. "The only person in the world who loves and trusts George is Theodore. George would not want any harm to come to him. I suspect his tumen is the most intact in the Ordu."

"Yes, it is, almost full strength after two years of campaigning. It isn't really necessary, though. He is an excellent warrior. I would gladly follow him into battle."

"Well, if you do see any more real action, do what you can to protect him; it might end your exile. But even if it doesn't, don't stay here when he returns home. Go with him to the border, then go north and wander about the Khakhanate for a few years."

“Theodore wants to see out the campaign against the Inka; then he’ll go back. I like your idea. Most of the Ani’ Yun’-wiya who went on campaign did just that. It sounds very inviting. Maybe I can find that girl I once saw who was as pale as I am.”

“You know, I saw such a girl once. She was a little younger than you and traveling with a merchant, her father or guardian I assumed. She reminded me of your mother because she seemed to have the same melancholy air about her. She served dinner when I spent the evening at their encampment, but the merchant never introduced her to me or paid her much attention. I wonder now if she was a servant or even a slave.”

“That must be her!” I nearly shouted. “She was traveling in a small train of wagons. You saw her! Where was she? When was it? What was the merchant’s name? What do you know about him?”

“Well, let me see.” Theodore was surprised by my excitement. “I was about two days’ south of the old Snake Ordu encampment. They have moved a little farther east since then. It was four or five years ago; I was on my way back to Anahuac. I think you were back already, or on your way also. Yes, you were. I remember you were already gone when I visited Iskagua and Ghigoioie. I can’t think of the merchant’s name, but he was from one of those northeastern tribes with the dreadful names, like Mathilde’s husband, Aspenquid. He was rather sophisticated, though, for he had many fine goods, and although a little taciturn, he was friendly to me. I remember he called the girl by an odd name, Kharrotta or Khallotta or something like that. I’m afraid that’s all I can tell you. I would guess the girl is probably married by now, so I hope you don’t have your heart set on her.”

“I saw her once many years ago, on the way back from telling Mathilde about our mother’s death. I only saw her for a moment, but it was like a moment frozen in my mind. I could never forget her. I must find her and speak to her. If she is married, I will not interfere, of course, but I will offer her and her husband my friendship. Still, I can’t imagine that we aren’t meant to be together.”

“I didn’t think it possible, but I do believe you are more of a romantic than Mathilde. You must have spent too much time with her when you were growing up. However, if I hear anything about the girl or remember anything else about her or the merchant, I will contact you immediately, if you can be contacted, of course.”

“I’m just so glad someone else saw her—I was beginning to wonder if it had all been an illusion. But let me assure you, if she is still alive, I will find her, no matter how long it takes.”

I finally recovered my manners and asked after his family and all the relatives. I had a few more nieces and nephews and even a couple of grandnieces and grandnephews. Our father was somewhere in the far northwest visiting my mother’s family. My Ani’ Yun’-wiya brother, Cinnashote, was on campaign in the east and doing well from all accounts. It would be good to compare campaigns with him one day. Cousin Theodore finally wandered by and he and my brother greeted each other warmly. He invited Theodore to stay with us for the last leg of the campaign and then we could all return together. He gave it some thought and agreed. He presented himself to Henry, who welcomed him stiffly (they already knew each other and were not friends), then set to work dealing with any health problems in our tumen.

After a short stay we left the capital and continued south. The Wanka provided guides as well as auxiliaries and we traversed their province without incident. There was a large population in the province and they eagerly provided us with food whenever we stopped for the night. It seemed they were expected to do this for the Inka and assumed we would require the same. Henry took some of it but encouraged them to keep the rest in storage for future need. They were somewhat bewildered by his generosity, and it took quite a while to convince them that they had not offended him in some way.

Now that I was part of Theodore’s staff, I saw a lot more of my cousin Henry. It was difficult to measure the man. He was neither likable nor obnoxious, neither friendly nor hostile, neither warm nor cold. He seemed efficient yet a bit hesitant. He was well organized but clearly not sure of himself. He relied heavily on his main advisor, a man called Dehahuit. Dehahuit, a tall, muscular, middle-aged man, was half Kadohadacho and half Tairona. His father, a Kadohadacho named Tarxar, had taken part in the original conquest of the Khanate of the Clouds and had remained behind to help govern it. He was greatly valued by my uncle Theodore and had been his chief advisor. Dehahuit had proved to be valuable to my disreputable cousin, the current Khan of the Clouds, and had been sent along to make sure Henry didn’t make any mistakes. He looked at me as if I were a

bug that was not worth the effort to squash. He looked at Henry as if he were an idiot just barely able to cinch up his own pants. It was obvious that Henry both resented and feared his “advisor” and in his position, I could see why. I was not allowed in the “strategy” sessions of the tumen commanders, but Theodore told me that what usually happened was that Henry greeted everyone, then turned the meeting over to Dehahuit, who merely barked “Henry’s” orders at them and then dismissed them. Theodore could not find any fault with the man’s tactics, however, - it was quite obvious that he knew what he was doing. Apparently, all the campaign decisions I had been told were Henry’s were actually taken by Dehahuit.

Acapipoltzin would come around to visit on occasion, and he and Theodore would reminisce about the various things they had done when they were boys together. They would graciously fill me in on the details and always included me in anything they did together. I did notice him looking at me strangely once in a while as if he wanted to ask me something, but nothing came of it until one night when he came upon me while I was checking over the perimeter of my tumen. His tumen was always placed next to ours and he happened to be making his rounds at the same time as I was. Seeing me, he walked over and chatted amiably about nothing noteworthy for a few minutes. Then he paused for a moment and in the moonlight I could see him weighing whether to ask his question, but then he did.

“Cacalotl, you were in Tlatelolco when Uncle Henry died, weren’t you?”

“In a way,” I answered. “I arrived while the palace was besieged. I think he was murdered during that time, but I’m not sure.”

“You would have thought that the murderer would have had some sort of prearranged signal to indicate his success to the mob and thus embolden them and perhaps dishearten the palace guard.”

“That makes sense, but George implied that he came upon the murder just as it happened, but too late to prevent it.”

“Yes, I suppose that is what he indicated. What do you think happened?”

“Who am I to question the word of my Khan?”

“Tell me, Cacalotl”—he looked at me steadily—“are you in exile?”

“What gives you that impression?” I squirmed.

“I thought so.” He smiled ruefully. “I’ll do what I can for you. Discreetly, of course.”

“Thank you, sir. You are most kind.”

“Did you ever wonder what it would be like had Theodore been born first?”

“I suspect the same man would be Khan now.”

“Exactly. Thank you for your insights. You are wise beyond your years.”

“You are too generous. I have learned much in the last few years.”

“Yes, haven’t we all.”

He drifted off and never brought up the subject again. I was glad that he could see through the miscreant George and wondered how many others suspected him of patricide. I doubted if Acapipoltzin could do anything to lift my exile, but was glad he wanted to do so. I found my brother and told him about our conversation. He was not surprised that Acapipoltzin had figured things out, but my brother urged me to avoid any other such discussions with anyone else from Anahuac, especially Theodore. He would never believe his brother capable of such perfidy and I would lose Theodore’s very valuable friendship. My brother decided that he would accompany me to the Khakhanate to make sure I arrived safely. Once there, he felt I would not be bothered as long as I kept my mouth shut about George. I assured him I would not even mention George to anyone anywhere. My brother was reassured and returned to his duties.

South of the Wanka was the province of Angara where our Wanka guides told us we would find the tribe of the same name and a scattering of other tribes that the Inka had transplanted to keep an eye on the warlike Angara.

Actually, except for a few stray old folk who were considered too ancient to move, the province was deserted. It was eerie passing through lifeless towns, villages, and cities with untended crops in the fields and terraces surrounding them. It continued this way all through this province and the next one, Vilcas, and into the next one Andahuayla. We were filing into and around the deserted capital of the latter when word finally came that the Inka were in position a little to our south on the gentle slopes of a snowcapped mountain. I rode ahead with Theodore and a few of the other tumen commanders to look over the enemy position.

We came upon them some thirty li or so south of the city. They filled the area between two small rivers that seemed to originate on the mountain. There were tens of thousands of them encamped openly and confidently waiting for our approach. Their numbers impressed Theodore. They outnumbered us at least three to one. They saw us looking them over and made no move against us as if they wanted us to reconnoiter them. One of our Wanka guides told us that the Inka relied heavily on intimidation and hoped that the sight of their encampment would make us surrender or, at least, despair. We assured the man that here in the open they didn't have a chance against us. In fact, if they had twice as many men, they still wouldn't have a chance. He was clearly surprised at us and began to look on us in awe. The truth is, it was no bravado, there weren't nearly enough of them to give us any trouble. The first salvo of cannon would likely send them scurrying to the rear and we would run them down on our horses and wipe them out. Had they repaired to their stone forts and cities, they would have been much more difficult to defeat. Out in the open, they were sitting ducks.

Henry (or actually, Dehahuit) decided to let them stew for a couple of days while we rested up in the town of Andahuaylas. Our scouts kept an eye on the enemy to make sure they didn't try anything. But they were quite content to wait us out. In the late afternoon of the second day, a small delegation ventured out of their camp toward our position and asked for an audience with our leader. Theodore happened to be present for the meeting and told me what occurred. The Inka delegation was led by a relative of their ruler (oddly the ruler's title was the Inka—as if the tribe got their name from him). The emissary presented himself to Henry and generously acknowledged that he could see that we were too frightened to venture out of the city to fight the Great Inka. He could certainly understand our plight, as could that most generous sovereign, Inka Pachacutec. Even though we had greatly offended him and even though we had killed one of his own sons, he was prepared to forgive us and accept our surrender. The response must have really shocked the poor man. Henry and the others present burst out laughing when his words were translated for them. When Henry recovered himself, he told the man that he really hoped Pachacutec survived our attack tomorrow; it would be a shame to lose a man with such a remarkable sense of humor. He then waved the man away before he could say anything else and he was escorted back to his lines. Theodore said that the man was visibly pale. He also mentioned that Dehahuit had not laughed, but did not seem to mind the laughter.

Once the man was gone, Dehahuit called for a council of tumen commanders. Everyone got their orders and preparations were made to meet the enemy early the next morning. Well before dawn, we were in motion. Our tumen was the first to move since we would be on the right flank and had the farthest to go, almost twenty li. We each took three horses so we could move quickly without jading the horses we would need in battle. We arrived in position just as the sky was beginning to lighten. We changed horses and sent the one we had ridden to the rear. We would each have an extra horse for pursuit. Acapiipoltzin's tumen was on our left and the others stretched out beyond it. Each tumen covered about three li of front. We were all lined up when dawn broke sufficiently to lighten up the view. We began to move forward in total silence except for the jingling of our equipment. The Inka were formed in groups six li up the slope from us. We steadily approached them until we were within a few hundred yards of their closest ranks.

At this point we could see on the slope above a man borne on a litter that glittered as though it were covered with gold. He motioned to one of his staff and the man moved forward a little and began haranguing us much like had happened at the small fortification when I was still with the Maya tumen. We remained in place while the cannon were moved into position behind us. Then on a signal, we all turned around and moved behind the cannon. The harangue continued all this time, although I noticed he paused when we turned and paused again when we revealed the cannon. Obviously, they had no idea what they were, but they looked threatening. Once again, we did not wait for the harangue to finish, but as soon as all was ready, the cannon were touched off.

Each shot cut a bloody path through the packed ranks. Some formations turned and ran, but most held. One of the shots plowed a furrow all the way to and through the haranguer and almost struck the Inka.

It was obvious they were stunned by this weapon, but appeared determined to tough it out. Since they remained in place, we fired another round into them and finally their unit leaders showed initiative and ordered a charge. As they started raggedly forward, we loaded the cannon with shrapnel and, as soon as they came into effective range, fired a devastating salvo into them that shattered whole ranks. Still they came on and received a second salvo before the cannon were pulled back about a hundred yards as we fired arrows into them while following the cannon. We again pulled up behind the cannon and they again fired off two rounds of shrapnel into the thinning ranks. Amazingly, they still came and we repeated the exercise once more. The third time was the charm, and after the next round, the survivors turned and fled. It was, of course, too late. We stormed after them cutting them down from behind with our swords. Eventually we came upon the abandoned litter of the Inka. Relentlessly we pursued the fleeing enemy killing all we found without mercy.

The only reason they weren't all killed was because the far side of the mountain was too steep for the horses. We had to dismount to descend into the deep valley below. Still, we relentlessly pursued until we reached the river. It was too deep to ford and the enemy had cut the crude rope bridges across it. All of those caught on our (the western) side of the river were killed. We estimated that not more than ten thousand of them got away, and most of these were the ones that fled with the very first salvo from the cannon. We didn't know whether we had killed the Inka. He did not appear to be a young man, so it was hard to believe he escaped. My tumen swept the riverbank upstream until dusk, then turned back. There was a tiny village on our side of the river near where a small river emptied into the larger one. It was deserted, so we camped there for the night.

The next morning our pontoon train came up (it had been no minor feat bringing it over that mountain) and bridged the river (it was called the Pachachaca). Three of the tumen crossed the river and swept along its valley looking for any of the enemy. Our tumen and that of Acapipioztzin were ordered to continue the search for any survivors on our side of the river. It was a waste, of course, although we did turn up a few of the villagers. They protested that they had no involvement in the battle and were hiding from the Inka when we found them. There were women and children among them, so they probably were hiding from us, but we let them go and told them to replant their crops. The fleeing Inka and the pursuing Mongols had ruined their terraced fields. I think it was almost too late for them to try again. That night we crossed the river and picked up our bridge. The tumen on the far side had rounded up a few of the enemy, and they were killed on the spot, but it was only a fraction of those that got away.

We had suffered very few casualties in our tumen, and most of those were wounds. There were only about two hundred of our men killed and about three times that many wounded in the whole Ordu. Word of the lopsided victory spread very quickly in the highlands and even the most loyal tribes began to defect from the Inka. As we marched toward the Inka capital, we were constantly met by delegations from their subject tribes offering their allegiance. All were accepted and ordered to provide a token force of auxiliaries. We were greatly slowed by all the reinforcements, but it made sense to get them all in on the final kill.

Our track led us east down the Pachachaca, then south up one of its tributaries, then east through a sort of impromptu pass among the high mountains, then down a tributary to a major river, the Apurimac. We were now in the Inka home province. We crossed the river on our pontoon bridge, just upstream from the remnants of the Inka rope bridge and followed a rather narrow road paved with stone along another tributary upstream to its source and continued generally east over a very rugged pass (the road actually had steps in places) between the very high mountains to the north and the moderately high ridge to the south to a high plateau with a river emptying into a fair-sized lake. The lake fed a river that flowed north to join another main river, the Urubamba. East of the lake, the road followed a river that joined its draining river upstream to its headwaters. There on the plain below us was the end of the road, the Inka capital, Cuzco.

It was mostly situated between two streams (the Huatanay on the west and the Tullumayo on the east), which joined together about a hundred yards before being joined by a third stream (the Chuncumayo). Some of the city had spilled over the two rivers and was approaching the third. The whole of it was rather more than a thousand yards long and at least as many wide. Our road entered the city in the part that had extended south over the

Huatanay. Northwest of the city, on a hill dropping steeply to the Tullumayo, but more gently to the Huatanay was a large fortress. Our guides told us it was called Sacsahuaman. We couldn't see from this angle, but it was likely more approachable from the northwest. From this angle it looked quite impregnable. It seemed to consist of a stone wall at the top of a ravine that was perhaps two hundred feet high. The city appeared deserted, but the fortress was fully manned.

Dehahuit sent the auxiliaries into the city to clear out any stragglers, but warned them not to touch the palace or the temples. They immediately set to looting and burning, but he didn't seem to care. We descended directly to the Huatanay River and over our pontoon bridge across it. We then surrounded the fortress just out of sling range. I joined Theodore and the other tumen commanders and their staffs on a ride around the fortress. On the northwest side there was a broad open area before a high (perhaps twenty feet) wall extending all the way to the ravine on each side. The wall consisted of salient and retiring angles like a sawtooth. It was too thick to bring down with cannon fire and impossible to climb without ladders, which we immediately started to build. There was the beginning of a second wall outside the first. Three towers appeared to be under construction within the walls and were all above the level of the wall. The largest of these was round. There were three entrances through the wall, but these were in the recesses and would be very hard to force. It was an impressive fortress, but we would not have too much difficulty taking it. While looking over the position, we found out we had not killed the Inka. He appeared on the highest tower to look us over. While the ladders were being prepared, we also positioned the cannon to fire in high trajectory over the walls. There was a small hill on the north end of the open space in front of the fortress and a hill on the other side of the Tullumayo where we were able to place them to good effect. Of course, all this took a while, but within six days all was ready.

17

Conquest of the Inka and Return to Tamalameque, 95 K

(Cuzco, Peru to Northern Colombia, 1463)

At first light on the seventh day, the cannon opened up and shells began to rain down on the fortress. The cannons were trying to lob a shell right into the unfinished circular tower. They finally did, and it crumbled outwardly after a few direct hits. Once the sun was up, we began to move forward with the ladders.

Acapioltzin's tumen was manning the ladders while we provided cover fire with arrows. We swept everyone off the wall and continuously fired over the wall to get those behind it. Before long, the wall was ours and Acapioltzin's men poured fire into the milling masses inside the wall. We followed them up the ladders and took over the cover fire as they climbed down the other side and closed with the enemy below. While I could see that our casualties were mounting, theirs were staggering.

It is always hard to see the whole picture from the heat of battle since one is necessarily very busy defending himself and killing the enemy. And even though they were hard-pressed, the enemy behind those in close combat kept showering us with stones and spears since we were better targets up on the wall. Of course, they were better targets for us as well and our larger shields were more help to us than their smaller ones were to them. Once the way was clear, we also got down off the wall and fought our way around the flanks to completely surround the enemy. Our front ranks cut them down with swords while the back ranks continued to shoot arrows into the packed ranks of the Inka. More than once as I dispatched one of them, another would drop to the ground already dead but held in place by the press. To my dismay, I noticed my cousin Theodore had worked his way into the front rank. I worked my way over to his side and tried to keep an eye on him.

Theodore and I were on the western side of the citadel within the walls and we eventually fought our way up to the ruins of the round tower. Quite a few of the enemy had been crushed by its fall. The carnage continued unabated. Even though our weapons were superior, the sheer packed mass made the work difficult and dangerous. The Inka fought desperately and fiercely with no thought to surrender. We kept shifting ranks so no one was exposed long enough to get too tired. The enemy could not afford the luxury. By now the ground was treacherously slippery with blood and gore and we would have seen our casualties mount quickly if the men who slipped had not fallen away from the enemy because of the slope of the land since we were generally fighting uphill.

Finally toward late morning, the signal was given to fall back. We reluctantly pulled back a few yards from the enemy, who were now packed tightly around the highest point in the citadel (some sort of large, uncompleted building) and looked to the horn blower in surprise. Then the signal came to finish them off with arrows. Once the remnant could see what was happening, they would have none of it and rushed down to close with us again. It was over in about another hour. The last one of them was cut down and we all sat down amidst the gore to rest while the tumen that was held in reserve moved in to tend our wounded and dispatch any enemy wounded. We had to assume the Inka was among the dead, although there was no way to tell.

My brother found me and when I saw the look of dismay on his face, I assured him I was relatively unhurt. I was covered with blood, but it wasn't mine. Once I cleaned up, I found I only had a few welts and one shallow cut. My cousin Theodore was unscathed, but he too was covered with blood. I think I got most of my welts after he joined the fray. He, of course, did not need my help, but I had to make sure no harm came to him while I was anywhere near him.

While Acapipoltzin's tumen had borne the brunt of the attack and had significant casualties (even he had been wounded slightly), we also had been well bloodied. About two thousand of our men were wounded, many seriously, and almost five hundred were dead, including many officers. It became necessary for me to take over one of the minghans. Theodore was quite pleased with his tumen's performance and very happy to have finally taken part in a real battle rather than the more typical rout. I found nothing to rejoice about. War is a very ugly business, and while it is gratifying to notice you stood and fought rather than turned and ran, I couldn't help thinking that there must be a better way to prove yourself. I sincerely hoped Theodore would not elect to further extend his tour of duty for I had definitely had enough of war at that time.

Our dead were buried, but the enemy was left (after being stripped of any valuables), and the large black-and-white cundur had themselves quite a feast. The city was really still in good shape since so much of it was made of dressed stone. All the thatch roofs had been burned and the insides of the houses were a mess. There was quite a bit of gold in the palace and in their main temple, and even more was found in the ruins of the citadel, but the looting auxiliaries had taken all from the private homes. Henry looked over the palace and temples and ordered that all the gold be removed and sent back to his father.

Word reached us that the Inka had been replaced by his son and they had no intention of giving up the struggle against us. It was hard to believe there were any of them left. The majority of their client states had either been conquered or shifted loyalty to us. But it turned out it was a religious thing with them, since the Inka was held to be a sort of god. Henry was not pleased, since he was hoping to end this conquest phase quickly. Dehahuit was not concerned. He ordered the auxiliaries to find and root out last of the Inka to prove their much-proclaimed loyalty. If they had any trouble, they could call on us to help. For now we would stay near the city until replacement tumen arrived. We would make ourselves useful by building permanent bridges across the streams around the city.

The bridge building was hard work since Dehahuit wanted them made of stone. We could have used the help of the Inka for this task, since obviously they were much better at it than we were. By the end of the local summer, we were finished and the replacements had reached us. While we were camped above the city, it had begun to rebuild. Some of the former inhabitants moved back in. A good yam was set up on the edge of town and the palace was cleared out and served as Henry's headquarters. Occasionally one of the tumen had to move out and help reduce an Inka stronghold that was too difficult for the auxiliaries to handle, but I noticed neither our nor Acapipoltzin's were called upon for this duty. I also found time to pick up a smattering of the Quechua language.

When the relief arrived, it was no less than five tumen that marched into our camp on the slopes west of the city. Among them was my long-ago acquaintance Tlapac, the great grandson of the legendary Smoking Mirror. He was commanding a minghan in a tumen of Olmeca led by his father Chlalcoatl. His younger brother, Tlilatl, was serving on his father's staff. I thought he was a bit young, but he wasn't much younger than I was when I started my training. I presented them to my cousin Theodore and found they already knew him, my brother, and Acapipoltzin quite well.

We all shared the evening meal together, and I asked Chlalcoatl how it happened that a governor was leading a tumen on campaign. He replied that the new Khan felt that all governors should go on campaign every ten years or so to prove they still had what was needed to rule effectively. I didn't think that made much sense, for ruling a province is nothing like commanding a tumen, but I was not about to comment on orders from the Khan. From the tone of his voice, I could tell Chlalcoatl was not particularly convinced by the logic either. I quickly changed the subject to fill them in on the campaign so far. My cousin Theodore warmed up to this subject, and between us, we told them all that had happened the last few years. I didn't dare ask how things were in Anahuac, but I did ask after Chlalcoatl's wife and daughters, and I asked Tlapac about our mutual friend, Kinahiwi. Chlalcoatl said that he had sent his wife and daughters to visit their Ani' Yun'-wiya relatives while he was on campaign. Tlapac said Kinahiwi was on campaign in the Khanate of the Green Mist. I mentioned my Ani' Yun'-wiya brother, Cimmashote, was also on campaign there, although I suspected their relative rank would preclude any contact between them. We talked for a while about our mutual Ani' Yun'-wiya friends, but kept it brief since it would mean nothing to cousin Theodore and Acapiioltzin. They, then, reminisced about their visits to Chlalcoatl's family when they were boys. We had a good visit.

After dinner, my brother took me for a walk and told me that, while I had done a good job of getting us off an awkward subject, I had to be more careful. It would be best if I talked less and listened more whenever our cousin was around. He didn't think Theodore caught Chlalcoatl's tone of voice, but it was a dangerous situation because our cousin trusted his brother and an innocent question from him could have disastrous consequences for others. He urged me not to be seen alone with Chlalcoatl or his sons. That bothered me, but I knew he was right, so the next day I convinced cousin Theodore to accompany me while I showed them all the sights in the city and citadel, Sacsahuaman. Tlapac wanted to know what the name of the citadel meant. I knew it had something to do with a hawk, but didn't really know what. On asking around, we found out it meant the "Throne of the Hawk." It was a good name for the site, although lately, it was more of the table of the curtur. The big birds had done their work well; all that remained of our late foes were piles of bleached bones.

After several more days, our two tumen were officially relieved and we prepared to march back to Tamalameque. The other three tumen would follow a few days apart. Since the area was not felt to be completely pacified, it was felt we should stay together at least until we passed through the new territories. Actually, Theodore and Acapiioltzin wanted to keep the units together all the way, so we could march through Tamalameque in triumph. I suspected Khan George would meet us and lead the procession through the city as if he had been somehow involved. I also suspected that if they could keep the tumen together all the way back to Anahuac, the other Khan George would do the same thing there. Of course, I never said a thing, even to my brother.

The journey back was very long. Somehow, you lose track of how far you have gone over the years, but we had to travel over five thousand li to get back to Tamalameque. It took us the rest of the season of spring and all of summer to do so. Of course, much of that spring was actually fall, but we were in the great Yuma Valley in last days of summer. Once again during our journey north, we passed through the area where the seasons reverse. I can't say that I noticed anything this time either.

The road we traveled went all along the mountains from one valley to another, always with high mountains on either side. Once we got past the Angara Province, the land was flourishing, all the rivers were bridged, either permanently or with pontoons, the villages and towns were bustling, yams were working or being built, the roads were filled with merchants, and everyone greeted us enthusiastically. Of course, it is best to greet an army of fifteen thousand warriors enthusiastically. Needless to say, we had no trouble anywhere along the road.

There was only one interesting encounter for me during this trip. It occurred in the Andahualya Province. We were camped on our old bone-strewn battlefield south of the provincial capital. Feeling the need to speak to my guide, I had wandered off and started climbing the mountain above the battlefield. I stopped at a point about a third of the way up and sat down. After looking about for a while, I turned within to seek counsel. After I got my questions answered, my guide told me to descend the mountain on the western side. I was puzzled by this suggestion, but didn't hesitate to do as he said. Within a short period of time, I came upon an old Inka sitting in a sort of niche in the rocks. He was covered with a beautifully colored and decorated blanket. As I got near I could see that he was an old man. He looked up as I approached and sighed deeply.

“Wiracocha is merciful,” he said in Quechua. “Aim your weapon truly, young man, I am ready to die.”

“I am not here to kill you, sir.”

“You have been doing little else since entering our lands, why stop now?”

“You are defeated, there is no point in killing any more of you.”

“Do you not realize that I am Uillac Uma, so you must kill me?”

“You correctly suggest that we have little tolerance of priests, especially so called high priests. But I have had enough of killing. I don’t think my spirit guide sent me to you to kill you.”

“But I deserve to die.”

“Why?”

“I have failed the Inka. It was I who performed the calpa near this very spot. I read the lungs and entrails of the lama. It was I who told the Inka he could not fail on this mountain. It was I who was responsible for the destruction of the army, the death of the Inka. It would be a mercy for you to kill me.”

“Perhaps you read your entrails correctly. Is it not possible that your god wanted your army destroyed here so that you would not go on resisting for years and bring far more death to your people? Better a clean decisive battle and surrender than an endless bout of futile banditry.”

“Why would a god wish those that serve him to be killed by those that do not? The fault is mine. I misread the signs.”

“Perhaps we too serve your god, but under another name.”

“What is your god?”

“He is called Tengri. He is a sky god looking down on us, protecting us and guiding us.”

“What is his form?”

“He has no form.”

“Is he your creator?”

“Yes.”

“Well, your Tengri does sound much like our Wiracocha. Perhaps they are the same. Once Wiracocha destroyed a town in anger. Who is to say he was not angry with us. But I can’t imagine why. What did we do to offend him?”

“It may be that he wanted you to be part of a stronger people and so ensure your survival.”

“You are a strange-looking young man. You do not look like your fellows. Why are you so strange?”

“My people came from a land farther away than that of the Mongols. But they were accepted by them when they joined and, in fact, my grandfather was the Khan of Anahuac.”

“Where do the Mongols come from and where is this Anahuac you rule?”

“The Mongols come from a land far to the north and west across the Great Sea. Anahuac is also to the northwest but not nearly as far. I do not rule there, however, nor do I rule anywhere else. My grandfather had several sons, my father was the youngest, and he became a healer.”

“There is a prophecy known to only a few of us. The father of Pachacutec predicted that a people not seen before would destroy our civilization within five generations. But that was only about thirty years ago, not even two generations. Still, we have never seen your Mongols before.”

“We will not destroy your civilization. It is not our way. Your people can do whatever they want and worship any gods they choose so long as they remain loyal to the Khan and obey his orders.”

“You have given me much to think on young man. Perhaps I can still be of service to my people. I must now consult with my spirit guides. I hope they are as wise as yours.”

“I have learned to listen to and obey them. It was a hard lesson. I hope you get your answers.”

“May you grow in wisdom as you grow in years.”

“Thank you, sir.”

With that, I continued down the mountain and returned to camp. It was nearly dark when I arrived and my brother was much relieved to see me, for he was beginning to worry that I had been injured or gotten lost. I assured him he need not worry about me, but I never mentioned my interview with the Inka high priest to him or anyone else. I never heard anything more of the man.

We favored a fairly leisurely pace on the march back, since there was no hurry. Each night we made camp in any available field. Since the harvests were being gathered in as we started out, we had to be rather careful, but eventually, the harvests were in and we could camp anywhere. In practice, however, a harvested field is much less comfortable than a fallow one and we assiduously sought out the latter. We actually encountered a light snow in parts of the mountains before we finally descended through the passes to the Yuma Valley. Once in the valley, the weather was briefly quite pleasant until we got about a fifth of the way down the valley when it began to get uncomfortably hot and humid. After the rather cold, dry highlands, this required a difficult adjustment. The natural result was that we were all soon in varying states of undress. We were in this condition as we arrived within a few li of Tamalameque late one afternoon. I suppose it never occurred to Theodore that we were less than presentable, but when, just as I expected, Khan George arrived to lead us all in triumph, he was appalled at our disarray. We hastily made camp and spent much of the evening polishing up all metal and oiling up all leather. The Khan graciously decided to “honor” us by spending the night with us.

I tried to make myself scarce, but Khan George wanted to meet his “heroic” cousin who survived the annihilation of the Maya tumen and then volunteered to continue serving the Khanate in another tumen. He had just about the same build as his son Henry, although he was somewhat stouter, and looked much older. I could see that he was studying me while he lavishly praised me. I also noticed that he had the coldest, deadest eyes I had ever seen. It was harder to believe I was related to this miscreant than his namesake in Anahuac. I protested that he was too generous in his praise and was greatly honored to have served and merely lucky to have survived. He then favored me with a smirk almost identical to that of his namesake in Anahuac. I couldn’t help thinking he would wear the same expression as he plunged a knife in my belly and then twisted it about. I found him chilling. I was grateful when he dismissed me.

When I left the tent, my brother was waiting for me. He quickly took me with him to visit an acquaintance of his in the area. He didn’t think George would move against me immediately, but he was sufficiently concerned to remove me from the area just in case. We rode hard toward the capital, and then turned off on a side trail for a short distance. We dismounted and walked around a large tree or bush—since it was quite dark with only a waxing moon to light the way, I couldn’t see anything well enough to distinguish it. Once we got behind the tree or bush, he got out a sort of broom and swept away our tracks from the trail. We then went down a barely perceptible trail to a small round hut made of wood with a thatch roof. Theodore made an odd birdlike noise that was answered from within by a similar one and we entered the house.

Once inside, there was a faint glow from the center hearth and in that vague light I could see there was a couple and their three children all of whom rose to enthusiastically greet their old friend. Once he introduced me, they all turned to me with equal enthusiasm. It reminded me of visits to my sister Sarah’s family. Theodore introduced me to them. Segunsua was a Muisca merchant, Pia, his wife, was a Taino and their three children, Chia, Kirikiri and Zuhe were ten, eight, and five respectively. He explained that they took turns naming the children, so the oldest and youngest had Muisca names, while the middle one had a Taino name. All I knew was the oldest was a girl and the other two were boys. I knew nothing of either language. Fortunately all spoke Mongol.

Much as I expected, Theodore had saved the life of one of them. It seemed that when Pia was due to deliver Chia she had great trouble. The midwives had decided there was no more they could do when Theodore

happened to arrive on the scene. Normally, he would not have interfered with a birth, but one of the midwives had recognized him and asked him to help. Segunsua had misgivings, but he was so desperate that he consented. Theodore immediately figured out the problem and, with the midwives help, delivered the child and brought Pia through the ordeal. It was indelicate to ask what the problem was and no one saw fit to tell me, but apparently he instructed her on how to avoid it with future pregnancies and the other two gave her no trouble. Ever since, Theodore was welcome in their home and he always stopped by when he was in the area.

They put up hamacas for us and we chatted a bit more before going to sleep. The next morning we were fed and sent on our way with gifts. I was rather puzzled why a prosperous merchant would live in such an out-of-the-way place that was really rather spare. Theodore explained to me that it was best not to attract attention in Tamalameque since George was not above arranging misfortune for anyone he judged to be too wealthy. Their hovel was hard to find and if somehow stumbled upon would attract no interest. He urged me to remember where it was and if I ever visited make sure no one followed me for their sake. He had been hoping that they would settle on one of the Taino islands where they would be safe from George, but Segunsua was not yet ready to give up this Khanate.

As we rode back to join the tumen, I couldn't help wondering aloud to Theodore how such a good, kind man as our grandfather could possibly spawn such vile creatures as the two Georges. He reminded me that their fathers were also good, kind men.

"Power," he explained, "can have a strange affect on a man. It can make him a monster if he lusts for it. It can make him a mediocrity if he is afraid of it. And it can make him great if he wields it with wisdom, sureness, and mercy. Our grandfather was the latter, so was my namesake, the first Khan of the Clouds. So, too, I think would have been Ignace, his older son. Henry, the late Khan of Anahuac was a good man, but he was not competent enough to rule. Neither are his namesake, our late commander, or Theodore, our dear cousin. At least Theodore is a good man just like his father. Henry is not particularly good or bad, just indifferent in every sense of the word."

"I suppose, on the whole, our family did quite well until recently. After all, the great Kaidu spawned the execrable Kuyuk."

"You mustn't accept everything you read in our grandfather's book as necessarily accurate. I think he wrote what he believed to be the truth, but he was very loyal to his friends. I often wished that Smoking Mirror had written his memoirs. I do believe he saw things much more clearly than did our illustrious ancestor."

"Grandfather was often puzzled by him, wasn't he?"

"Yes. I don't think he fully appreciated how astute he really was. He would just assume his friend had missed something. I think Smoking Mirror would have made a better Khan than our grandfather."

"Really?"

"Yes. And, all things considered, Citlalcoatl would be a much better Khan than either of our cousins."

"What about Batu?"

"The Khakhan was like the late Khan Henry in that he was trusting, like our cousin Henry in that he was of indifferent competence, and like his father Jelme in that he was ruthless."

"Was?"

"He died about four years ago. Hadn't you heard?"

"No."

"So much for the authority of the Khakhan. His 'subjects' don't even notice when he dies."

"Well, I suppose we are technically his subjects, but we really only answer to our Khan."

“Don’t ever suggest that when you are wandering about the Khakhanate. You will find the new Khakhan, Kujujuk is quite jealous of his authority. I suspect that was why he arranged the marriage of his daughter with cousin George. He wants to be Khakhan in fact, not just in name. George had best tread lightly around him.”

“So he is another bad ruler! What about Hutulu?”

“Kujujuk is not a bad ruler. He is a very good and fair ruler, but he is very determined to maintain his rule and will ruthlessly crush any attempt to undermine him. Hutulu is quite ill from what I’ve heard and is not expected to live long. He was always considered a good, if uninspired, ruler. His son, Tegulun, is much like him. That is best for his sake. It is from him that Kujujuk would first look for disloyalty. He won’t find it, however. He really has nothing to worry about, but he’ll worry with his dying breath. It is his nature.”

“Whatever happened to the original plan, that the people would choose the successor to the Khan?”

“That bit of romantic idealism died with Kaidu. In theory it sounded good, but in practice, it would be impossible to carry out and lead to constant wars of succession. How do you think the immortal Kubilai became Khan? He had to kill off his brothers, or at least those he could reach. No, that would never work.”

“Well, maybe the next Khan will be a better one.”

“Not here. The only one worse than Henry is Ignace. As to Anahuac, I can’t imagine anything decent coming from George and Chabi.”

“Is she another monster?”

“Arrogant to the core, oblivious to everyone except herself, enjoys lavishing expensive adornments on herself, despises everyone in Anahuac, especially the Khan and all his relatives.”

“It sounds to me like the perfect match.”

“Shame on you, Karl. You should not wish so much evil on anyone—even if they richly deserve it.”

We were both laughing uncontrollably as we reached the tumen. All the men were putting the finishing touches on their accouterments for the great triumphal procession. Cousin Theodore was glad to see us. He wanted to make sure I had a place of honor in the parade. I quickly changed to my best uniform and put on a clean sash I had kept for just such occasions. We formed up and, with George at our head, we marched the short distance to Tamalameque. To my mild bemusement, the street was thronged with people cheering us and waving banners. The city had grown quite a bit larger during our campaign and it took a while for us to reach the palace. Still, all along the way people cheered us. When we reached the plaza in front of the palace, we formed ranks and Khan George addressed us. He briefly praised our heroism, dedication, loyalty, and so on and thanked us for our service to his Khanate. He then assured us we would always be welcomed should we ever decide to return in any capacity either for another campaign or to settle permanently. We were then dismissed and the men were issued their final pay and sent on their way. Theodore and Acapioltzin personally thanked each of the officers and gave them each a bonus out of their own pockets. When Theodore got to me, I reminded him that I had only served with him for a short time and should not be paid by him. He brushed that off and asked if I would come back with him and Acapioltzin. I explained that I wanted to visit my relatives in the Khakhanate, but hoped to see him again soon. My brother and I then took our leave of Theodore and Acapioltzin. I changed into civilian clothes and we set off on the north road toward the coast. They went into the palace to visit a few days.

With typical caution, Theodore only followed the north road for a short while; then he turned east on a narrow road for a few hours; then he led us northeast on an even smaller trail. Toward evening he turned off on another hidden path and once again brushed away our tracks. We followed this path for some distance arriving at a tiny thatch hut in the twilight. It was deserted but was in good condition as though it had been recently used. We ate a cold meal and stretched out the hamacas for the night. When I asked about the place, Theodore explained it belonged to a friend of his who had invited him to stay whenever he was in the area. He seemed to have a lot of friends.

The next morning we continued on the small trail that had brought us to the house. It seemed to lead generally north and was becoming quite rough. We spent the next night in another small hut much like the first and so

continued generally north for the next six days working our way along the western slopes of the Tairona Mountains and spending each night in a conveniently located hut along the way. I had to wonder about all this, but Theodore was not going to tell me anything more than he already had, so I didn't pursue my curiosity. Finally we reached the Putun Maya settlement on the coast called Tuxla (after an Olmeca city). As usual, Theodore knew just what to do. We left our horses in the corral of the yam just south of the town and then worked our way through the underbrush around to the north side of the town and waited until dark, then approached and slipped over a wall into a garden behind a house just on the northern outskirts of town. Silently we approached the back door. At the door, Theodore knocked in a strange sequence. The door opened and we slipped in.

A small dark Putun Maya embraced us both. He led us into the courtyard in the center of his house and sat us down while his servant started to fix the evening meal. Theodore introduced me to the man, another merchant, incongruously named Juchi. I asked him how he happened to have a Mongol name.

"My name surprises you, young man?" He laughed. "My younger brother's name is Raven. My father was an excellent sailor; he always knew which way the wind blew."

As usual, he was indebted to Theodore for his life. I was beginning to think that Theodore had saved half the lives in the Khanate of the Clouds. Juchi was happy to help us. He would get us to one of the Koryo ships. He knew right where we should be able to intercept one just as it was leaving port. Since they were good businessmen, they would be happy to slow down long enough for a few extra fares to scramble aboard. We would set out at first light. We turned in early, right after our meal. Juchi's servant awakened us in the dark. He took us to the central court and fed us a cold meal. Once we were finished eating, he led us down to the shore where Juchi was busy making the final adjustments to his cargo and boarding his rowers. He welcomed us aboard as though he hardly knew us and ushered us into the small hut in the center of his boat. Just as the sky was lightening, we shoved off and headed for the inlet that would take us from the lagoon to the open sea. Once through the inlet, we turned west and followed the coast. Two days later, just as Juchi had suggested, we were approaching one of the large Koryo ships just as it had left the main port near the mouth of the Yuma River, Yumabalikh (where I had landed some three years before). The vessel trimmed sail long enough for Theodore and me to scramble up the ropes onto the deck. We had left the Khanate of the Clouds.

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The Quest, 95–6 K

(1463–4)

Once aboard the ship, we bade a seemingly curt farewell to Juchi and abruptly turned to present ourselves to the master of the ship. He was not far away and, in fact, had been watching us closely. His name was Ch'oe Yong. He was rather tall for a Koryo and appeared to be about middle-aged. He readily agreed to take us with him to the Khakhanate mainland, although he had to make several stops among the islands on the way. We settled on a fare and paid him. I had to assume Theodore had not saved his life. He confirmed my assumption adding that the Koryo had their own healers in whom they had complete faith. He had studied with them and had learned from them about treating the illnesses from the old country like the Zhen plague and barbarian pox and had taught them quite a bit about the local diseases. Still, he had only treated one Koryo in his entire career and the man had only agreed to it because he was delirious at the time. Once he came to his senses, he arranged to be delivered to one of his own healers. I asked if he had been offended by the move, but he insisted he was not.

"I never let my personal feelings interfere with healing. I am happy to help anyone who wants my help and not bother anyone who does not want my help. I consider it an honor to be able to help those who want my help and no dishonor if someone does not want my help. The only dishonor would be if someone wanted my help and I refused. So far, I have never done that."

This ship was just like the one that brought me to the Khanate of the Clouds five years before. The Koryo seemed to only build one-size ship following one design. But since it was quite good, why not? We slept and ate in the large open area of the first deck, passengers on one side, and crew on the other. The hearth was strategically placed under a large opening to the upper deck and meals were fixed for passengers and crew at the

same time. The Koryo were heavily into fish, vegetables, and rice all rather nicely spiced. We both enjoyed the meals very much. The other passengers were all merchants from various places. They were just like most merchants, a mixed lot. Some were very friendly, some were not, some were talkative, some were quiet, some bragged, some deprecated, some were nervous—constantly checking their goods below and the weather above, some were relaxed. Theodore didn't seem to know any of them, although I thought one of them recognized him.

I was beginning to think that Theodore had a secret life of intrigue he wouldn't share with me (no doubt for my protection). I noticed that the merchant who seemed to recognize him made it a point to follow him up onto the top deck one day when I stayed below (on purpose). I went up after a decent interval and found them both leaning on the deck rail seemingly looking out at the water. As I joined them the merchant nonchalantly wandered off. Not wishing to intrude, I asked Theodore if it looked like the weather would hold for our trip. He thought it would and added that we would arrive at Boriquen that evening. He never mentioned the merchant.

That evening, as promised, we dropped anchor off the western coast of Boriquen and small boats began to approach to drop off or pick up cargo and passengers. A few of the merchants left and a few new ones came aboard. By nightfall all was ready and we put to sea again. I suppose we passed Amona that night, but I didn't even know it existed at that time. Odd how life seems to send one (well, me, anyway) in a series of ever-expanding circles. But it would be many, many years before I returned to this area. The next morning, we were dropping anchor at a port on the southern coast of Aiti. And so it continued, we stopped at two more ports on Aiti's south coast, two more on its west coast, and three on the north coast of Cuba before finally turning toward the mainland. At each stop we exchanged cargo and passengers. All of the latter were merchants. The one I thought knew Theodore debarked in Cuba. I admit to not paying much attention to the new ones that joined us. I had decided I had other things to think about. I was planning my quest for my mystery girl. I had decided to visit my Ani' Yun'-wiya family and then my sister Mathilde and see if I could pick up her trail by asking all I met along the way. After that I would work my way across the Khakhanate.

At last the ship dropped anchor in the large bay where the Koryo had established themselves in their own largely shipbuilding town called Tonggye after the area of Koryo from which most of them originated. Theodore told me the bay was at the mouth of the Albayamule River, but had come to be called Tonggye Bay. The town was on the western shore of the bay, about halfway between the mouth of the river and the mouth of the bay. On the shore there were a few of the ships grounded for repairs. The copper on their undersides shone dully in the afternoon sun.

We were rowed ashore with some cargo. The ship apparently had a few more stops to make after this and was still taking on cargo and passengers. I noticed some soldiers among the passengers waiting to board. They noticed me also and saluted. I suppose one can always tell when a man has returned from battle. I returned their salute and wished them good hunting. I sincerely hoped they would return safely; they all had that innocent, eager look I remember from all the Ani' Yun'-wiya who had lined up to go on campaign when I was a boy. I envied them that, for I was already jaded when I left for campaign, and the three years of campaigning only made it worse.

We made our way through the town and stopped at the yam just north of town. It was run by Hoopa Ullah, an old Pansfalaya, who greeted us warmly. Theodore had not helped him, but my father had, and he recognized us as his sons. In my case, I could understand that, but Theodore only shared stature with my father; otherwise, he looked like an Ani' Yun'-wiya. In any case, we confirmed our identity, and Hoopa Ullah insisted we join him for dinner and stay in his house for the night. He was a wonderful host and his wife, Chiliad, also a Pansfalaya, was a wonderful cook. They were most proud of their son, Pushmataha, who had been named governor of a province in the Khanate of the Green Mist. They weren't too certain what it was called or where exactly it was, but they hoped to visit him someday. It seems he had five children whom they were also eager to meet for the first time. It was odd that the man hadn't been back in almost twenty years, but he wrote them regularly. I had to assume he was in one of the more pleasant areas, perhaps the far south. I had heard it was more temperate. Of course, the Pansfalaya were used to hot and humid weather anyway. After dinner we arranged to have two mounts ready for us in the morning.

The next morning, we rose early and after a hearty breakfast, Theodore gave me a big hug and wished me well on my quest. He asked me to give his best to our relatives and urged me to keep a low profile. I wished him well on his journey and told him to give my best to our father, should he run across him and make a fuss over Cuauhtzin when he sees him. He laughed at that idea (he really didn't care for my feathery noisemaker) and set off westward. Before I left, I asked our hosts if they had ever seen my mystery girl. They had to admit they had not but wished me success in finding her. I mounted up and rode off to the north.

I stuck to the yam system and the merchant road that ran right through the lands of the southeastern tribes toward the Ani' Yun'-wiya towns. At each yam I asked the owner if he had seen my mystery girl. The answer was always no, until I got to the yam just outside the town of Coosa. A native of Coosa named Coacoochee ran the yam. He was perhaps fifty and a veteran of several campaigns in the Khanate of the Green Mist. All he would say about his campaigns was that he had fought various peoples along the coast. He had been content to remain a soldier refusing promotions on several occasions.

"I wanted to only worry about myself, not wet-nurse a bunch of raw recruits. Every promotion included training and leading newly trained boys into battle. That was suicide. I was content to fight and fight well. What about you?"

"I must admit to being promoted. But I went on campaign as an arban commander, so I had no choice."

"What did a young boy like you do to be made an officer before his first campaign?"

"I was given more credit than I deserved for helping thwart the Tenocha coup attempt in Anahuac."

"Oh that. I heard of that. You know, I've met only a few Tenocha. All of them were merchants. They seemed to have uncommon good sense. It's hard to believe a sensible people would have tried something like that."

"Tenocha merchants are nothing like Tenocha elites. The latter have more arrogance than is decent considering their position. The merchants, on the other hand, have traveled the world and have had their eyes opened."

"Well, arrogant elites are no rare item in these parts. Those that remain are as arrogant as ever. Fortunately, my family is of more humble origin. So, are you wandering about the country the way most of us veterans of campaigning do?"

"I am. But I'm also looking for a girl a little younger than I am, who is as pale as I am. She was traveling with an older merchant who was from one of the northeast tribes. Have you seen her?"

"I did see her. It was a few years ago. Time was when most merchants came to Coosa, but now most pass us by. But I remember the girl and the merchant. He was her grandfather. I am a curious man, not afraid to ask questions. When I saw them I asked her if she was related to the great healer John of Cuauhnahuac. She looked at me strangely, then turned to the older man. He told me that she was related only to him, and was, in fact, his granddaughter. I remarked that her pale complexion made me ask, and that I did not mean to upset her. He replied that it was no matter; they would both be honored to be related to John, but were not. He would not elaborate, but as I said, I am curious, so I persisted asking if one of her parents was from a strange pale tribe. He looked at me peevishly and answered that no, both of her parents were members of his tribe. I could tell that I was not getting the whole story, but it was also clear that was all he was going to tell me. I have heard that there have been pale strangers that fished off the shores of the area of the northeast bands. Who knows, perhaps a couple of them got lost and joined his band. In any case, I think he is too old to be her grandfather, he is probably her great-grandfather."

"Do you remember where they were going?"

"It didn't seem prudent to ask, but I noticed that they took the road to the northeast. They arrived from the south like you did."

"You are very observant. You must have been a scout. Do you happen to remember their names?"

"No, I'm afraid not. I'm sure he told me, but you know how difficult those Northeastern Bands' names are. The girl had a very strange name also, Shrott or something like that. By the way, I was not a scout. I was observant enough to notice their attrition rate."

I thanked him for his help and agreed with him about the scouts. I had also heard about the pale fishermen off the northeast coast. My grandfather had mentioned them in his book, and my uncle Pierre had been assigned to contact them. From what I had heard, he had been unsuccessful and had returned home after a few years. I understood that they had been staying well offshore, only visiting uninhabited islands to dry or smoke their catch. As the Koryo ships began plying the waters of the east coast, they had been even less in evidence. I now wondered if perhaps my mystery girl was descended from a shipwreck survivor.

The next morning, I continued on my way northeast. I stopped at all the yams, but none of the keepers had seen her. In most cases they had only been running the yams for a year or two, but as I got closer to Ani' Yun'-wiya land, the yam keepers were Ani' Yun'-wiya and had been there for some time. None of them had seen her or heard of her. It wasn't surprising that they hadn't heard of her; no one would remark a merchant traveling with part of his family no matter how strange the family looked. But it seemed that the man did not visit the Ani' Yun'-wiya. I thought that was rather odd, since they were a wealthy tribe with plenty of goods to trade. Indeed, I remembered seeing merchants in Itsati every few days. I couldn't imagine there was any bad blood between any of the northeast bands and the Ani' Yun'-wiya.

I arrived in Itsati in early winter. Iskagua and Ghigooie made a big fuss over how much I had filled out and what a great warrior I had become. Gatagewi also greeted me warmly as did the other boys with whom I had grown up who were in town. Cimmashote was still on campaign, but was expected back in the spring. Four of the boys I had known had died on campaign. The ones who had already returned were mostly scattered about wandering, but a few had returned. Not surprisingly, they had no wish to discuss their experiences. I could understand, since I shared their feelings. With embarrassment, I recalled my badgering of the returned veterans with questions. Now they all gave me knowing looks. They welcomed me into their sweat lodges and we spoke of many things, but not of war.

Once I had made all the rounds and paid my respects to all the elders, I asked Iskagua and Ghigooie about my mystery girl and her grandfather. No such pair had ever come through Itsati and they knew of no merchant who avoided the Ani' Yun'-wiya. They speculated that the man probably just avoided mountains and so passed up on visiting here. They also had to admit that they didn't know much about merchants or the routes they plied and suggested that I ask any merchants I encounter about the pair. That seemed like a good idea and I began asking the merchants who came to Itsati about them. Of course, not many merchants came into the mountains in the winter, so it was some time before I got a positive response. The merchant was an old Leni lenape named Arneekwes. At first he was hesitant to admit knowing them, but agreed after I assured him I meant them no harm.

"Yes, I know them well. The merchant's name is Hiacoomes. He is from the band called Wampanoag. He is from a village called Nashanekammuck on the island of Capawake. The girl is his great-granddaughter and her name is Carlotta."

"Capawake?"

"It is the western one of the two islands off the southern coast of the Wampanoag lands. Are you familiar with that area?"

"No, but I have studied maps. Is that the coast just south of where the long narrow peninsula juts northward?"

"Yes, that's it, the peninsula is called the Nauset Peninsula after the band living there. They are also Wampanoag."

"The girl has an unusual name."

"Yes, she does. I would guess it is not Wampanoag."

"Were her parents not of the tribe?"

"No, they were also Wampanoag. What you are probably getting at is that her grandparents were not all Wampanoag. Her two grandfathers were the only survivors of a shipwreck somewhere near Capawake. Hiacoomes was a younger man and still fished and gathered shellfish to support his family. He pulled the two

half-dead strangers onto his boat and took them back to his village. His wife nursed them back to health. Communication with them was very difficult, but they gradually became part of the band and fished with Hiacoomes. For a while, they constantly looked for ships of their people so they could return, but eventually, they gave up and married into the band. One married Pingtis, the daughter of Hiacoomes, the other a girl named Makunchis. In the fullness of time Pingtis had a son and Makunchis a daughter. One of the strangers disappeared one day. He had gone to the mainland to hunt, but no one ever knew what happened to him. The other went alone fishing one day and never returned. Pingtis pined away for her husband and soon died leaving Hiacoomes to raise her child. Makunchis was a stronger woman and raised her daughter with the help of her family. Eventually, the two children grew up and married. Carlotta was their youngest child. They and their other children died during one of the Zhen plague outbreaks, but Carlotta survived. Hiacoomes took her in and when he became a merchant after his wife died, he took her with him.”

“So all her other relatives are dead?”

“No, she still has some relatives on her mother’s side. Her mother’s name was Wingenund, as I remember, and she had some relatives on the mainland who still live. Makunchis died some time ago, but I don’t recall the particulars.”

“So you don’t know where the strangers were from?”

“I never met them. Hiacoomes probably told me their names, but I don’t recall them. I met him soon after he became a merchant and we have been friends ever since. He is a fine, fair, honest man.”

“I very much want to meet him and Carlotta. Do you have any idea where he might be?”

“Well, it is winter, so he will likely be in the south or on his way west. He generally moves south along the coast to the land of the Timacua, then west as far as the Kadohadacho, then north to the city of Murenbalikh, then east along the southern shore of the lakes then down the Mahican River to the Leni lenape River and along the coast to his people. He tries to avoid the north in the winter since it is hard on his old bones. I can understand that; I also plan to head south when I am done here.”

“I must visit my sister in the Panther Ordu. Might they have gone that far north last summer?”

“I doubt it. Of course, he is a merchant—we travel where trade leads us. Go visit your sister, then follow the merchant road along the coast and you will likely catch up to them before they turn north.”

“Would you know if Carlotta was married?”

“So that is your interest. From one glance a dozen years ago? What a romantic! She was not married when last I saw them, in early spring. I doubt that she will marry as long as Hiacoomes lives, however. She is devoted to him and he to her.”

“Nevertheless, I must see her again.”

“Good luck, young man. May your dream come true.”

I thanked him for all his help and ran to prepare for my departure. I wanted to run after them right away, but it would be unthinkable to not visit my sister and Aspenquid. I explained the situation to Ghigooie and Iskagua. They congratulated me for finding out so much about my mystery girl already and quickly set to helping me get ready for my trip north. The next morning I set out with three horses, two to ride and one carrying my pack and gifts for my sister and her family from me and my Ani’ Yun’-wiya family. With the two horses, I was able to make good time. I went directly east along the road through the mountain valleys. There was quite a bit of snow along this route, but it would get me to the coast, and I could stay in comfortable yams along the way. Once out of the mountains, I turned northeast cutting through the Iyehyeh lands to the lands of the Great Bay Tribes. There was still snow, but it was not as deep, and as I neared the Bay there were even some patches of bare ground. I crossed the frozen Potomac River above the falls and turned a little north of east through the rolling hills until I reached the mouth of the Kubilai River. I followed the Kubilai north to the new camp of the Panther Ordu. There was a deep cover of snow on the ground when I reached the Ordu.

I found Mathilde and her family with little difficulty. She also made a big fuss over what a big man I had become. My nephew, Aju, and niece, Paula, had grown from babies to children of twelve and ten years respectively. They had been joined by a brother, Bedagi (seven years old) and a four-year-old sister, Sarah. Mathilde introduced me to the two latter, explaining that Bedagi was named after Aspenquid's father, who had died about a year before the boy was born and Sarah was named after our sister because the baby smiled and giggled all the time just like our sister did. The older children did not remember me at all, but all made me very welcome. In fact, Aju became my shadow for all intents. Aspenquid was away on campaign in the Khanate of the Green Mist. He could no longer put it off and had left the past spring. He had written that he had arrived safely and was enduring the orientation training much like I had done when I reached the Khanate of the Clouds. He was a jagun commander now and was too busy to write often.

I could see something was troubling my sister, but it took some difficulty to get her to unburden herself to me. I forced the issue by refusing to tell her anything about myself until she told me what was the matter. She finally admitted that although Aspenquid had left her with ample provisions until the spring, when his brother would get her enough for another year, she had found it necessary to share with a friend of hers whose husband had been killed while hunting, and she didn't know how she could replenish the larder. I assured her I would take care of the problem. I decided not to tell her about Carlotta or she would insist that I go find her. I could hardly leave her this way. Much as I disliked hunting, I would have to do some.

The next morning, I set out with Aju to do some hunting. The men of the Ordu suggested I go north into the mountains since the Leni lenape had depleted the Kubilai Valley forests of game. Fortunately, it was not snowing, although it was quite cold and the snow cover already on the ground had not melted, but instead had become crunchy underfoot. Once we reached the mountains, I could see it had snowed more there, but it was still not too deep for the horses. Soon enough we found deer tracks and followed them for the rest of the day. We made camp in a shelter made by tying saplings down and covering them with hides. The next morning we continued after the deer finally coming across a good-sized herd of them about midmorning. The deep snow slowed them down enough so that Aju managed to get one and I got two before they scattered out of bowshot. We cleaned them, buried the entrails, tied the carcasses high up in a tree and set off after the herd again. I figured if we could get two or three more we would have as much as we could carry out on the horses.

The deer led us in a wide circle right back to where we had gotten the first three, but it took a whole day. We got our three more and cleaned them as before. I took a look around and found that there was a salt lick in the spot. I would have to remember the place in case I ever had to hunt around here again. We loaded up the horses and returned to the Ordu. I offered to help cut up and smoke the meat but was shooed away by Mathilde and her friend, a Wazhazhe named Mitsege, and the latter's mother. By asking a few questions, I discovered that Mitsege's family consisted of herself, her parents, her eight children (the oldest of whom was twelve), and her sister's orphaned four children (all younger than seven). It was clear I had to do a lot more hunting.

Mitsege's oldest son (Ingrokah) was only nine, but that was old enough to hunt, so I gathered him up and secured a few more horses and an unmarried Ani' Yun'-wiya member of the Ordu auspiciously named Galagina (buck deer) and set out to do more hunting. We returned to the salt lick and secured twelve more deer. I felt that was all that herd could afford. On the way back, we were attacked in our night camp by a bear that should have been hibernating. It was just one of the smaller eastern bears, but he was big enough to require a sled to haul him out. We dropped off the meat and set out again this time to the northwest. During this trip, our luck with the weather ran out and we were caught in a heavy snowstorm. We were able to get more deer and even two of the large deer called moos by the northeast bands. What I really wanted to get were some of the plains oxen. I knew they could be found in the eastern forests also, but were becoming more rare. We had to settle for some of the smaller animals like rabbits, the little bear called kvtli by the Ani' Yun'-wiya and mapachin in Nahual, and the large ratlike creature called siquutsets by the Ani' Yun'-wiya.

It was obvious that we would not get sufficient food for winter this way. It finally occurred to me that the easiest way to get food this time of year was around the Great Bay, just to the south. It was full of large fish and waterfowl. As soon as we got back, I dropped off the meat and borrowed a cart and a boat, recruited Mitsege's mother (Ni Otatse) and with Galagina and the boys in tow set off down the Kubilai River to the Great Bay. We were on the eastern side of the river and I thought it best that we remain on that side since I thought that the

hunting would be better on the eastern shore of the Great Bay. We reached a promising spot (with very little snow cover) several li south of the mouth of the river. I sent Galagina and Aju off to hunt birds while I set off with Ingrokah to fish and Ni Otatse set up camp.

At the end of the day, we returned with about twenty of the large basslike fish. Ni Otatse had the smoking racks already built and we set to work preparing the fish. Soon Galagina and Aju returned with a number of geese and a few ducks. When the game was all on the racks, Ni Otatse surprised us with a meal of crabs, which she had caught while she was waiting for us. We remained there another day, then moved farther south to another promising spot for a couple of days and so on until we had a cart full of smoked meat and fish which we all agreed was enough for the rest of the winter and perhaps much of the spring as well. We then turned back north.

The weather began to deteriorate as soon as we reached the mouth of the Kubilai River. There was almost half a foot of snow on the ground and more was falling. We took refuge in a Leni lenape town until the storm ended. We continued on our way slowly through the ever-deeper snow, making very little progress each day. Fortunately, there were quite a few Leni lenape towns along the way, and we could stay inside a house almost every other day. We finally reached the Panther Ordu after almost ten days. Mathilde had been worried about us, but suspected the weather had held us up. We put up all the food, and confident that she was well provided for, I was determined to continue my quest. Once I told her why I needed to set out, she immediately agreed and gave me some silk cloth as a gift for Carlotta.

After resting a day, I bid everyone farewell and set off south again. I was about halfway down the Kubilai when another storm broke. I was forced to take shelter in a copse of evergreen trees since I was nowhere near a yam or town. The blizzard raged for two days. I had managed to pack up the snow as a windbreak for the horses and me during the storm. With some difficulty, I managed to dig down to some grass for the horses, but it was hardly enough. Once the storm ended, it took me quite a while to force our way through the drifted snow and onto the trail. The wind had kept the snow fairly shallow along the riverbank where the trail was. It was midmorning by the time I worked my way onto the trail. Around noon, I thought I heard a horse whicker from a copse of trees well buried in snow about a hundred feet off the trail. I felt I should investigate in case someone was injured.

I fought my way through the snow to the copse and again heard the horse. I called out, but there was no answer. Finally, I reached the horse. He appeared to be alone and was obviously hungry. I dug down to the grass in front of him and he started cropping the sparse grass. I looked around for a rider but couldn't find one. Yet the horse was tied, so there had to be one somewhere. I kept fishing around in the snow with the butt end of my spear and finally I felt something. Digging furiously, I found a man. He was still alive, but only barely. I knew I was still some distance from the next yam and this man would have to get warmed up quickly or he would die. With much difficulty, I got a fire going, set the man next to the fire, and prepared a soup for him. He came around and was able to take in the soup. We spent the night there although I had a hard time keeping the fire going since most of the wood I could find was green.

The next morning, I gave him some more soup and bundled him up. We reached the yam at midday. The yam keeper, a Leni lenape named Pemhake, helped me carry the man into his house. We laid him next to the fire and he warmed up another soup for him. He became feverish, and then seemed to have chills that no fire could relieve. This continued for a few more days. I began to think we would lose him, but he continued to hold on. Finally, he began to recover. He turned out to be little more than a boy, only seventeen years old. His name was Behechio and he was the son of a cacique on Boriquen. He pledged eternal gratitude to both Pemhake and me. I don't know if he ever repaid Pemhake, but he certainly repaid me.

It turned out that he was on his way to the Panther Ordu when the storm hit. He had never seen snow before and had been unprepared for the cold winters in the north. He was not feeling well when he reached the Kubilai, but had stubbornly insisted on continuing north. He had been trying to make good time and had bypassed Pemhake's yam near midday thinking he could make the next Leni lenape town before nightfall. Then the storm broke. He correctly assumed he needed to find shelter when he found he could no longer continue and took refuge in the copse of trees much as I had. He tied his horse and had a cold meal. He remembered wondering if the storm would ever end. The next thing he remembered was me trying to feed him soup. I stayed with him

another day to make sure he had recovered completely. Before continuing on my way, I urged him to wait until a group came along before going on to the Ordu and suggested he look up my sister when he got there. After his close call, he agreed, added that he had much to learn about here in the north, but that he would do his best.

I managed to get the rest of the way down the Kubilai Valley without further incident, although the snow was fairly deep in places that were sheltered from the wind. The river was frozen over north of the mouth, and I gingerly crossed it about a day's ride from the mouth. It is a fairly wide river but not particularly deep, so a plunge into it would be more uncomfortable than deadly. I continued along the merchant road crossing the Potomac a little south of the place I had crossed it earlier, although the snow on the ground was still deep and the river was still frozen. There was a bridge being built across it that made use of a small island near the far shore. That would be convenient when completed. The water was tidal below the falls, but it still froze over in the winter. Most of the yams were run by retired warriors from the Great Bay Tribes. I found them to be very cordial. Most of the rivers in this area are rather shallow and can be easily forded, the few exceptions had permanent bridges under construction, so progress would soon be unimpeded.

The snow cover gave way just before I crossed the Secotan River near the Great Sound. I started making a little better time, although the occasional cold rain was not pleasant. I reached the lands of the Timacua in early spring. The merchant road splits in the lands of the Saturiwa, one fork heading south into the Timacua Peninsula and the other turning west. I turned west. I had not gone too many days when I came upon a merchant with a broken wheel. He had foolishly failed to carry a replacement and was stranded. I rode back to the yam I had left earlier that day, secured another wheel and returned to the merchant. He was an older man and was of little help replacing the wheel. I suggested he find a younger relative to travel with him. He asked me if I couldn't accompany him to the main town of the A'palachi. It wasn't far, and he was so helpless, I decided I had no choice but to agree. It took almost four days to get the overloaded cart the relatively short distance to the town.

The old man tried to pay me for my help, but I refused, telling him to repay me by getting someone to go with him from now on. He said he would try. I left him and continued west. The road bypassed Tonggye, crossing the Albayamule above the mouth and continuing due west through the lands of the Pansfalaya. I remembered my grandfather mentioning a holy place of the Pansfalaya called Nanih Waiya. It was the place where he had conferred with them when they had agreed to join the Khanate. I remember him mentioning spending the night there in hopes of dreaming a dream. I decided it would be a good place to contact my spirit guide and asked for directions at the next yam.

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Carlotta, 96 K

(MS, TN, KY, IL, MO, 1464)

Nanih Waiya was rather north of my position. To get there, I had to turn off the main southern trade route and take a road that ran a little east of north through the eastern part of the Pansfalaya lands. It was a very attractive land. Deep woods were periodically interrupted by very large villages and their attendant fields. The villages were still very much as Grandfather described them, very spread out, but with a central area where the Mico lived. There was always a yam in the central area as well. Once they joined the Khanate, the Micos saw to it that yams were set up in each village so any visitors would be conveniently placed to visit them or do business in the village. All the yams were run by Pansfalaya, usually somehow related to the Mico. It was a very convenient arrangement.

Still, I found them all very well run, clean, and spacious with excellent food and good horses available. Once the keeper heard I was headed for Nanih Waiya, I was invariably treated with great respect, deference even. They were very impressed that a stranger had not only heard of their sacred shrine, but was going out of his way to visit it. The yam in the village closest to Nanih Waiya was run by Konshak Lusa, an ancient, small, thin, and very dark man, one of the very few Pansfalaya who still sported the deformed heads. He did little work himself, beyond greeting and welcoming all visitors. He greeted me warmly and asked if I was related to the great Raven. I confirmed that I was his grandson. He marveled that he had such a young grandson. I admitted that I was the youngest child of his youngest child.

“I saw your grandfather in this very place once,” he said. “He was no longer a young man. He did not see me. He was talking to my grandfather, Kiliahote.”

“I remember him writing about Kiliahote. He was the seer who advised the Pansfalaya to join the Khanate. He mentioned seeing him again when he was trying to stop the barbarian pox. He wrote that Kiliahote had warned him about the coming Zhen plague and then had disappeared while he went to get water.”

“He would never tarry about after giving a message. He always felt that it would be taken more to heart if he left no opportunity for discussion. He died not long after that. My father died from the Zhen plague when it came upon us.”

“It killed many of my relatives also.”

“Indeed, few families were unscathed. Do you come here like your grandfather, to dream dreams?”

“Yes, in a way. I wanted to consult my spirit guide and since I tend to find him on mountains, I felt that this was not only the closest ‘mountain,’ but as a holy place, would be even more appropriate.”

“It is our holy place; it may not speak to you. Your spirit guide may not be compatible with our spirits.”

“Well, I am willing to find out.”

“In any case, you will come to no harm. If your guide cannot speak to you, perhaps ours will. The mound covers the bones of our people, you know.”

“My grandfather wrote that it was the place from which your people believed they had come out of the earth.”

“No. Some of us tell that story. We were a wandering people in ancient times until our gods led us to this place. We carried with us the bones of our ancestors. Our gods instructed us to place our ancestors’ bones here. We then covered them with bark and buried them under mounds of earth. For several years we continued to mound up the earth over the bones until the hill was deemed to be high enough. Then trees were planted on the mound and in time it came to be as you see it.”

“No wonder it is a holy place!”

“There will be a new moon tonight. It should be a good night to dream. May you find your answers, young man.”

As he suggested, I decided to try my luck that night. I skipped dinner that evening and after sunset climbed up the hill and sat down under a tree near the top. It was early spring so the insects were not too much of a problem. There was a brief shower near midnight, but the night was mild and I was not uncomfortable. I did manage, eventually, to contact my spirit guide. Finally, I fell asleep leaning against the tree. I had a strange dream that night. I appeared to be on top of a mountain, and then I jumped off the mountain and started to fly. I flew through the air parallel to the ground with my arms at my sides, not flapping like a bird. I could feel the wind rushing against my face and I could see the land flashing by below me. I flew over forests, rivers, villages, and fields. I stopped over what looked like a huge city with a very high terraced mound and many lower ones, most topped with houses with thatched roofs. On the left was a ring of large logs set upright in the ground. Beyond the city was a large river and to the left of the city was a mighty river. There was a long bridge over that mighty river. On the bridge I could see a lone wagon crossing over toward the city. I swooped down to the wagon and could see an old man was driving the wagon. Next to him was a young woman almost as pale as me. Suddenly I was whipped away and sped through the air. After a time, I saw snow below me and strange people, who looked a little like the Dinne, living in rude huts. One of them stopped and looked up at me. He reached out to me as I sped by. Then I turned sharply to the left and flew over frozen plains followed by high mountains and eventually coming to the ocean. Here I began to descend and landed on a beach in front of a very strange village with wooden plank houses and large wooden poles carved into fantastic animal heads, one on top of the other. The one in front of me had on top the head of a bird with a large beak. As I drew near, it said to me, “Welcome to your home, my son.” Then I awakened with a start. I had to run over the dream a few times in my mind to make sure I remembered it, and then I tried to figure it out.

I decided the city must be Murenbalikh and it was there that I would finally catch up with Hiacoomes and Carlotta. I could not imagine why I would travel north then west to the ocean once I found them, but that was what seemed to be happening. The bird was probably a raven from the shape of the beak, but I could not imagine how that village could ever be my home. The poles with animal heads did seem to be something I had heard of, but I couldn't place it. I decided it would be best to keep this dream to myself for the present.

"Did you dream dreams?" Konshak Lusa greeted me as I returned to the yam.

"I did. Nanih Waiya is indeed a holy place."

"Your dream troubles you?"

"No, it more puzzles than troubles."

"Well, a life with puzzles is an interesting one."

"Yes, I suppose so. I must travel to Murenbalikh. Does the road to the north lead there?"

"Ultimately. It is probably the most direct route from here, unless one was to go up the Missi Sipi River. Is that where your dreams take you?"

"It seems to be."

"Have something to eat before you go."

"Of course."

I ate a good breakfast and took along some dried meat so I wouldn't need to stop until dark. I was on my way within a short time and riding quickly north. This was not a much-used road. While there were occasional villages and towns there were no extra yams outside of the towns. I had to spend my first night in the woods since I had stubbornly refused to stop at the last village in the midafternoon. I still had some dried meat, so I didn't have to hunt, and it was mild enough that I didn't have to build a fire, so I bedded down in a thicket for the night. The next morning, I rose early and mounted up right away. I had no more food and very little water so I thought it best to get right to the next yam. I reached a village near midmorning and went straight to the yam for a meal and a change of horses. Within a short time, I was on my way again. This time I brought along enough food and water for a few days and did not have to stop again in Pansfalaya territory. I seemed to be traveling in an almost empty quarter for a few days before I finally came upon a town belonging to the people called Tsoyaha.

It was late afternoon when I reached the town and I was out of food, so I decided to search out the yam. It proved to be on the east end of town not far from the bank of the West Tsoyaha River. I could see that the road I was on joined a much larger road that seemed to follow the river along its west bank. I went into the yam. It was run by an old Wazhazhe couple named Michushingaw and Gthe Do'zwi'n. They greeted me warmly and showed me to the guest rooms. Over dinner we chatted about the usual banalities for a while; then I asked them how they happened to be running a yam in Tsoyaha territory. They laughed and asked me if I had ever come across a Tsoyaha yam keeper. I had to admit I hadn't.

"It would seem, young man," Michushingaw said, "that some tribes have certain preferences. Our Wazhazhe, for example, are rarely found to be merchants. The Ani' Yun'-wiya are also rarely merchants. The Tsoyaha are often merchants, but almost never yam keepers."

"You know, I didn't realize it, but you are right. I lived many years with the Ani' Yun'-wiya and never knew any to be merchants."

"Precisely. Now the Leni lenape have many merchants but few yam keepers. I couldn't begin to explain why that is. Perhaps it is merely a coincidence or perhaps it points to peculiar tribal traits. Who knows?"

"An interesting thought. Are all the yams in this area run by Wazhazhe?"

"No, not all, but I would say the majority."

"What about the infamous Hotcangara?"

“Oh, they’re not so infamous anymore. I would say they are more Mongol than the Mongols.”

“Really? I thought they resisted the Khanate.”

“That was a long time ago. Oh, you’ll occasionally come upon a bitter old-timer, but most of them have died off. Besides, there is talk that the Khakhan will move the capital to Murenbalikh.”

“Why would he do that?”

“It is only talk. I suspect it is just some wishful thinking on the part of the Hotcangara. I have been to Khanbalikh—it is magnificent! Of course, it is not permanent. As a city of yurts and tents it could be struck and moved in a day. But Murenbalikh is overcrowded already, and there is sickness there. I doubt the Khan would want to move to such a place.”

“What sort of sickness is there?”

“It is an old disease that is only found in crowded places. There is much coughing and a wasting of the body.”

“It sounds like what my father calls la’o.”

“Your father is John of Anahuac?”

“Yes.”

“It is an honor to serve you then. I’m a fool for not recognizing you.”

“We don’t look that much alike, actually.”

“In the Khakhanate, no two people could look more alike. You are the only pale ones I have ever seen.”

“No, there is another. She is a girl, the great-granddaughter of a merchant, with whom she travels.”

“Really? They have not come here then. Is the merchant also pale?”

“No, he is from one of the northeast bands.”

“Oh, of course. I have heard of the pale fishermen on the large boats. So a few came ashore, eh?”

“Well, two of them anyway. They were her grandfathers.”

“So you have met her then?”

“No, not yet. I will meet them in Murenbalikh.”

“Try to stay out of the city, if you can. It is not healthy.”

“I will remember that. Thank you for the advice.”

“An honor to serve any relative of John of Anahuac.”

I did not ask about his encounter with my father, but his words did make me think that perhaps I had best hurry on my way so I could keep Hiacoomes and Carlotta from getting la’o. As I recalled, it was incurable and always fatal after a few years. The next morning, I ate quickly, secured some extra provisions, bid my hosts farewell, and set off. The road followed the river generally, but it did not bend nearly as much. There were no towns on the road, but smaller roads and paths led off to them all along the way. Once in a while, there would be a yam right on the road and I would stop for more provisions and to change horses as necessary. Often the road would be bounded on both sides by fields that were full of locals planting or clearing to plant. Once in a while, the road cut through a wooded area and there was also an occasional swamp, which the road turned sharply to avoid. The road was also rather busy. I would often pass lone riders, groups or families on foot or in wagons, merchants, or troops of soldiers. The latter always saluted me. I would return the salute, of course, but I had to wonder how long the “glow” of battle would cling to me.

In due course, I came to the Wazhazhe River. The road turned west for about a day’s ride before coming to the lower bridge. There were a few bridges across the Wazhazhe. The oldest used the island above the falls, another was just east of the juncture with the East Tsoyaha River, and another was farther upstream from the one at the

falls. This was the longest one. It was a pontoon bridge. It also made use of an island and was unfortunately still being rebuilt when I arrived. The spring floods had subsided and it was deemed safe to set it in place again. They would be finished by the next day. Even though the floods had subsided the current was quite swift and it was not easy to lay down the bridge. I decided I had best wait, since any attempt to cross would be very difficult. I found the yam at the bridgehead quite crowded, but I was able to get a hot meal and some supplies. I noticed some coughing among the guests, so I took my meal and camped out in the open. The next morning, I discovered that a light rain had soaked me completely, but I remounted and rode down to the bridgehead.

The bridge was in place by midmorning, and I was one of the first across. Here I had to decide whether to take my chances on the direct route to Murenbalikh, or to take the longer merchant trail.

This was no small decision since the direct route was often under water during most of the spring. I decided to chance it since it was late spring and the worst of it should be over. I had heard that it could get waist deep sometimes. The first day the road was dry, the second day it was muddy, and the third day it was under water about a foot deep. Toward nightfall, I was able to find a small knoll on which to camp, but the mosquitoes were out in force, and while the bear grease discouraged most of them, the constant humming kept waking me up. Fortunately, the trail on the fourth day started out wet and ended dry. The fifth day was also dry. I occasionally encountered a lone rider who would ask me about the road ahead and nod grimly when I told him what to expect.

Not long after setting out on the sixth day, I came upon Murenbalikh. The road entered the city from the southeast. The land was quite flat here, and once the road left the woods and entered the cleared fields south of the city, I could see the many mounds in the distance and the largest one looming over all the others. I could tell I was still some distance from the mound and the houses in this area were few and scattered. There was some activity on the road, most of it heading toward town and most of it consisting of individual men.

I could soon see what old Michushingaw meant when he said the Hotcangara had become more Mongol than the Mongols. From the dress and total lack of tattoos or feathers they looked like a throwback to the old Mongols who first came over from the old land. I also began to notice yurts among the more typical Hotcangara houses and herds of goats and sheep being led to pasture. I found it all rather bizarre. It was really too humid here to live in a yurt; the local houses were much more practical. The sheep and goats were more suited to grasslands like the prairie. Here there were woods and fields. Of course, the herds were small, but I was sure they used up valuable fields that could be planted with centli. The Mongol dress, raw-silk shirt, leather pants, and long, leather boots was comfortable enough in cooler, drier climates, but again, this was not a cool, dry climate. I tended to wear cotton. Of course, it was none of my business.

By midday my road had entered a city with many houses on small plots of land. Again, there were quite a few yurts. The activity on the street had picked up and people were moving along in wagons, carts, on horseback, and on foot in both directions. I began to see more appropriately dressed individuals here, but most of the young men were dressed like Mongols. Eventually, I began to approach the stockade that surrounds the city center. It had been destroyed when the city was taken long ago, but apparently had been rebuilt. Most of the young men were streaming into the center through the several openings in the stockade. Curious, I tied up my horse and also went in. Near the center, there was a large open area in which there were two very tall poles. It seemed there was a contest in progress where the young men were trying to see who could get his spear the highest in the pole. The spectators were prudently standing behind the contestants.

While that could be seen as something of an athletic feat, I was unable to think of a practical use for such a skill in battle. We always used arrows against enemies high above us. I looked around the center a bit. The large, terraced mound was at the northern end. It appeared to have four levels and a house on each level—all yurts. The largest one was on the highest level, where I suspected the governor of the city lived. Around the periphery of the stockade, there were several smaller mounds, most with yurts, but a few were conical with no room for houses. Around the mounds on the periphery were many more yurts on the ground level. I thought these last must be truly uncomfortable, with no hope of a breeze because of the stockade. I couldn't help noticing quite a bit of coughing coming from the yurts and among the spectators. I decided I had better leave.

I regained my horse and turned west, then north around the stockade, then west again, down a broad street. Occasionally, I would come across a mound with a yurt on top of it, or a yurt enclosed with a small stockade, but most of the houses were close together and only about half of them were yurts. Not far from the stockade, I came upon the circle of standing logs I had seen in my dream. In its center was a taller log. It had apparently been connected to some sort of religious ritual that had been abandoned and was now maintained as a curiosity. As I continued west, the houses began to thin out again toward evening and I was among fields again. Just at twilight, I reached the bridge. It, too, was a pontoon bridge, a practical necessity because of the varying depths of the river during the year. It was quite broad for a pontoon bridge, and two wagons could easily pass each other crossing it. I started across it just as it got dark, since it was night when I encountered Hiacoomes and Carlotta in my dream.

There were lamps that were lit at night so that one could cross the bridge without blundering into the water. Even so, there was very little traffic crossing at night. I peered intently at the few wagons I encountered, but none were manned by an old man and a young pale girl. When I reached the far side, I was unsure what to do. I rode into the yam not far from the bridge and asked the keeper, a middle-aged Hotcangara named Moonjah, if he had seen them. He had not, but he did know whom I meant and confirmed that they usually crossed this bridge early in summer. I decided I was too early and spent the night at the yam.

The next morning, I saw that there were some hills to the west, and I decided I had better consult my guide again, since I felt I was missing something. I took along a few provisions and set out westward. I reached the hills in the evening and climbed a likely looking one for the night. There were few trees on the hill and a light breeze made it quite pleasant there for the night. Yet, I found it impossible to contact my guide—there was a distracting presence on the hill. That night I dreamt of a battle. Mongols on horseback were riding around a dwindling group of Hotcangara firing arrows into them. The hatred of the trapped men was palpable. It seemed to clutch at my throat and make it hard for me to breathe. The next morning, I returned to the yam not at all rested.

When I reached the yam that evening, I asked Moonjah about the hills. He confirmed that some of them had been made to bury the dead from a battle long ago. There had been so many dead that it was deemed easier to pile them up and cover them with earth. He had heard reports of people sleeping uneasily there. I confirmed his reports and asked if Hiacoomes had arrived yet. He told me that he had not. Again I was unsure what to do, so I spent another night at the yam. The next morning, I was just weighing whether I should go south in hopes of meeting them on the road when I heard an unpleasantly familiar voice.

“Well, if it isn’t the hero of the Tenocha Revolt,” Aztahua greeted me.

“Has your employer exiled you also?” I asked.

“No. He has sent me on an errand. He will be so pleased to see that you are well.”

“Of course, he will. I often felt his protecting embrace while on campaign in the Khanate of the Clouds.”

“I’m sure you did. How is your wonderful family?”

“They are well as far as I know. How is Texcalla?”

“Still there when I passed through on the way here.”

“Decided not to chance the southern route this time, did you?”

“No need to cover old ground. Are you on your way to Khanbalikh?”

“No, are you?”

“Perhaps. Where are you going?”

“What interest is that of yours?”

“Oh, I see. You are making the grand tour like all the other veterans seem to do. No wonder the roads and yams are crowded with ne’er-do-wells.”

“Perhaps. Maybe if you tried a tour of duty you’d be a bit more sympathetic.”

“What makes you think I haven’t?”

“I can tell.”

“Interesting. Do you want me to give your regards to your cousin?”

“No, coming from you he might take it the wrong way.”

Not wishing to give anyone like him any ammunition he could use against me, I left the yam and rode north. Much as I expected I was soon being followed. I crossed the Mongol River and rode on to a yam just on the other side of the bridge. My shadow soon arrived. He was probably another Texcalla. I had my horse made ready so I could leave before first light and went right to bed. I rose while it was still dark and made my way to the coral. My horse was ready and, I noticed, so was another. I mounted up and rode quickly northward on the main road. By first light I could see that I was again being followed. When the road reached a wooded patch, I rode down a small path that led east toward the Missi Sipi River. When I reached the river, I started back south again along a small path that hugged the riverbank. I camped for the night in small thicket near the southern edge of the woods. I heard no sound that night. The next morning, I checked to see if any other tracks had crossed mine in the night. There were none.

I decided to continue along the river path. Because of the wide bend of the river, I had still not reached the confluence with the Mongol River by nightfall. There was a small house nearby, but I did not want to leave a track, so I stayed away. Once it was dark, I went down to riverbank and looked for a boat. I finally found one and launched it while leading my horse behind me. The current was still quite swift and we were carried well south before I managed to get us across the river. I beached the boat and found I was within sight of the large pontoon bridge. I rode for it and again crossed it, peering intently at anyone in a wagon or cart. Again, I made it all the way across without finding them. I rode up the road a little way and made camp in a small copse of trees. I was in sight of the yam and the bridge from this vantage point, but could not be seen from either.

I was sick at heart that my youthful stupidity might now endanger my dream girl. I couldn’t believe my miscreant cousin still wanted me dead. Of course, it could have been merely a coincidence that the vile Aztahua crossed my path. I wondered why George would send him on mission in the Khakhanate. He was so obviously from Anahuac, he could hardly blend in. Perhaps it was a harmless mission. Still, I couldn’t take any chances. After all, I had been followed. It least it looked like I had been followed. The next morning, I waited until all the travelers staying at the yam had left, and I joined the road traffic moving toward the bridge. Once I reached the yam, I turned in and sought out Moonjah.

“Moonjah, have you seen Hiacoomes yet?”

“Not yet.”

“Did the man from Anahuac ask you about me?”

“Oh, the courier? Yes, he did. Of course, we veterans don’t tell tales on each other, do we?”

“Did you serve in the Khanate of the Clouds?”

“Indeed I did, young man. I fought in the army of Ignace before he was killed. What a loss that was!”

“A tragic loss. How did you come to serve there?”

“I was given a choice and thought that I would prefer mountains to jungles. Of course, we ended up in the jungle eventually anyway.”

“So I heard. I was in the mountains, on the coast, and back in the mountains again. They were very high mountains, higher than Anahuac. It was hard to breathe.”

“I heard that the mountains get higher as you go south. I understand that the seasons are also backward.”

“It is true; you are well informed.”

“I have also heard about you, young Crow. I would never tell anyone anything about you without your leave.”

“You have heard about me?”

“Oh yes. Any non-Maya who survives the ritual slaughter of their tumen becomes immortal in the eyes of those who serve in the Khanate of the Clouds.”

“Well, sometimes fate is puzzling.”

“Perhaps you still have much to do?”

“Perhaps. So the weasel claims to be a courier now?”

“So he said. Of course, I didn’t see any pouch.”

“Whatever he is, he is a devious character. I’m grateful that you told him nothing about me.”

“It was a pleasure, but actually, I told him you were on your way north and had been held up here a couple of days by a bout of fever. He was pleased to have all the information.”

“Even better. I am in your debt.”

“Not at all. Hiacoomes will surely be here soon, but perhaps you should not wait here. I noticed one of his henchmen followed you north.”

“Yes, I lost him in the woods, so he’ll probably be back today. I will lay low where I can keep an eye on the road.”

“Excellent. Best of luck to you.”

I thanked him and returned to my copse of woods by a circuitous route. I remember thinking that sweeping negative statements about Hotcangara would no longer come from me. The copse was big enough that I could enter it while only visible from the other side of the river. Once in, I could easily hide the horse from view and creep to within sight of the road, the yam, and the bridge. About midmorning, I noticed my would-be shadow riding in from the north. He stopped to confer with Moonjah, and then rode west. It looked like I was not deemed important enough to employ heroic efforts to find. I was relieved. I waited until dark, then rode down to and across the bridge. Once on the far side, I waited a while, then started back across the bridge. There was only one wagon on the bridge as I crossed and I slowed down as I approached it. A very old man drove it.

“Hiacoomes?” I asked.

“Who wants to know?” the old man peered uncertainly at me.

“I am Karl, son of John of Anahuac.”

“You are the one who has been looking for me, aren’t you?”

“You heard?”

“Of course, we merchants stick together. Now what’s this twaddle about seeing my granddaughter once years ago and falling in love with her? That doesn’t begin to make any sense. What do you really want with me?”

“I suppose it does seem strange. But it is quite true. I was returning home from visiting my sister in the Panther Ordu when I passed your cart. I happened to look back and there was your great-granddaughter looking dreamily out of the rear of the wagon. I was still a boy then, but I have never forgotten her, and I bothered many of my relatives asking about you ever since.”

“Young man, if you were a boy that must have been almost ten years ago from the look of you.”

“Nine to be exact.”

“Carlotta, come out here. You need to meet this madman.”

The wagon cover parted and a small young lady slipped out and sat beside Hiacoomes. She was hard to see in the flickering lamplight, but her eyes shone with an inner beauty that blinded me to everything else. I was

speechless, enchanted, overwhelmed. I don't know how long we stared at each other before Hiacoomes had had enough, but it should have been much longer.

"It is true! This young fool is besotted. What do you think we should do with him, Carlotta?"

He got no response from her. She, too, was rooted to her seat. She told me later that if she could have moved, she would have thrown herself into my arms. In seeing me all her sadness, loneliness, despair of ever having a family of her own disappeared, and she didn't want anything to interrupt her rapture. I, on the other hand, recall that I wanted to sweep her into my arms and protect her with my life. Hiacoomes again broke into our reverie.

"Whatever it is, it appears to be contagious. I hope it isn't fatal. I wonder if you two would mind if we got off this bridge before morning. I think I could use some sleep tonight."

"Oh, forgive me, sir," I said. "Please don't go into Murenbalikh; there is sickness there."

"Really? What sort?"

"My father calls it la'o. It is incurable and fatal after a few years of coughing and wasting."

"Oh that. It is a plague of crowding. You don't find it among my people. Thank you for the warning. Perhaps we will cross back to the other side for the night."

"May I join you?"

"Might as well. I hope you won't take her from me."

"I thought I would go with you. Perhaps I can help."

"A young warrior like you, the son of the great healer John, the grandson of the Immortal Raven, joins with a lowly merchant? Why?"

"There is nothing lowly about being a merchant. My sister and her husband are merchants. I would be honored to work with you. But even if you were the servant of goat herder, I would gladly join you to be near Carlotta."

"I knew this day would come eventually, even if she didn't. If you will join us, it has turned out better than I had a right to hope. Welcome to your home, my son."

His words struck a chord, but I was too besotted to remember that those were the very words spoken to me by the raven on the pole fetish in my dream. He carefully turned the wagon around and we crossed the bridge together. I rode my horse next to Carlotta. She shyly offered me her hand and I held it tightly all the way across. Once across, I prevailed upon them to bypass the yam and instead move north a way and camp under the stars. Hiacoomes nodded, knowingly and did as I asked. Once we were camped, Carlotta and I prattled endlessly until we fell asleep at last.

20

Wandering in the Khakhanate 96 K

(MO, IO, MN, SD, NB, 1464)

The next morning was bright and beautiful. I suspect if there had been a torrential downpour, I still would have thought it was bright and beautiful. Carlotta and I continued to get acquainted. I told her my life story without, I am proud to say, any embellishments. There was something about her trusting look that demanded complete honesty. She listened attentively and genuinely shared in my joys and sorrows. You would think I would have wanted to hear all about her first, but anyone who has lived long enough and observed human nature with his eyes open knows that men always are too willing to bore women with their stories before listening to anything they might have to say. At the same time, women are too willing to listen rather than take the lead and speak first.

In any case, it finally dawned on me that I knew almost nothing about her, and I very much wanted to know everything. She had never known her grandparents and only barely remembered her parents and her brother and sister. She did recall that she was fairer skinned than all the others and had light hair when she was very young.

She was named for one of her grandfathers' mother. Her grandfathers were from a town called something like "Sanjandeluz" in a land across the sea called "Lapuri" or something like that. That was all she knew about them. They spoke a strange language, but she didn't know any of it. Her grandparents had died or disappeared as I had heard and her family had died when the Zhen plague virtually wiped out their band. The few survivors scattered to join relatives in other bands. She had been left with Hiacoomes, because none of the other survivors knew where her other relatives were, but all knew him. He had been glad to have her with him since his wife had recently died and he was all alone. He continued fishing for a year or so and got a neighbor to teach her all the womanly skills. Then he decided to become a merchant since the sea no longer cheered him and Capawake held too many unhappy memories.

Since then, they had traveled in a large circle every year, trading, buying, and selling. They had heard from Arneekwes that I was looking for them and why. It had amused Hiacoomes who joked that perhaps she would finally find a suitor. But it had intrigued her because she also remembered as if in a dream the day I first saw her. She had been in the back of the wagon and had heard some riders going by. Curious she had opened the covering in the back to look out. She saw a man and a boy ride around the left side of the wagon; then the boy looked back, and she was stunned to see he was even fairer than she and just then the sun broke through the clouds and shone on her face. When her vision adjusted to the bright light the riders were gone. It was a moment frozen forever in her memory. We were made for each other.

It occurs to me that I have yet to describe her. I remember at the time thinking she was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. Nothing has happened since to alter that opinion. But to be more specific, she had light, golden brown eyes, a medium nose, full lips, and a small chin. She had an oval-shaped face and a golden complexion. She was not as fair skinned as I, but was much lighter than anyone I had met besides my parents. Her hair was dark brown, long, and strait, and she wore it braided. She was of average height for a woman, but a good deal shorter than me. She was slim and graceful. In short, breathtakingly beautiful. I asked her how it was that no one had snatched her up by now. She said that Hiacoomes would never have ordered her to marry anyone, and until I came along, she had never meet anyone she was interested in getting to know better.

Hiacoomes felt compelled to intrude on our mooning over each other that evening. We had continued north and I again suggested that we avoid the yams and camp out. He correctly suspected that I must have some reason for not wishing to be seen. I explained my situation to him and my reasons for suspecting that George still wished me ill even though I had remained in exile as he ordered. He listened intently to the whole story.

"It has been my experience," he said, "that the best way to stay out of trouble is to keep a low profile. I can't help but notice that every soldier we pass salutes you with some deference. If they all know who you are, do you really think avoiding yams will enable you to pass unnoticed through the countryside? If you wish to make yourself invisible you will have to stop looking like a warrior."

"What do you suggest?"

"You said you wanted to join us, so why not become a merchant?"

"What else do I appear to be now?"

"Other than a moonstruck suitor, I suppose you appear to be a warrior who has either volunteered or been hired to protect a doddering old merchant from the dangers of the road."

"What should I do?"

"It would be easy enough to dress you like a merchant and get you off your horse and into the wagon. However, your complexion rather gives you away in any disguise, as does your brown hair. I can help you with those, but then there is the problem of the blue eyes. I'm afraid the best we can do is to make you less noticeable. Of course, then there is also the matter of your bearing."

"My bearing?"

"Yes. You walk like a conqueror. Merchants tend to be deferring, ingratiating, unthreatening. There is also the small matter that you have asked so many people about us that should they be questioned one or the other is

bound to mention that you were looking for us and, since I have been taking the same route for years, we can be easily tracked down.”

“I can work on my bearing if you think it is important, but as to your route, why not change it?”

“What do you suggest?”

“I heard that you invariably turn east soon and head for your people at this time of year. Why not instead, turn west and follow the mountains south, then turn toward the lands of the Chahiksichahiks and their relatives the Kitikiti’sh and the Kadohadacho? They are all wealthy tribes who welcome merchants.”

“We could do that. I would miss my old friends along the usual way, but we could do that.”

“Good. Why don’t we continue north to the land of the Anishinabe, then turn west to the areas of the Ocheti shakowin and the Dzitsiista?”

“I don’t speak those languages. I hope they all speak Mongol.”

“I know a smattering of the first two and quite a bit of the last. My sister-in-law is Dzitsiista.”

“Very good! This will be a most-interesting trip. You seem to know quite a bit of the land for someone who has never been here before.”

“I owe it all to studying maps. I have always loved them and could probably draw a map of the Khakhanate from memory with good accuracy.”

“An interesting talent. Did you make use of it during your campaigns?”

“No, each tumen has an official mapper. They didn’t need me.”

“I’m glad I missed out on campaigning. It seems like a lot of travel to bother people just minding their own business so a Khan may feel a bit more important.”

“In general, that is true, but they don’t all mind their own business. We interrupted the Inka while they were conquering their way northward. The Chimu also appeared to have conquered quite a bit of territory.”

“Yes, but then there are all the people in between.”

“Most of them joined without a fight; the more warlike had to be conquered. But it is safe to assume a warlike tribe would eventually attack its neighbors, so perhaps it is just as well. I would perhaps be a bit more enthusiastic if the Khan of the Clouds was a decent man.”

“Isn’t he related to you?”

“Yes. I think my family has used up its allotted competence to rule.”

“So, you think Cautantowit (the Wampanoag name for God) only allows each family so much competence?”

“Who knows? My brother thinks that Smoking Mirror and his family would have been better rulers than ours.”

“I wouldn’t know about such things. The Mongols have brought us peace. I can freely travel all over the land without fear from any man. In my grandfathers’ time, we could not travel much off our island without running afoul of enemies. The campaigns let all the young men get fighting out of their systems at a safe distance from those of us who have no interest in being drawn into it. Even if I think it is foolish, it serves a greater good. Now we only die from disease or natural catastrophes or, best of all, old age.”

“My Ani’ Yun’-wiya ‘mother’ would agree with you.”

“A wise woman. You would have saved us all a bit of trouble had you heeded her instead of the old fool of a warrior.”

“I suppose so. Still, I do feel people should be able to choose their own rulers.”

“Spoken like an Ani’ Yun’-wiya. The idea has some merit, but only for small groups. How could the entire Khakhanate agree on any one man? It is best the way it is. Life is full of compromises.”

He was right, I supposed, but I always wondered if there wasn't some way to adapt the Ani' Yun'-wiya system to the Khakhanate. Hiacoomes was a wise old man and very practical. It was a pleasure talking to him. Carlotta and I were at the stage where we hardly needed words. Meanwhile, Hiacoomes gave me a stain for my skin and hair and some ill-fitting 'merchant clothes' and I practiced my merchant bearing. Much as he predicted, the soldiers who passed us ignored me, as did most other people. To further avoid attention, he also prevailed on Carlotta to stain her skin and hair. The effect was rather odd. I felt that I looked like an Ocheti shakowin and she looked like a Dzitsiista. I wondered if those tribes would share my impression when we reached them.

We continued north slowly, only about twenty-five to thirty li a day. Sometimes Carlotta and I would walk alongside the wagon for a change and sometimes we would drive it while Hiacoomes rested. Each night we would camp along the way. There always seemed to be a spot where one could camp out if he wished. This was still Hotcangara country and often the woods would give way to large cleared areas already planted with centli in the mounds they favored in the north with the squash and bean plants planted on the sides of the mounds. Often there would be women working in the fields, but no one even looked up at a merchant wagon passing by. Once in a while, Hiacoomes would stop at a town to trade. Carlotta and I always stayed in the background during this procedure and were dismissed as servants by the customers.

By midsummer we were reaching the fringes of Hotcangara land and approaching the Anishinabe area. The days were rather warm and the air humid. The rain had begun to let up and we would often have clear starry nights. One evening we set up camp in a meadow. It looked like it had once been a field or a beaver pond that had drained. There was a small, fresh stream running right through it. The open area was covered in a soft grass that was about knee high. We had turned off on a smaller road that led northwest, somewhat away from the Missi Sipi River. There was a soft, gentle smell of grass in the air and one of those beautiful, starry nights. Carlotta and I were sitting together in front of the fire staring wistfully into it when Hiacoomes came over and sat next to us. He also contemplated the fire for a while before he spoke.

"I don't suppose you two wish to be married?"

"Of course!" we both answered almost simultaneously.

"Well, I thought I would ask. Do your people have any special rituals you go through, my boy?"

"No. We generally defer to whatever our spouses wish."

"Very accommodating of you. Have your people no customs of their own?"

"Not that I know of. As you no doubt gathered, my people are originally from the land across the sea from where Carlotta's grandfathers were, except that it was called the Holy Roman Empire. But we have lived as Mongols for generations; then we came to this land where the customs and beliefs are stronger than those of the Mongols, so we have adapted to some of them."

"How did your ancestors wed?"

"My grandfather wrote that he and his wife were married before her uncle, by simply declaring their wish to be married and he declared them married. My father was married according to Ani' Yun'-wiya customs the first time, but I don't know what he did when he married my mother. My brothers and sisters were married according to their spouse's tribal customs. I think my great-grandfather was married before his father-in-law, some sort of priest."

"Well, our customs are very simple. The couple declares their wish to be married and they are. I should tell you that I am not in any way related to a sachem, so I belong the class called sannops. Carlotta as the descendant of outsiders might be considered to be of the lowest class by some of my people. In our village, however, she was held to be a member in good standing of the Wolf Clan. By marrying her you would also be considered a member of the Wolf Clan. Of course, if you never live among my people this should not matter to you, but I thought you should know."

"Well, among the Ani' Yun'-wiya I am held to be a member of the Bird Clan. According to their ways I would remain in that clan even if I married a member of our Wolf Clan."

“Since I am a member of the Turtle Clan, I am in no position to object to it if you wish to remain a member of your own clan. The truth is, many of my people have strayed from the old ways and I really have no objection to what you two young people choose to do. I just thought I would tell you how the old ways would be. Actually, according to the old ways you, as an outsider, would most definitely be a member of the lowest class. So I wouldn’t blame you for eschewing my tribe’s rituals for some other.”

“I am completely satisfied with the simplicity of your marriage practice, but I would wish to request your approval.”

“It is thoughtful of you to ask my approval. In point of fact, I do not feel in a position to approve or disapprove. Carlotta is no child and neither are you. If this is what you both wish and you are fully aware of what you are doing, I will raise no objection.”

“It isn’t enough that you don’t object, Grandfather,” Carlotta said. “It is very important to me that you approve. Is there something that is bothering you?”

“Yes, there is. Crow is a fine young man, a credit to his parents. I would be honored to be related to him and his illustrious family by marriage. However, he has very powerful enemies and may be hounded by them for the rest of his life. We have made him and ourselves less visible and will seemingly disappear to all who have known us on this new route, but the danger remains and I hope you are prepared to never have a normal life.”

“Have I ever had a normal life? Did I ever complain or express regret that I have not been raised in a village like most people? Can you think I would pass up on being married to the perfect man for me because I might not get to settle down in a village, a life I barely remember? I am not afraid of spending my life in hiding or exile or whatever Cautantowit decides.”

“Then, my dear child, you have my enthusiastic approval. I would remind you, however, Cautantowit does not interfere in our lives, that is done by the lesser gods.”

She threw her arms around his neck and then turned back to me and did the same. I returned her hug warmly. I was touched by her love, but troubled by Hiacoomes’ point. I loved her too much to put her in any danger and too much to let her get away. She sensed that something was bothering me and asked about it. I said that I had to consult my spirit guide before we got married. She seemed troubled by that, but said no more. We had already had dinner so I proposed that we stay in the meadow an extra day so I could fast and find a good spot to contact my guide. All agreed. The next morning, I had a small meal, then walked around the periphery of the meadow to make sure there were no dangerous animals lurking near. It seemed to be quite safe, so I returned to camp to take my leave. Carlotta clung to me for a long moment as if to seek reassurance.

“Don’t worry, my love,” I told her. “I’m sure my guide is on our side.”

Hiacoomes wished me well. I could tell he very much approved of my decision. There were no mountains that I could see in the area, so I withdrew into the woods for some distance until I found an outcrop of boulders incongruously jutting out of the ground. They were not too high and I easily scrambled to the top. It afforded me no view at all, for the treetops were higher than the rock pile. Still, it did seem like a sort of mountain and I sat down and prepared myself for my consultation. The day grew warm; then clouds rolled in, and quick rainsquall moved through; then it grew humid, and more, darker clouds came in. It was obvious I was not doing well, since I was so distracted by the weather. Finally, I suppose a little before dusk, I made contact with my guide. When we finished it was twilight and I was soaked through from another rain shower, which I hadn’t even noticed. My guide had been quite supportive, so I didn’t care how wet I was. I slid down from the rock pile and ran back to camp. It was fully dark when I arrived, but I ran headlong until I reached Carlotta and drew her close to me.

“I must marry you,” I said at last.

Over dinner Hiacoomes suggested that we marry in the morning. We could then keep two of the horses while he continued on the way. That way we could have some time to ourselves as all newlyweds should, and then we could catch up to him when we were ready. We both needed some reassurance that he could manage by himself for a few days, but he insisted that he would be fine, and if he ran into any trouble he would just camp and wait

for us. The next morning we both bathed and presented ourselves before Hiacoomes. He witnessed our marriage and gave us both a fatherly hug. We helped him get ready and saw him off down the road. Then we returned to our meadow and found a new spot for a camp, well away from the road. We set up our camp and began the most wonderful few days of my life. Even now if I close my eyes, I can relive every moment of that incredible time.

With great difficulty, we both agreed on the evening of the fifth day that we were too concerned about Hiacoomes to remain there any longer. We reluctantly broke camp the next morning, renewed our stains on hair and skin, and with a last look to burn it all into our minds, we left our meadow. We regained the road and set off after Hiacoomes. Carlotta told me how grateful she was that I had not insisted on taking her from him, for she felt very protective of him. I couldn't imagine being so close to a parent, but he was all she had for almost all her life; I had more family than I knew what to do with. As we rode, we asked a few questions about those little details that escape one at the moment, but then return to puzzle.

"Why does your band have classes?" I asked. "I thought the Mongol rule ended such nonsense."

"Officially it is ended," she shrugged, "but I was never really accepted as a member of the Wolf Clan in many of the mainland villages."

"How is it that the Zhen plague struck your village with such devastation? It has become little more than a nuisance in the south. In fact, my father took me to a town where it was raging to make sure I would have it as a child when it is less dangerous. I would think it would have only killed a few in your village."

"I understand it was long that way on the mainland, but on Capawake and the other islands, the plague never struck before the time it wiped out my village. Now it is different on the islands and should never happen again."

Then, of course, she had a few for me about Anahuac and all my relatives. She very much wanted to meet my brother Theodore, my sisters Sarah and Mathilde, and even my father. The most difficult question she had for me was what the Holy Roman Empire was. I tried to explain what Grandfather had written, but I had to admit that even he did not seem to understand the concept. I speculated that since there were high priests ruling in parts of it, it was considered holy (although in my experience any connection between priests and holiness was coincidental). I didn't have any idea what Roman meant, but empire was the word for Khanate. I'm afraid I wasn't much help, but she had an understandable curiosity about her grandfathers' homeland.

We rode at a good clip and caught up with Hiacoomes on the evening of the third day. We found him in good health and delighted to see us. We returned to our routine continuing west of north. We were in Anishinabe land now and he enjoyed trading with a different people. He picked up a good supply of copper that he thought would be welcome in the south. In our disguise we would occasionally stay at yams now and never attracted the least attention. Mostly, however, we enjoyed the mild northern summer and camped along the way. He always made sure to give us as much privacy as was possible, further endearing him to us.

Eventually, we came into Ocheti shakowin country. They originally were more widespread to the north and east, but since so many of them had joined the Khanate with their whole families, there was only a remnant of them left behind in a few scattered villages in the southwest corner of their old tribal area. The Anishinabe had expanded into most of their old homelands. Just beyond them we encountered the Dzitsiista not long before autumn. Coincidentally, the village of my sister-in-law, Mahwissa, was one of those we passed through. Hiacoomes made some careful inquiries and that evening we were visited by her brother, Hotoa. He was puzzled that a merchant would know his sister and wondered where he had made her acquaintance. At this point, he stepped aside and I presented myself.

"Mahwissa is married to my brother, Theodore," I explained.

"I know Theodore." He eyed me suspiciously. "You look nothing like him."

"I am somewhat disguised. But, in fact, I don't look much like him."

"Are you the one called the Crow?"

“Yes.”

“Why are you in disguise? I have heard how you covered yourself in glory on campaign. You would be honored wherever you went. I would be honored to welcome you as a guest.”

I explained my situation briefly and prevailed upon him not to let anyone know I was here. He agreed, but was obviously disappointed. He told me that it was all over the Khakhanate how I had rashly volunteered to join the Maya tumen and, in spite of being so much taller and such an inviting target, had survived and been promoted all the way to minghan commander, and would have been given command of a tumen had I chosen to remain. I briefly outlined the real story for him, but he liked his version better. I asked if anyone had mentioned what had become of me since. He said it was variously rumored that I was on a secret mission for the Khan of Anahuac, that I was looking for a mysterious merchant and a white girl, that I had decided to campaign in the Khanate of the Green Mist, or that I had simply disappeared, but would return when suitable foes presented themselves. When I told him the true story, he thought it rather romantic, but still preferred the rumors. I asked him to tell his sister to tell my brother the real story, but say nothing about me to anyone else. He agreed and added that if I ever needed his help, I had only to ask. I thanked him and he embraced Carlotta and me before he left.

I was more than a little bewildered how my story had been so exaggerated and by whom, for that matter. I doubted that my few surviving Maya comrades would be spreading such tales, and even if they did, it would only be among their own people. The Maya never wandered around; they always went straight home after campaign. I couldn't imagine my cousin Theodore telling such tales, either. He had no imagination; he would only tell the truth. My Ani' Yun'-wiya relatives would also refrain from spreading tall tales about me; it wasn't considered polite. I was truly baffled by it and I wondered if it would hold me in enough good stead among the soldiers to preclude any move they might be ordered to make against me. In the end, I decided that it would be naive to think I would be safe, when even my revered grandfather had a narrow escape from an assassin sent secretly by the Khan. I would remain hidden.

Carlotta was impressed by my reputation and wondered if perhaps I had modestly played my war record down. I assured her I had been scrupulously honest with her. She agreed with Hotoa that the legend made a better story. I was not amused. Hiacoomes offered that if what Hotoa said was true, it was very unlikely that anyone would make any move against me. I retold him the story of the assassin sent after my grandfather and he saw my point. In any case, he assured me, he was enjoying the change and all the new customers he was meeting on this trip.

We were traveling more westerly after leaving the Dzitsiista and eventually came upon a village of Yanktonai, who had moved south to the Kensistenoug River. They were a very friendly people, not unlike the Dzitsiista, and welcomed the odd merchant who wandered into their midst. Hiacoomes had a wonderful time trading with them. They were quite interested in the reddish stone that is used to make pipes. He always had some of that on hand. They mostly offered furs and hides in trade. Carlotta and I did some fishing in the river while Hiacoomes enjoyed himself. Having Carlotta with me made the people leave me alone. No one wanted to intrude on the young lovers. Since I couldn't hide my blue eyes, it was very helpful that no one got close enough to notice. Instead, they would smile knowingly and wander off.

Once we had left Anishinabe territory, the forest gave way to grassland. At first, it was intermittent; then the grassland predominated except along the rivers. The grass was much higher now, almost over my head when I was on foot. Because it was much drier now, there was the danger of grass fires. As a precaution, we tended to travel the roads that wend alongside rivers. We picked up the South Dzitsiista River in the Ocheti shakowin area and followed it to the North Dzitsiista River (to Dzitsiista country). Once across the latter, we followed its tributary, the Kensistenoug, (apparently Juchi first encountered elements of that tribe along this river somewhere) where we found the Yanktonai. That river led us southwest for several days, and then it turned sharply to the northwest. We left the river and spent a tense few days making our way to the Bear River (I have no idea how it got its name, but I suspect the mapper who named it had a story to tell). The grass had now become a mixture of tall and shorter grasses, but there were still woods along the riverbanks. We followed the Bear along its east bank until a fire forced us to cross it. The woods and the river stopped the fire and few of the trees were harmed. Actually, the river was wide and shallow enough that we could have stayed in the river had

the other bank caught fire. As it happened, we had to cross back over again several days later when the west side was on fire. With all the smoke and coughing, Hiacoomes was not sure he wanted to spend much more time on the plains.

By late autumn, we were approaching the Mongol River. We were about one hundred eighty li upstream from Khanbalikh at this point. Much as I would have liked to see the capital, I thought it best to bypass it and Hiacoomes agreed. He had heard that anyone who enters the capital is carefully scrutinized and all bows and spears are confiscated. It would seem Theodore was right in characterizing the Khakhan as being overly cautious. The nearest bridge across the Mongol was on the eastern side of the Bear, where we just happened to be, so we crossed over the bridge and stopped briefly at the yam on the far side for some supplies. As usual, Carlotta and I stayed in the wagon while Hiacoomes got what we needed. He returned with a troubling story.

The yam keeper was a Menominiwok ininiwok named Inemeku. He recognized Hiacoomes and told him that there had been a strange man from the Khanate of Anahuac looking for him. He had assured the man that Hiacoomes never came this far west. The man said that he knew that, but since he seemed to have disappeared near Murenbalikh about the same time as had a criminal he was following, he thought that perhaps he had come to grief or been forced to go elsewhere. Hiacoomes assured him that he was well and had not met any criminals, but had merely decided it was time for a change of route. He asked Inemeku to not mention having seen him, since he had no business in Anahuac and suspected foul play. Inemeku readily agreed and wished him good trading on his new route.

I asked Hiacoomes if he felt he could trust this Inemeku. He was sure he could since he had long had good relations with the man's family. I asked why he was so far from his people's lands. He admitted that it had not occurred to him to ask, but it was not surprising to find yam keepers from tribes located far away from where they had their yams. He had once run across a Leni lenape running a yam in the lands of the Taunika. I wasn't sure what to do but decided that perhaps it would be a good idea to turn off toward the west for a few days and pick up another road to the south. He reminded me of the need to follow rivers and suggested we continue south until we reached the North Chahiks River before turning west. I recalled that there was a small river nearby which flowed into the Plains Oxen River which in turn flowed into the Chahiks. Unfortunately, it joined the Chahiks very close to the Mongol and there was a tumen stationed right at the confluence of those two rivers. However, there was a small tributary of the Plains Oxen that we could follow to its source, which was near another small tributary of the Chahiks, which would bring us to that river some 240 li west of the Mongol. This route would only take us away from a river for a day at a time, and no one would expect us to go that way. Hiacoomes reluctantly agreed and expressed the fond hope that we would not run into any more fires along the way. Since it was still autumn, I told him that by now the fires had already swept the area. That was just as well, for I suspected some of the small rivers we would be following would be little more than trickles by now, and would afford little protection from fire. There were some Tanish villages along this part of the Mongol, but we easily avoided them. We were not south enough to avoid the harsher winter weather and we needed to pick up the pace.

21

More Wandering

and Meeting the Khakhan, 96-8 K

(NB, KS, OK, AR, LA, MS, TN, IL, MO, IO, 1464-6)

We reached the Chahiks River without incident and moved easily across the wide, shallow river. We turned west on the road that ran parallel to the river some distance from the bank (beyond flood stage, no doubt). We passed a few villages of the Chahiks-i-chahiks along the way and stopped to do a little trading. We encountered other travelers occasionally, and all would greet us, except for the soldiers who rode past without even glancing at us. We continued along the Chahiks for some days until it began to turn north. We then turned south on a little-used trail for a few days until we reached Stampede Creek. The trail passed by the creek, but we turned and followed it downstream toward the southeast ultimately bringing us to the Owl River. Once across the Owl

River we encountered more Chahiks-i-chahiks towns. Over the years, they had spread north and west and the Owl had become their southern frontier.

Hiacoomes did some trading in the small towns, and then we followed a vague trail southward to the Kitikitish River. We were in the tall, grass prairie again, although much of it had burned away during the summer and fall, and we would only encounter patches of new growth, patches of tall grass, and patches of black stubble along the way. It was early winter, but we still had not had a freeze. There were no more Chahiks-i-chahiks towns, but we soon encountered Kitikiti'sh villages. They, too, had expanded north and west. As we continued down along the river, the towns became larger and their fields more extensive. We had our first freeze at the same time the grassland gave way to forest. The trail became a road and again was well traveled, mostly by merchants.

It was full winter when we reached the Kadohadacho River. It had snowed a few times, but not heavily, and we could still move easily along the roads. We crossed the river and turned east along the broad road that ran parallel to it. We soon ran into the towns of the Kadohadacho. Hiacoomes was very much enjoying trading with them since they esteemed merchants and made them most welcome. He insisted we stop in all their towns along the way making our progress very slow. It occurred to me that we would be passing by the ancient abandoned town I had wanted to visit long ago when I was on my way back home from Itsati. In early spring, we came upon it. I knew it the moment I saw it. It was just like Grandfather described it. I told Hiacoomes and Carlotta about it and we camped there for the day and explored a little. It was a rather exposed site so the wind had kept the snow cover to a minimum, and most of it had already thawed. Hiacoomes asked if it had been a Kadohadacho town. I explained that according to my grandfather it was neither Kitikiti'sh nor Kadohadacho, but some other tribe's abandoned settlement.

He seemed quite curious about it and, after looking around awhile, sat down in the middle of the settlement and closed his eyes. We assumed he was meditating so we respectfully moved away to the edge of the settlement and sat on the bluff looking down at the river enjoying the mild day. Eventually, he joined us and announced that the people who had lived here had been ordered to move east by their gods. I didn't ask him how he came to that conclusion, since it was as plausible as any I could suggest. He added that there had been some dissension when the need to move had been announced, but in the end, the tribe had gone on as ordered. Their descendants lived across the Missi Sipi River. I supposed that was also possible.

We continued trading our way along the Kadohadacho River reaching Yatasi Territory late in the spring. When we came to the loop in the river, we turned south to pick up the Salt River. When we reached the Salt, we joined some Yatasi who were boiling down some of the water to make salt and also secured some for ourselves. We continued along the river for a while passing other small groups from various tribes also making salt from the river. We finally came to the juncture with the Red River. Here was a very large town of a tribe belonging to the Hasinai Confederacy. We were made welcome and Hiacoomes set to trading while Carlotta and I tried fishing in the Red River.

We spent most of the summer wandering south along the Red River and stopping at all the large towns to trade. Eventually, the towns were no longer Hasinai, but rather Hais, another group associated with the Kadohadacho, although their language was different. Fortunately, almost everyone spoke Mongol. We remained on the road on the east side of the river, which was actually more of a trail, and the towns along its banks were smaller, but the trading was still quite good.

We followed the Red River all the way to the Missi Sipi, passing from Hais lands to Taunika lands and from summer into fall along the way. The latter also made Hiacoomes welcome and he was quite pleased with the trading. It was late fall when we crossed the Missi Sipi on the very long pontoon bridge above the mouth of the Red River. I remember remarking how slowly we had been traveling and how we were reaching the southeast at just the right time of year. I also remember that it was a mild, pleasant morning and the sun shone brightly on the muddy, sluggish water of the big river. The brightness made it hard to see much clearly and there was a bit of a mist on the far side. I was walking alongside the horses to keep them calm across the long bridge. As we approached the far side, we entered the mist; then just as we reached the shore, we stepped out of the mist into a blinding sunlight.

"Halt!" a strong voice rang out.

A squad of soldiers quickly surrounded us. One of them held on to the horses while the officer approached me. The others fanned out around us in a semicircle with spears at the ready but not yet pointed. The officer looked at me closely, then stepped back and saluted me.

“The Khakhan requests the honor of your attendance at his court, Minghan Commander Crow. We are charged with escorting you there.”

“May I have a few minutes?” I asked.

“Of course, sir,” he replied and withdrew a discreet distance.

Carlotta looked devastated, and Hiacoomes looked worried, but I reassured them. I told them that since the Khakhan wanted me, there was nothing to worry about. They should continue on their way. I would rejoin them as soon as possible, or if there were any complications, I would send them word. I urged them to stay in the south for the winter along the merchant trails so I could find them or send them word. I changed into my old clothes, embraced Carlotta and Hiacoomes, and joined my escort. We mounted up and turned north along the road that ran parallel to the eastern bank of the Missi Sipi. I rode next to the leader, a jagun commander from the Eagle Tumen named Tatanka Ptecela. He was Ocheti shakowin as were most of his men and they treated me with great deference. They did not guard me closely and I made no attempt to escape. When we camped, we talked about hunting, campaigning, the weather—everything except why they were taking me to the Khakhan. It was as if there was an unspoken agreement between us not to bring it up. I really didn't know what to expect, but I was certain I had done nothing to turn the Khakhan against me. Of course, Theodore had warned me that he was very cautious and perhaps my nemesis, Aztahua, had told him some lie about me. Still it would be better to know and confront the situation as it was than speculate endlessly about what it might be. Puzzling over this helped distract me only slightly from my devastation at being separated from Carlotta only a year and half after finally finding her. She was almost always on my mind. If I was uncomfortably cold, I would be glad she was in the south, if I saw a particularly beautiful scene, I wished she were with me to share it. Every night I would fall asleep reliving our trek across the plains this past year. At least I had that memory and nothing could take it away. In any case, I would finally get to see the capital of Khakhanate, Khanbalikh. Of course, I wished Carlotta would be with me so we could discover it together.

We rode quickly, changed horses at every yam and camped wherever darkness overtook us. Fifteen days later, we were crossing the Wazhazhe over the westernmost bridge. Four days later we were crossing the Missi Sipi just below Murenbalikh. The next day we crossed the Mongol and turned west along its northern bank. By now, the weather had grown quite cold and there was generally snow on the ground or falling out of the sky. It was not yet deep, however, and did not slow us down much at all. Fourteen days after we crossed the Mongol, we arrived at Khanbalikh. The land was quite flat except for the deep cuts made by the rivers, so it was hard to see what the city looked like from this approach. It just looked like a huge tent city. We entered from the south along a road of packed-down snow. There was no wall or gate, but there were sentries just before the first tents. The sentries saluted us as we approached and my escort led me up the road toward what appeared to be a raised area in the center of the city. As we got closer to it, it appeared to be elevated ground enclosed by logs. Before we reached it, however, we turned off on a side road and stopped at a large yurt with a pair of guards in front. I dismounted and entered the yurt receiving a salute from the guards.

The yurt was not occupied, so I warmed myself up by the fire for a while until a soldier came in and asked if I wished to bathe. I did and he brought me large basin and some slightly warmed water. As I was drying off, he brought me some rather splendid clothes to put on. There was a finished silk shirt dyed red, black woolen pants, and fine leather boots. He also gave me a heavy fur coat and hat for when I stepped outside. Once I was bathed and changed, he brought in a large meal, bowed, and left me alone. After finishing eating, I looked around the yurt. There were several sleeping areas and in one corner there was a shelf with some book scrolls in the old style. I looked through them. There were a few books in the Hanjen characters, but most were in Mongol. One was called Heroic Adventures and seemed to be some rather exaggerated retelling of the discovery journeys of Grandfather and Juchi as well as some of the smaller mapping expeditions. I preferred my history unvarnished, but it was rather diverting reading. I wondered what Grandfather would have thought about it, especially the

story of how he single-handedly killed four of the great bears with only a dull knife. I read until it was rather late, and then I turned in for the night.

The next morning, a new guard brought in breakfast and left. I continued reading while I ate and after. I finished the tome around midday. I put on the overcoat and hat and went out for a walk. The guards saluted as I left, but made no move to stop me. I wandered through the yurt center of the city to the periphery where the house style varied greatly, from the conical hide tents, to the earth houses, to the stick and hide huts, and to the occasional yurt. It was a beautiful, clear, cold day and children were playing in the snow under their grandmothers' watchful eyes, women were bustling about their household tasks, and men were testing their weapons, bringing in fish from the river or game from their traps or, mostly, standing around talking to each other. The occasional courier rode importantly through the streets at a good clip. I noticed that there were streets after a fashion. There seemed to be an order in the way the houses were laid out. They radiated out from the center (where the Khakhan's compound was) forming rather neat, broad streets like the spokes of a wheel. Then more narrow streets or paths connected the spokes. It certainly reinforced the idea that the Khakhan was the center of our universe. The spoke or street I was walking along led me to the river, although not to the bridge across it. I could see that the river was beginning to freeze over along the banks and the pontoon bridge, a little downstream of my position, was being removed and stored. I watched the men work for a while, and then turned back.

I decided to look around the "inner yurt city" a little bit before returning to my yurt. It also was arranged to form the streets. The yurts closest to Khakhan's compound were larger than those farther away. There were eight levels of yurts from what I could see. The Khakhan's compound was on a mound about ten feet above the rest of the city, with a large cleared area around it. It was quite a large circular mound, well over a hundred feet in diameter. The mound was held in place by huge logs driven deep into the ground that extended about four feet above the surface of the mound. There were four long and broad ramps leading up to the mound, one from each of the cardinal directions. The huge stark white yurt of the Khakhan shone brilliantly in the winter sun. It was surrounded by a clear area and then a single layer of smaller yurts, which were a somewhat duller white. The standard of fifteen white horsetails rose high above the doorway to the Khakhan's yurt, which was on the east side. It was very impressive.

I made my way back to my yurt, which was in about the third tier of yurts, and found a cold lunch waiting for me. I ate and returned to the bookshelf. I found a book about all the tribes in the Khanate and sat down with that one. It was rather a cursory overview of each tribe as it had been found with some rather presumptuous and even jaundiced interpretations of them. The Ani' Yun'-wiya were described as "good warriors with rather bizarre notions of equality who pay too much attention to their women and waste too much time in ritual." I could find no author for the book, but I was quite sure my grandfather had no hand in it. It actually hit the mark once in a while. The Mexica were summed up as "fierce warriors who are as likely to stab you in the back as die protecting your side. They give too much credence to their much-too-ambitious priests." I continued to read the book that afternoon. The author could actually be quite funny on occasion, whether or not it was intentional. The author described the Huasteca as "stubborn warriors with rather obscene dedication to the male member to the exclusion of even the pretense of common decency." I could almost hear him sniff in disgust as I read that.

So it continued day after day. I was fed, offered a bath, took long or short walks about the city (depending on the weather), and read. I was down to the Hanjen books one evening when, finally, my yurt opened and an officer saluted me and asked me to follow him. I bundled up and went out into the wintry night. He led me up the southern ramp to the central compound. We went around to the front of the huge yurt, which was illuminated by torches. The guards saluted as we approached and I was led into the antechamber. There were blue silk curtains sectioning off the antechamber from the rest of the yurt, and a rug made of a kind of coarse fiber covered the ground. The antechamber was fairly large and manned by a small contingent of guards. I took off my hat and coat and lay them on the bench. My escort entered the next room alone, then returned and motioned me inside alone. I stepped into what appeared to be a short hall delineated by red silk curtains, but with a fine red wool rug on the floor. At the end of the hall were two more guards who parted a gold-colored curtain at the end and motioned me into the next room. This was a broad semicircular room, with gold curtains, a white wool carpet, and a small platform at the back covered with a plush white woolen rug on which was a

single chair made of gold. It was not occupied, however, but a rather fussy-looking old man came up to me and urged me into one of the rooms that were curtained off from the throne room. The old man looked rather like a Mongol, but he had a strange accent. The room he ushered me into was not large and had a blue rug on the floor and white silk curtains on the “walls.” There was a small brazier in the back of the room glowing with hot coals and keeping the room quite warm. There were just two plain chairs in the room with a small table on the side of each. There was a goblet of kumis on each table. I was alone, as yet, so I remained standing by the brazier and waited.

The white curtain suddenly parted and a man perhaps forty years old and only slightly shorter than me darted into the room. He was muscular with powerful shoulders, but still appeared rather slim, with a straight posture and a sure stride. He had rather angular features, not at all like an old Mongol, but more like a Leni lenape or perhaps a Dzitsiista. He had deep-set, intense eyes that seemed to be trying to read me as he looked me over. He was wearing a raw silk shirt and leather pants just like any warrior, so I really wasn't sure who he was.

“You are Minghan Commander Crow, son of John the Healer?” he announced more than asked.

“I am, sir,” I answered.

“I don't suppose you would recognize me. I am Kujujuk, the Khakhan.”

“An honor, sire.” I quickly bowed.

“You are very young to have covered yourself with so much glory on campaign.”

“I fear my exploits have been exaggerated beyond recognition.”

“Well, by some of the men, of course. But that is a good thing; it makes them want to match or exceed preposterously heroic efforts. However, I have read the official reports. Tumen commanders do not embellish anyone's achievements but their own. They all wrote well of you. You have reason to stride boldly about the Khakhanate like a strutting cock, but instead you slither about disguised as a humble merchant. Why?”

“I wished to disappear from view and spend time with my new wife in peace. Her guardian is a merchant who is too old to be traveling about alone, so I joined him and disguised myself so as not to interfere with his trade.”

“You are telling me only a partial truth. I prefer the whole truth.”

“You put me in a delicate position, sire. I am unable to speak more fully under orders from my Khan.”

“Curious. Does this withheld information have anything to do with me or my family?”

“No, sire, it is between him and me.”

“Do you feel you are under some threat in the Khakhanate?”

“Possibly, sire, but not from your hand.”

“Good. I would not want a hero to think he could not wander freely about my realm. Is your possible threat from a certain agent of your Khan-cousin?”

“Yes, sire. If he would meet me openly in single combat, I would not be concerned, but he is the sort who would lie in ambush.”

“Well he was, I suppose. It took a long time to get anything remotely resembling the truth out of him. How does this version sound to you? He was sent here to make sure you did not foment a revolution against me.”

“That is outrageous.”

“Yes, I know. Next was, he was here to make sure you didn't tell me any lies about your cousin, thereby causing trouble between us. How does that sound?”

“Doubtful. My cousin has no reason to doubt my loyalty.”

“Good, so far we are in agreement. What about, he was sent to spy on me and coincidentally see what you were doing.”

“I can’t imagine why my cousin would want to spy on you, sire.”

“No, I suppose you couldn’t. But it is quite normal. After all, I spy on him to make sure he is still loyal; he spies on me to make sure I’m not getting ready to move against him. As you can see, my spies are better than his. No matter. My understanding of your difficulties with your cousin are this: you were involved in a Tenocha plot to overthrow his father but thought better of it and exposed it to him. Of course, he already knew about it and was hoping to use your involvement to discredit your family before his father. Since you deprived him of that and instead were instrumental in making short work of the plot, he was forced to honor you instead. Of course, he took advantage of the confusion and killed his hapless father so he could take over the Khanate. He vented his frustration with you by sending you on campaign and making sure you were attached to the Maya tumen in the not unreasonable expectation that you would be killed in action. Against all odds you not only weren’t killed but were promoted a further two ranks for your exemplary service. Once more, he sent agents to kill you in Tamalameque, but your clever brother hid you and whisked you off to safety in my realm. How does that sound?”

“I don’t know what to say.” I was amazed. “Your spies seem to have ears all over my cousin’s palace. You know more than I do. I merely suspected him of patricide and only my brother was sure he was trying to kill me in Tamalameque. I thought he was finished with me.”

“Tell me, if you were in my place, would you move against your cousin for the patricide?”

“I don’t know. I would want to do so, but so many innocent would die, I would have to give it much thought.”

“Tell me something else. If I find it necessary to move against your cousin, who would you support, him or me?”

“I must be honest with you. It would depend on whether you moved against him with or without provocation.”

“A very worthy, honorable answer. It was what I expected you to say. Unfortunately, it is an answer with consequences. But first, tell me if your admirable loyalty to your cousin is because of your kinship, or something else.”

“It is difficult to see my cousin George as kin, but his brother I do so acknowledge. However, my loyalty is to my grandfather’s Khanate, not the incumbent Khan.”

“Your grandfather would be more loyal to the Khakhanate than to himself.”

“You may be right, sire, but I recall he resigned rather than unjustly arrest his friend, your ancestor Juchi, as ordered by the Khan. I feel he would approve of my loyalty to his Khanate in the name of justice as well as my loyalty to you in the same name.”

“As I said, I respect your position, but it does have consequences. I can only have people who are blindly loyal to my slightest whim without concerning themselves with questions of justice. Still, I do concern myself with questions of justice and so will give you a choice. You may depart immediately to campaign in the Khanate of the Green Mist or you must return to the old land. Your wife and her guardian will not be affected by this and may continue as they are unless they wish to join you. Your exile will be for five years in either place, after which you may return if you still live. On the whole, I would suggest your chances are better in the Green Mist, but it is up to you.”

“May I give it some thought, sire?”

“Yes. You may tell me tomorrow morning. In either case, you must leave the following morning at first light. You may go.”

I bowed and withdrew from the small room. The old Mongol waved me impatiently through the throne room door into the hall. I regained the antechamber and retrieved my hat and coat. A guard took up a torch and led the way back to my yurt. I sat down heavily by the fire and weighed my options. I was devastated. Five years of separation from Carlotta. I couldn’t possibly take her into the uncertain fate of exile or campaign with me. I had not for a moment thought I would be exiled from the Khakhanate. My brother had warned me that the Khakhan was very suspicious, but I had thought complete honesty would hold me in good stead. I guess I had won his

respect, but not his trust. I could see his point, I supposed, but found it excessively cautious. I was so lost in thought that I didn't even notice the draught of cold air as the door opened and someone came into the yurt. He stood a while looking at me, then finally sat down on the chair next to mine, starting me out of my chair.

"Deep in meditation, Karl?" my brother Theodore asked.

"Where did you come from?" I stammered.

"Interesting question, but the easy answer is: from your lovely wife. I see your quest was successful. Congratulations. "

"How is she? And Hiacoomes?"

"Well, both of them, although very concerned about you. How went your interview with the Khakhan?"

"Not that well, actually. Did you know he knows everything that happens in the Khanate?"

"Well, not everything, just what happens in the Khan's palace. What do you mean, not that well?"

"I have to choose between exile to the old land or to campaign in the Green Mist."

"What a choice! Have you decided yet?"

"No, well, yes, actually. When I returned with you from campaign last year, I told you I would not go on campaign again. I will go to the old land."

"Are you sure that is your choice."

"Yes."

"Well, in that case tell the Khakhan you wish to travel overland to retrace the path of our ancestors. That way I can ensure that you arrive at your destination safely."

"How?"

"How often have I told you, the less you know the better? Do you remember the path our people took? You read that book so many times you must have it memorized."

"Yes, but it was spring when they came out of the north, it would be difficult to follow that path in the winter."

"Indeed, but you know the first leg from here is up the Mongol River to the site of the old Hawk Ordu. There is still a large settlement there, although the tumen is gone."

"Yes, that's right. Then I would have to continue upriver to the old Ox Ordu site, then turn north through the lands of the Siksika and then into the land of the Tinneh."

"Precisely. Go to the Hawk Ordu and visit our cousin, the descendant of our grandfather's brother Henry."

"The sword maker?"

"Yes, his descendants are still sword makers. Well, some of them are. But ask for the local sword maker and present yourself to him. His name is George."

"Not exactly my favorite name these days."

"Never mind that, just go see him. He'll tell you what to do next."

"Could you look after Carlotta while I'm away?"

"Of course. I have passed the word; she is well understood as being a member of our family. She will be taken care of by all of us. Now turn in and tell the Khakhan your decision in the morning. I must get going tonight. Don't worry about anything."

With that he turned and hurried out of the yurt into the night. I was amazed that he always seemed to know what was going on in my life and seemingly could always find me when he needed to do so. I felt very protected although I could not imagine how he was going to make my trek into exile an easy one. No one in his right

mind traveled north in the winter. I had to wonder what would become of me, but decided not to worry about it any more. I retired for the night with my thoughts on my Carlotta and slept quite well. I dreamt she slept in my arms that night. The next morning I ate breakfast and went out into a steady snowstorm. There was little wind, but the snow was accumulating quickly. I found my way to the Khakhan's yurt and presented myself to the guards. They ushered me into the antechamber. There I dusted myself off and waited while my arrival was announced within. Soon the head of the guard motioned me into the hall, where the guards held open the curtain for me. Once again, the old Mongol was there and again guided me to the same little room.

"What have you decided?" the Khakhan demanded as he strode briskly into the room.

"I have decided to return to the old land, sire. I would only request that I be allowed to retrace our ancestral route to the north."

"In the middle of winter, you want to travel north?"

"Yes, sire."

"You are very brave, or very foolhardy. In any case, you may go that way. You must be out of the Khakhanate by spring. Don't try to settle along the coast like your grandfather did. Patrols will be looking for you there and along our northern frontier. They will have orders to kill you if they find you. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sire."

"Well then, you may go and may Tengri guide your steps."

"Thank you, sire."

"Before you go. There is something I have been wondering about for some time now."

"Yes, sire."

"Is your brother Theodore involved in some sort of intrigue, or is he just the healer he appears to be?"

"As far as I know, he is a very fine healer and nothing more."

"Hmm. Well, at least he answered my question correctly. I was just wondering if he was answering honestly."

"Theodore has always been scrupulously honest with me, sire."

"No doubt. Still I can't help thinking he's up to something. Time will tell. When you see him again, tell him I've got my eye on him. He visited you last night, but left before morning. He moves around too much to be a mere healer. Of course, he wouldn't involve you in his intrigues, unless...did he tell you to pick exile over campaign?"

"No, sire, that decision was mine."

"So be it. Good luck."

"Thank you, sire."

I bowed and retraced my path to my yurt. I got together my belongings and went to secure some supplies for the trip. I got a new bow and several bags of arrows; I got my sword and my knife sharpened. I got some warm clothing, a few extra blankets, and a supply of dried meat strips. I got together a few emergency medicines from the shaman and selected four strong hardy horses. I got a good night's sleep and at first light was on my way out of Khanbalikh on the western road. The weather had cleared, but the snow was about a foot deep. Fortunately traffic had packed it down a bit on the road and I could see my path clearly as I left the city behind me.

22

The Road to Exile, 98 K

(IO, ND, MT, SK. AB 1466)

The road from Khanbalikh to Khartsgaibalikh (as the town on the site of the old Hawk Ordu was now called) turned sharply northwest three days after leaving the capital. Even in winter there was always steady traffic

between the two cities so the road was easy to follow. That is not to say it was an easy ride. I found it necessary to change horses frequently to avoid jading them. It was so cold that the breath was sucked out of me as I moved along. I did not want to miss a yam along the way so I always left early and continued until I reached one. What would be an easy ride in the summer was very hard in the winter. I was forced to lay over for a few days in one yam while a blizzard raged. When it abated, I decided to wait another day so that someone else would break the trail for me. When I finally left, there was about three feet of snow on the ground, but the trail had been broken and I had reasonable hope of reaching the next yam. I did make it just at dusk, a little too close for comfort. Some ten days after leaving Khanbalikh, I arrived in Khartsgaibalikh.

There were no guards in town, although there was a jagun stationed in a camp at the north end of the town. I asked around and got directions to my cousin George the sword maker's house. It proved to be an old-style yurt with the unmistakable sounds of a smith coming from the back. I made my way around the yurt and found the smithy. It was a shed made of stone walls with a large opening in the front and an elevated roof made of logs and thatch. I wondered that the roof didn't catch on fire with all the fire and sparks coming from the smithy. A short, broad man was working with his back to me. I turned aside to the corral, situated a safe distance from the smithy, and added my horses to the others. I then approached the smith.

"Are you George, the smith?" I asked the broad back.

"I am," he replied without turning around or missing a stroke.

"I am your cousin, Karl, the Crow. My brother Theodore suggested I look you up."

"Well, let's have a look at you." He stopped and turned to look me over. "You don't look much like your brother or your father, for that matter, but you could be no one else. Welcome, and congratulations on your recent marriage. I'll be with you as soon as I finish this spear."

He turned back to work on the spear. It was one of the solid iron ones used to hunt the great bears. I wondered if I would need one of those on my trip. I asked him how he had heard of my marriage. Of course, Theodore had told him. George appeared to be well over forty and looked more like an Anishinabe than anything else. I imagined that his mother was probably one since there had been a fair colony of them in the old Hawk Ordu ever since the days of Odinigun. In due course, George finished the spear and put it in the water barrel to cool. He then led me around to the front of his yurt and through the door. He introduced me to his wife, Ba-ahnoce, an Inuna-ina. She greeted me warmly and drew us each a bath. While we were bathing she washed the clothes we removed and set us out fresh things. I helped George dump the bathwater when we finished and Ba-ahnoce set out a big meal for us. All this time we had been chatting amiably about family. It seemed that Carlotta and I were just about the only members of my family he had not yet met. He proved to be the great-grandson of my grandfather's brother Henry. His mother and grandmother were both Anishinabe, so it was no wonder he looked like one. His grandmother was the daughter of the legendary Odinigun. After dinner we sat down by the fire.

"It would seem you have quite a trip ahead of you, Cousin," he began.

"Yes, I do. Do you have any advice?"

"Oh, I can give you more than just advice. First of all, you must go on to Sharbalikh, the town on the site of the old Ox Ordu. There you will ask for Atot'ain, the smith. He will tell you how to proceed. Also, here is a bag of dried fruit, mostly berries; you must eat some each day in the winter. Dried meat and raw fish will not keep you healthy. Meanwhile I have just finished the iron spear you will need."

"Are there great bears in the north country?"

"In the west, in the mountains, but there is an even larger bear in the north, the white bear."

"Larger than the great bear?"

"I'm not sure if he weighs more, but he is longer, or taller if standing."

"I'm not looking forward to making his acquaintance."

“Indeed! But it is best to be prepared, so I have made you an extra long spear. It is important to keep the bears claws well away from you should you encounter one. Whatever you do, never cook meat out in the open; it will bring them right to you. Of course, they sleep through the winter, so it is unlikely you will see one until the spring.”

“I have yet to see one of the great bears. I’m used to the small ones.”

“If you are lucky, you won’t see one, but as long as you are traveling with horses it is likely you will.”

“Do you suggest I go on foot?”

“No, of course not. In time you will have to switch to dogs.”

“I remember my grandfather writing most unfondly of dogsleds.”

“They are obnoxious brutes, but essential in the North Country. Don’t worry about it; you will be shown how it is done in time.”

“I must admit to feeling like a child being protected by all my relatives. Is all this really necessary?”

“Had you chosen to campaign in the Green Mist, you would be left to your own devices. After all, you have proven yourself as a skilled warrior and can take care of yourself in battle. As it is, you are not exactly being hand carried to your destination; you are only being assisted to make sure you have a chance. When Theodore catches up with you again, he will explain everything. Until then, enjoy what comfort you can along the way. On some of your trip you will likely be alone and protected only by your own wits. In any case, nothing you have done so far will have prepared you for what lies ahead. May our God guide your steps and may Kababonkaug-g show you mercy.”

“Kababonkaug-g?”

“The winter sky, the north.”

“Thank you.”

The next morning, I set out at first light as usual after thanking my hosts for all their hospitality and especially for the fruit and the spear. The latter was longer than I was tall, more of a lance than a spear. I decided I had better get some practice with it along the way. The road to Sharbalikh ran just a little north of west. I was again held up by a blizzard along this leg and it took ten days instead of seven. While I was held up, the keeper of the yam, an old Siksika who had hunted the great bear, happily showed me how to handle the iron spear. I felt much more confident with it after his instruction. I reached Sharbalikh in the late afternoon. It was a small town with no military presence at all. I got directions to Atot’ain’s house. It was on the eastern edge of the town and proved to be one of the conical hide tents with a stone smithy (much like cousin George’s) in the rear and a corral on one side. The smithy was idle, so I put up the horses and approached the tent. Just as I was about to call out, the flap opened and a short, squat young man with a huge welcoming smile urged me inside.

“You must be the Crow.” He clapped me on the back. “Welcome to my home. I was beginning to worry about you.”

“I was held up by a storm for a few days,” I explained.

“No matter, there is still plenty of time. Everything is ready. We leave tomorrow.”

“You are coming with me?”

“Yes, but never mind that now. This is my wife, Wunoantome, and my two boys, Patadal and Dohasan. Come, you must want a bath, like your brother always does.”

Wunoantome, a short slim woman with a sweet smile began to heat some water while the two boys (ages six and four) excitedly followed me around. I managed a bath in spite of the boys’ help and changed into fresh clothes. Wunoantome washed my clothes while Atot’ain and I got rid of the bathwater. We then sat by the fire to chat and Wunoantome finished up my clothes and began dinner. The boys sat at our feet hanging on every word.

“Curious habit your family has with all that bathing in warm water. I think cold water is best. I’m afraid it will be some time before you get another warm bath.”

“I lived among the Ani’ Yun’-wiya; I am quite used to baths in cold rivers also. Where are we going?”

“North to the Khanate River, of course. There is a small settlement there called Kuriltaibalikh that I visit each winter and summer to do their blacksmithing. I have been waiting for your arrival to go.”

“How far is it?”

“It is just about fifteen hundred li. It will take us about twenty-six or seven days by dogsled.”

“Fifteen hundred li by dogsled? You travel fifteen hundred li in the middle of the winter? Are there no settlements in between? In any case, I’m afraid I don’t even know how to handle a dogsled.”

“Well, that’s a few questions. Let’s see, yes I do travel fifteen hundred li each way every winter and summer, but only in the winter by dogsled.” The boys thought that remark was uproariously funny. “There are a few settlements in between, but I don’t stop at them in the winter, only in the summer, and don’t worry about the dogs, you won’t have to handle them, I will.”

“I didn’t notice any dogs around. Where do you keep them?”

“I don’t. We’ll just push the sled over to where the dogs are kept. They belong to a Kensistenoug named Sakcewescam. He lives to the north of the town.”

“I understand the dogs can be hard to control.”

“Only if they think you don’t know what you’re doing. By the time we reach the settlement, you’ll be an expert.”

“Why is the town called Kuriltaibalikh?”

“Actually, that’s a frontier joke. You remember, of course, that a kuriltai is the Mongol word for the assemblage that met to choose the successor to the Khan in the old land. Well, since the only time there was such an assemblage in the new land was on the site of that town, they have come to call themselves that.”

“Has the Khakhan missed the sarcasm?”

“I doubt if he even knows where the place is. Of course, officially the locals would insist that they are merely honoring the ‘first’ kuriltai.”

“There must be some old Mongols living there.”

“It was founded by a small group of them after Kaidu died, officially to trade with the northern tribes, but actually, to get away from Kuyuk. Today it is mostly populated by Kensistenoug, some Siksika and perhaps a few Tinneh.”

“I have Siksika relatives. One of my uncles was Siksika.”

“That will hold you in good stead among them; they are quite clannish I find.”

Somehow I felt he was being just a bit sanguine about my learning to control the dogsled in that time, but dinner was being served so we turned our attention to that and chatted amiably about the usual banalities. I did manage to ask how he came to know my brother. As I might have expected, Theodore had saved his life many years before while he was on his way to campaign in the Green Mist. He also knew George, who had trained him to be a smith. He also mentioned meeting some of my relatives on my mother’s side. There he had the advantage over me, since I never had. It made me wonder why they never visited us in Cuauhnahuac. Well, they mostly lived on the northwest coast, and it was quite a trip, but you would think they would have gone to visit once. Maybe they had when I was too young to remember and no one had ever mentioned it. Perhaps they didn’t much like my father. While everyone respected or even revered him, I often wondered (when I was young) if anyone actually liked him.

After dinner we put my things on the sled and turned in early. The next morning, we rose before dawn, ate quickly, and together pushed the sled over to Sakcewescam's compound. It was easy to find; one only needed to follow the sound of the barking. He was situated in a wide hollow, well north of the town. The hollow muffled the barking somewhat for the town. He must have had at least a hundred dogs in his compound and he was busily feeding the snarling brutes as we came up.

"Ah, Atot'ain," he greeted us. "You're finally ready to go north?"

"Yes, it is time," he replied. "This is the Crow, brother of the great healer, Theodore."

"An honor, sir." He bowed formally. "It is a pleasure to serve you today. I will select the best team for you."

"You are most kind," I replied. I decided I didn't want to hear why he was grateful to my brother. I think it was about this time that I decided that my brother's life story would be far more interesting than mine or that of anyone else in the family, and when next we met, I urged him to write it down, but he just laughed. I suppose one would be able to get more information out of a corpse than out of Theodore. I keep hoping that one day a manuscript of his memoirs will turn up somewhere.

Sakcewescam manhandled a team into harnesses for us, pausing every so often to break up a fight among them. He assured us that once they started running they would stop fighting. We paid him and attached the team to our sled. Atot'ain broke up a few more fights and we started off. We alternately rode on the back runners of the sled and ran alongside holding on to the handholds on either side. The running was necessary to keep warm and the riding to rest between runs. When we wanted to stop, we turned the sled on its side. There was little opportunity to talk while we either rode or ran since the wind would snatch away any words we tried to shout. This left me with time to think once I knew what I was doing with the sled. My thoughts always returned to Carlotta, and our magical time together. It lifted my spirits rather than depressed me; for I was certain that somehow we would be together again soon.

The road was not easy to follow, if indeed there was one, but Atot'ain seemed to know exactly where he was going and showed me how he aimed the sled each night by the stars, when we camped, and went in that direction in the morning. I doubted if such steering could be that accurate, but we eventually came right upon the town near midday on the thirtieth day. It was a very small settlement, belying the suffix -balikh. There were a few dozen of the conical hide tents scattered in a ragged line along a hill just across the Khanate River from us, with a single yurt in their midst. We shot over the frozen river, up the far bank and on to the settlement. We turned aside to the western edge of tents and stopped at one near the end. Atot'ain released the dogs from the sled and tied them to a stake still harnessed together. We fed them and I had to admit he was right about my learning how to handle the sled, I felt quite competent with it.

Once the dogs were taken care of, we pushed the sled to the rear of the tent where there was a very snowbound smithy. It was also made of stone with an elevated thatch roof, but it took a while to dig the snow out of it. He then filled the furnace with wood and some of the coal he had brought along and set out his tools. Once all was ready for the next day, he led the way into the tent.

"Is our host here?" I asked him.

"Oh no, Kiskap is probably checking his traps. He should be back by nightfall. We'll surprise him by fixing the evening meal."

"He has no wife?"

"No, Ksakwi Ahki died a few years ago. This is a hard place to live, you know. I thought perhaps he would find another wife, but I guess he hasn't."

"Did they have any children?"

"Yes, two girls and a boy. The boy is on campaign in the Green Mist; the girls are married and living with their husbands' bands."

"He must enjoy having the company when you visit."

“He has always made me welcome.”

By evening, Atot'ain had a fragrant stew in a pot on the hearth. Just before dark, the dogs began barking incessantly setting off responses from the neighboring packs including one that was obviously getting closer. Atot'ain began serving up the stew and after a furious exchange of barks and some maneuvering outside, the flap of the tent flew open and a tall man of perhaps fifty years dressed in furs covered with ice crystals strode into the tent. He grabbed Atot'ain by the arms and lifted him into the air and set him down again.

“My old friend, you are finally here!” he shouted. And turning to me, “This must be my young cousin.”

“Are you related to my uncle, Seagull?” I asked.

“Yes.” He nodded sadly. “He was my father’s brother. It was a tragic story. You know, songs have been sung about it.”

“Really?”

“Yes. I’ll sing you one after dinner. Atot'ain you are most kind to fix such a splendid feast.”

“My pleasure, my friend.”

After dinner, true to his word, Kiskap sang us the song about Seagull. It was quite a long song and there is no greater folly than trying to translate poetry, but the gist of the song was: One day Napi (literally “Old Man,” the Siksika Creator God) looked down on his people (the Siksika) who were struggling to survive on the plains. He decided to send them help and called up the Eagle Clan from a land far away to bring them ponokamita (literally “Elk-dog,” the horse). This changed everything for the people and they joined the Eagle Clan and became a great people. Among the people was a young man named Apuni (“Butterfly,” apparently an earlier name of Seagull), who flitted about the plains until he came to the great mountains in the west. He fluttered up through the mountains until he reached a great lake of saltwater where he was turned into a Seagull. Seagull then flew east into the land of the steaming waters where he found the family of the Great Raven who had fled the unjust wrath of the new head of the Eagle Clan. He joined the Raven Clan and flew west with them to the Great Sea. They escaped the Eagle, settled in a small valley, and flourished. He married the beautiful daughter of the Raven and had five children. But a fever attacked the people and Napi called the Raven back to the Eagle Clan to save the people. While he was away, a pack of wild dogs attacked his clan. Led by Seagull, the ravens fought bravely and finally drove the dogs off, but they were all wounded and the fever found them and took four of them including the great warrior Seagull. Unable to live without him, the daughter of the Raven soon joined him and now they hunt with Napi in the special hunting ground reserved for those who love each other more than life.

I decided not to correct the errors in the song, but instead praised it. Actually, the melody was rather repetitious but Kiskap had a strong, deep voice and the overall effect of the song was haunting. I did ask him if his family blamed my grandfather for the fate of Seagull. He assured me that they did not. They had only the greatest reverence for the Raven. They were also very pleased when he sent the children of Seagull to them for a few years. I hadn’t thought much of my Siksika cousins since they were all so much older than me, but I decided to find out about them now.

“Well, let’s see,” he began. “The eldest was a daughter named Christina. We called her Ksistuk Ahki (Beaver Woman) because she loved to swim. She was a beautiful woman, tall and graceful. She married a Dzitsiista named Miahtose and moved down to the south near the Pelican Ordu. She died about seven years ago. He died soon after, but their two children still live. Their names are Oomi and Mathilde. I think they have also made their homes in the south. The next child was also a daughter, Miriam. We called her Piksi (Bird) for she was like a little bird flying around. She was small and slight of build but full of energy. She married a fine boy from a neighboring band named Ahwotan. He died on campaign and she died in childbirth. The child was also lost. The women felt she was too small to have a child. Perhaps they were right. The third child was Henry. We called him Itska (Danger) because he was such a fearless child. He died on his spirit quest fighting a great bear. He only had a knife, but he and the bear killed each other. He would have been a great warrior had he lived. There are songs about him also. The fourth child was also a boy, Leo. We called him Ahwahpitsi (Lonely) after

his brother died for he was devastated by the loss and kept to himself. When he was about seventeen, he rode off toward the north and never returned. I rather hoped I would run into him up here one day, but I never have. I don't know what became of him. The youngest child was a daughter, Sarah. We called her Ksiskum (Spring), because she was like a flower of spring, beautiful, sweet, light and airy. We all loved her like she was our own child. And she loved us all. She was the only person who could talk to Ahwahpitsi. I believe he always loved her, if no one else. She married a tall handsome Wazhazhe named Mitzoxhi, who she met while visiting Murenbalikh. They have four children, Mitsiushi, Tciju, Miriam and Ugasho'n and still live in the east near the Wazhazhe River."

"I had no idea I had relatives among the Wazhazhe. I guess they never came down to visit us at Cuauhnahuac."

"If I may be frank, after your grandfather died, there was nothing to draw them back there."

"My parents were rather poor company, but my sisters and my brother Theodore were wonderful."

"Yes, but they have come to us over the years. There was no need for us to go all the way to Cuauhnahuac to visit them."

"Did my sister Mathilde visit you when she was with her Salst relatives?"

"Yes, she did. They are fine people, the Salst. Have you met them?"

"No, my father sent me to stay with his first wife's people, the Ani' Yun'-wiya."

"Also a fine people. It is good you are finally getting around to visiting your other relatives. Unfortunately, you must make this visit a short one. Your brother tells me you must be out of the Khakhanate by spring. So you will have to go in a few days. That is, of course, if Klah arrives in time."

"Klah?"

"Yes. He is a Thilanottine and will make sure you get safely out of the Khanate before spring."

"Just where does the Khanate end?"

"Officially, it takes up all the land in the north, but practically, it ends about halfway into the Tinneh lands. They are sort of loosely allied to the Khanate, but no one presses the issue. If they need help, they can come get it, but there are no patrols by Khanate soldiers and, in fact, the Tinneh never ask for help, they just come down to trade for iron tools when they need them."

"Is it far to Tinneh land?"

"We are in Tinneh land. Depending on who you ask, it is either Tsattine or Sekani."

"I never heard of the latter."

"They are allies, fine people, both groups."

"But this man Klah is neither."

"It is no matter. His tribe is despised by both groups, but he is well known among them as a trader."

"I see. How did you come to live here?"

"Once my youngest daughter was safely married, I wanted a change. I like the cold, so I moved north. I like it here. You live or die by your wits. There is no compromise, no margin for error. It is a good strong life. My wife liked it also."

"Don't you miss your relatives?"

"We visit each other in warm weather. Although I surprised them early one winter a couple of years ago. I brought a big elk I had hunted down, so I was quite welcome."

The next day, I hitched up the dogs to the sled and took them for a good run along the riverbank to make sure I could handle them. Meanwhile, Atot'ain fired up his furnace and set to work in the smithy, and Kiskap took care of his trap harvest of the previous day. When I returned, there were still a few people lined up to get their

various weapons sharpened or repaired and Atot'ain was hard at work. Kiskap had finished his skins and was fixing dinner in the tent. I joined him after I tied up the dogs and he welcomed me warmly asking if I had noticed the snow softening up. I hadn't, but he assured me spring was quite close now and he hoped Klah was almost here.

By nightfall Atot'ain had taken his cold bath and joined us for supper. He expressed surprise that there had been so much work for him this time. Kiskap told him that the locals traded in the area for damaged weapons, then traded back the repaired ones at a premium. Atot'ain was impressed that they were so enterprising. He expected to be busy for a few more days.

The next morning, Kiskap went out early to check his traps and Atot'ain went back to the smithy. I decided to wander about the village a bit. The locals were definitely a mixed lot as Atot'ain had said they would be, but I was intrigued by the lone yurt and decided to investigate. It was on the crest of a small hill just about exactly in the center of the ragged line of tents. I called out and the flap opened to reveal what looked very much like an ancient Mongol. He invited me in asking if I was a descendant of the Immortal Raven. I admitted being his grandson, and he marveled that he had a grandson as young as me. (It is amazing how often I hear that.) He identified himself as Abaka, the more or less head of Kuriltaibalikh. I asked if he was descended from the founders of the town. He acknowledged that he was the son of one of the founders, Munguk.

"I have received orders from the Khakhan to kill you if you are still here in the spring. But, of course, I don't take orders from him, or anyone else. You may stay here as long as you like."

I thanked him, but assured him I would be leaving in a few days. He shrugged and wished me a safe journey. He seemed to almost regret not getting the opportunity to disobey his "orders" from the Khakhan. We had a nice visit while he reminisced about old times and heaped praise on my grandfather and the great Kaidu. I returned to Kiskap's tent in midafternoon, went in and began preparing the evening meal. All was stewing away when I heard the dogs barking. Thinking Kiskap had returned early, I went out to check, but it was a much shorter man, older than me but younger than Kiskap, meanly dressed and sporting a straggly beard covered with frost, approaching on a dogsled. He pulled up to the tent tied up his dogs and greeted me warmly.

"You must be young Crow. I am Klah. Is Kiskap here?"

"No, he is still out checking his traps. It is a pleasure to meet you."

"And I, you. Is there something I can feed these ravenous dogs, before they start eating each other?"

"Yes, the trap meat is stored in that box."

"Excellent!"

He opened the box and threw his team what looked like a skinned beaver. They set on it savagely biting each other as much as the meat from the look of it. I invited him in the tent and apologized that the stew wasn't ready yet. He laughed and told me he never ate cooked meat. He pulled a nasty-looking piece of fat with skin on one side and cut off a bit and popped it into his mouth eating it with much relish. He then thoughtfully offered me the next cut, but I politely refused, and he popped that one into his mouth. He then put the vile thing back in his bag so he could eat when the rest of us did. Kiskap arrived soon and after securing and feeding the dogs came in and raised Klah off the ground in greeting while the latter laughed uproariously. Soon Atot'ain came in and he and Klah clapped each other on the back. When he noticed I had made dinner, Kiskap raised me off the ground—easily to my surprise. Then we all sat down to eat. Klah refusing even a taste of my stew but offering everyone a cut off his disgusting repast. Only Atot'ain accepted a small bit and he seemed to enjoy it. When dinner was finished, Klah turned to me.

"Well, young Crow, we should really leave tomorrow, but I have some knives for Atot'ain to repair, so we will have to leave the next day. We will be chased by spring all the way to the mountains."

"The mountains?"

“Of course. Your brother wants me to take you to a certain path that will lead you through the mountains. There you must continue on alone to the sea. You will be met at the end of the path by a relative of yours. I don’t know his name, but he will recognize you so it won’t matter.”

“It is strange, but I had a dream almost a year ago on the sacred hill of the Pansfalaya. In it I flew up to the north and a man who looked something like you pointed me to the west and I flew across the land and over the mountains to the sea where a wooden pole carved with faces was stuck into the ground. The one on top was a raven and it said to me, ‘Welcome home, my son.’ ”

“I didn’t know you were a shaman.”

“I’m not, but sometimes my spirit guide sends me dreams.”

“I have never been over the mountains, so I don’t know what you will find there.”

“There are people along the coast,” Kiskap said, “who carve poles in the way you describe. I saw some of them when I was with the Salmon Ordu many years ago. They are very tall poles—tree trunks, actually. The people are a handsome, friendly lot and live in fine plank houses.”

“You know the houses in the village in my dream were also plank houses, very large, unlike any I had seen before. But I saw no people in my dream.”

“It would appear your dream will come true,” Klah added. “It is a good sign that you will make it over the mountains. I am much relieved to hear that, for it is not an easy path.”

It seemed I would get an adventure out of this trek after all. I had no fear of mountains, but I had heard that those in the far west were much higher and more dangerous than those I was used to in the east. Although I doubted they could be any higher than those I climbed in the Khanate of the Clouds. Still, spring was a dangerous time to be in the mountains because thawing could touch off avalanches, especially in passes. This might be quite a challenge.

23

“Home,” 98 K

(AB, BC, AK, 1466)

The next day I helped Kiskap dress the furs he had trapped the day before while Klah got his knives repaired and sharpened by Atot’ain. Around midday, Klah’s knives were finished and he checked out his sled and his dogs’ harnesses carefully before loading up the sled. He had me come with him and we took a quick run around the town to make sure all was well and to see what the snow cover was like. By the time we returned, he was reassured by what he had seen. All the equipment was in good shape and the snow was still not melting. Actually, I thought any signs of spring had to be in one’s imagination around here, but my three companions were quite sure it would soon arrive. We packed my things on the sled. I had thoughtfully brought along a fair amount of dried ox meat. Klah also strongly recommended that I not cook any meat while on the journey. I decided I could probably use some more dried meat and asked Kiskap if any could be secured in the village. He directed me to a tent near his where meat could be bought.

I called out as I approached the tent and the flap opened to reveal a small, slender man, probably mostly Kensistenoug from the look of him. He invited me in and I asked if he had any dried meat to sell. He said he did, but wasn’t sure if I would want it. He brought out four bags of dried meat strips. He was fairly certain one bag was mostly elk, moos or deer, but he couldn’t be absolutely sure. Another bag was definitely none of those, but whatever he had trapped that last year. Another was dried fish from the lake to the north and from the river. A fourth held whatever hadn’t fit in the other bags. I decided on the first and third bags and we settled on a rather high price after some spirited bargaining.

I added the meat to the sled and joined the others inside. All three cautioned me again not to cook any meat or even stew the dried meat while I was in the wild, especially once spring was in the air. If I decided to catch any fresh meat or fish I must eat it raw. I rather hoped I had secured enough dried meat for the trip. We all turned in right after dinner and rose early the next morning. We ate some leftover dinner and soon all of us were out

getting the dogs hitched up to the sleds. By first light we were ready to go. I got a big bear hug from Kiskap and a hard clap on the back from Atot'ain. Both wished me luck on my journey and hoped they would see me again one day. I thanked them for all their help and echoed the hope we would meet again. With one last check of all the gear, Klah and I headed west, Kiskap headed north, and Atot'ain headed to the smithy.

We followed the Khanate River upstream west for most of the first day, until it turned south; then we continued west and slightly north, keeping the mountains to our southwest. We continued in this direction for the next six days. Each night we would camp where we could see a bit of shelter, usually behind (south of) a hill. The weather was fairly clear, but quite cold with a steady wind blowing out of the north. The ground was quite hard and completely snow covered, but Klah still insisted that spring was at hand. On the third day we came upon a small village and we visited it so Klah could trade. I could really see no difference between him and them, and their languages were mutually comprehensible, but they seemed to have a thinly veiled contempt for Klah, and I was suspect since I was in his company. Once the trading was done, we did not even entertain the thought of spending the night, but pressed on. The villagers' homes were not particularly inviting, in any case. They lived in double lean-tos covered with hides from which an unsavory odor emanated boldly even through the sense-dulling cold. There was one impressive-looking structure in the village, but Klah told me it was for storing food—no one actually lived in it.

After the sixth day, we turned sharply northwest keeping our path just beyond the foothills of some impressive mountains that were still in the distance. Klah told me that we would soon be in the lands of the Nahani who would be a little friendlier. First, however, we had to endure two more Sekani villages, which, if possible, were even meaner looking than the first and marginally more hostile. I didn't really know why Klah would want to trade with them, but I didn't think I should ask him.

On the seventh day of the northwest tack, we crossed a large frozen river and turned due north for the next four days. I noticed Klah made a point not to stop at a large village on the bank of the river not far from where we crossed it. I also noticed that the river, while still frozen, appeared to have a thin layer of water over the ice. Perhaps spring was finally on its way. This northward track was not an easy one. The terrain under the snow pack was quite rough and made for a bumpy ride. More than once the sled turned over by itself and sent us both on a graceless tumble. We then had to check the sled for damage and break up the endless fights among the dogs before picking another path. We often used the frozen rivers as paths, but even here we would occasionally hit a protruding rock and turn over. During one such spill I came very close to dashing my head against a rock. At the last moment I managed to twist enough so that my shoulder took most of the hit. It wasn't broken, but it was certainly sore for a few days. I was glad the cold helped numb it a bit. Unfortunately, the need for constant vigilance severely curtailed my daydreaming, but my nights were still free and I went to sleep every night and awakened every morning thinking of Carlotta.

On the fourth day we turned sharply west for day or so, then turned north of northwest. Again we followed frozen rivers most of the way and on the whole it was still better than the rough terrain, but we nevertheless managed the occasional spill. On the third day, we turned more to the northwest for a day and came to a medium-sized village near a large river. This village was as mean as the others, but the people, while indistinguishable from their neighbors to me, were much more friendly and insisted we accept their hospitality for the night. Fortunately, the nose quickly adjusts to almost any outrage. I think the smell was from packed unwashed bodies. We were fed smoked fish and everyone took turns telling stories. These were mostly about their hunting prowess. I decided to tell the story of my cousin Henry and his tragic fight with the great bear. They were very impressed by the tale. Especially since Klah confirmed the tale as being completely true. Klah's story was about a whale hunt and also greatly impressed our hosts.

The next day we left the village at first light. We went down to the river and turned upstream. It was covered with refrozen slush. I noticed the wind had changed directions and was now coming from the west over or through the mountains, but was still quite cold. During our first day on the river, we would alternately find patches of water and refrozen slush, but the ice was still quite thick enough to hold us. Before long, however, we had to abandon the river for the south bank because of roughness. It looked like there were frozen rapids or small waterfalls along a large stretch of the river. The south bank was fairly smooth and the travel much easier than we had had in a while.

On the third day after leaving the village, we veered away from the river which turned northwest and continued due west, past a large hill which stuck out in the now rather broad river valley. Just around this hill was another village, somewhat smaller than the last. Again we stopped and were pressed to spend the night. We both shamelessly told the same stories again with a bit more embellishment. This time after the stories there was some dancing performed. The dancers used masks to represent the various characters of their myths, which had inspired the dances. I noticed they did quite a bit of the quillwork to decorate their clothing, much as did the people in the south.

The following morning we left at first light as usual and continued due west all day. We camped for the night and the next morning were treated to a blizzard just as we were about to get under way. The wind was still blowing from the west, so we banked up a snow wall in that direction and hunkered down with the dogs to wait it out. It continued raging for two days. Then on the third day, the sun came out and it grew almost warm. The new snow was actually starting to melt. We quickly got ourselves together and set out toward a bit south of west for most of the day before turning due south along a river. I noticed that this river was beginning to thaw and small rivulets were flowing around the ice. Just before dusk we came upon a small village. We were again pressed to spend the night and tell stories. This time we both came up with new stories. Klah told about an encounter he had with one of the white bears. I told the Ani' Yun'-wiya story about the Stone Man (Nun Yunu wi) who had been overcome by an unusual stratagem and gave up all his secrets as he lay dying. They loved both stories.

The next morning Klah did some trading and came back with what looked like two pieces of sapling wood each about eight feet long. He lashed them together at one end making what looked like a primitive travois out of it. He then got my things out of the sled and tied them down on the travois. Then he asked me to try it out. I obliged and found it rather awkward, but tolerable. He then explained.

“It is time for us to part company, Crow. You must continue on foot. This travois will make it easier to carry your things than piling them on your back. When you no longer need it, you can simply discard it along the way. I have not gone on this path, but this is what I have been told. You must follow this river to its source, a long narrow lake. Beyond the lake you will find another river that flows toward the southwest. Follow it until it empties into a larger river. Follow the larger river to the sea. It should take you five or six days to reach the lake, two more days to pass the lake and reach the other river, two or three days to reach the last river. This first river tends toward the southwest. Be careful not to turn aside and follow the smaller rivers flowing into it. If you do not come upon the long lake, you have made a wrong turn. You will find things are thawing as you go along and as you near the sea it will be quite warm. Remember a relative will be waiting for you near the sea. Otherwise, there should be no villages along this path. Any questions?”

“Has anyone in this village walked along this path?”

“Yes a few of them have gone as far as the lake.”

“Well, let me draw a little map from your directions and perhaps they can help me with it.”

“Most shrewd, Crow. I'll go get one of them.”

While he was gone, I got out a piece of hide and made some charcoal ink to write with. I sketched out the village at one edge of the map and placed the long lake about six days' distance to the southwest and attached the two points with a line marking the river. Klah arrived with a few of the locals who were all eager to help. It took a while before the rather abstract idea of the map became comprehensible to them, but once they understood, they were eager to fill in the blanks. First they insisted that the lake was longer than I had it; then they began to point out where the tributaries joined the main river. It would seem I would run into no less than seven the first day, where the river flowed north. Then there would be another twelve or thirteen the rest of the way to the lake, six or seven from the south and six from the north. They also corrected the flow of the river for me where it varied slightly from its northeasterly flow. So armed, I felt much more confident of finding my way to the lake. Klah clapped me on the back in approval and assured me my brother would be very proud of me. Since it was already past midday, we decided to spend another day with our hosts, much to their delight.

They also entertained us with some of the mask dances that night and then turned to storytelling. Since they all told new stories, we had to do likewise. Klah told of another memorable fight with the great white bear, but this one had occurred to a relative of his. I decided to return to my Siksika relatives and told about Leo and his reaction to the death of his brother. I gave him a few fictional adventures before he disappeared, mostly avenging himself on great bears. I ended by suggesting he still roams the mountains hunting the bears without mercy and if they come across him they will know him by the scores of bear claw necklaces he wears. They then told me that they had heard of such a man. He wears only bearskins and lives alone in the mountains to the south. He was thought to be mad. They were glad to hear how he came to be this way. I rather hoped he was not the relative I was to meet.

The next morning Klah and I embraced and he turned his dogsled north while I pulled my travois south. The river was not completely thawed, but was too dangerous to cross. It was swollen with meltwater and debris from the winter along with chunks of ice that swirled around in it menacingly. The snow along the shore was softening, but no ground was yet visible. The small rivers flowing into the main one were not as dangerous to cross, but all required a bit of a detour upstream to find a still-frozen patch and, yes, I misjudged the strength of the ice more than once. Fortunately I was wearing waterproof pants made from walrus hide (I think), the same kind that the Inuit wore (I had picked up a pair in Khanbalikh). They did not fit, of course, but they did keep me dry when I had to cross rivers. By the end of that first day, I had crossed five of the tributaries on the east side of the main river and the last of them was quite the largest and required a long detour to cross.

Actually I waited until the next morning to race across the last one, when the ice would be most likely to hold. It did. I continued south alongside the river most of the next day, crossing a small stream and turning west about midafternoon. The river seemed to be flooding out of its banks a little, so I stayed up near the trees. These were mostly pines near the river, but I could see hemlocks farther up the mountains. The trees were not dense or tangled, but fairly open and passable. I was glad to see the trees, since they made it less likely that I would encounter an avalanche along the way. Some shrubs were visible in between the trees, but they were not dense either. There were still no signs of flowers. The days were almost mild, but the nights remained quite cold, refreezing any slush from the day's melt.

On the second and third days, I had to cross two more significant tributaries. In both cases I had to detour well upstream to find a shallow enough spot to cross. The rest of the streams were not that much of a challenge and on the sixth day I arrived at the lake. It had to be over sixty li long and as much as three li wide. It was thawed, but there were still chunks of ice floating in it. There were only a few small streams emptying into it on my side (east). I arrived at the far end of the lake on the eighth day. There was a small stream flowing into the far end and as it was late in the day and it had been rather warm I decided to hurl caution to the winds and take a much-needed bath in the stream.

The water was so cold when I plunged in that I had to gasp to breathe. I rubbed myself frantically to effect the bath, then jumped out and dried myself quickly and put on some fresh clothes. I then built up a fire and washed and dried my clothes. I was done at dusk, but remembering all the advice I had received, I dared not cook any food, but merely ate my dried meat and a handful of the dried fruit. I slept with my bear spear clutched tightly in my hand.

The next morning I woke up with a start and found a man sitting by my fire, which he had stoked up, and staring at me with no expression at all. He was a little older than me and dressed in bear skins, with a very dense bear claw necklace. He was clearly too young to be my legendary cousin Leo. Were he alive he would be well over sixty. I rose up and looked around. He was alone. He had a bow and a quiver of arrows on his back, a knife on his belt, and one of the long bear spears on the ground by his side, but he held no weapon in his hand. I laid down my bear spear and greeted him. He grunted and pointed over to his left. I walked over there and behind a screen of trees was a very dead bear, the largest I had ever seen. I returned to my guest.

“You killed that bear?”

“Yes.” He spoke Mongol, but his accent was atrocious. “You were lucky I was following him. Only a fool doesn't tie his food up in a tree overnight.”

“I didn’t know that. I am new to these parts.”

“Obviously. I know all the tribes around here. None look like you.”

“I come from Anahuac, I am called the Crow. Who are you?”

“I am called ‘Enri. I was born a little to the east and south of here.”

“Was your father called Leo?”

“You knew my father?”

“He is my cousin, son of my father’s sister.”

“We are related?”

“Yes. I am honored to meet you. Your Siksika relatives would be happy to meet you also.”

“My father was Siksika?”

“His father was Siksika; his mother was like me, pale. We are from a people far to the west, beyond the sea.”

“My father never spoke of his people to me. I only came to live with him when my mother died. She was Sekani.”

“I see you were named for your father’s brother.”

“Yes. He told me that the great bear was my mortal enemy and I must kill all I see.”

“Your uncle Henry was killed in a fight with one of the great bears when he was a boy. He was very brave and fought the bear with a knife rather than the spear. He also killed the bear, so he avenged himself. I don’t think you should consider the bear your enemy.”

“My father made me promise to carry on his war, after he died.”

“I see. How did he die?”

“We were following a bear three summers ago. We were in the mountains southeast of here. He tripped on a loose stone and fell down the side of the mountain. When I reached him, he was just barely alive. He made me promise to carry on his war. It is fortunate for you I am.”

“We were raised to respect the lives of animals and only kill them when necessary for food or in self-defense. While your war has saved me, it is not a good thing. It is like wiping out a whole tribe because one of its members offended you. I would urge you to give up your father’s war and live your own life. Go visit your Siksika relatives. One of them lives in Kuriltaibalikh to the east. He told me he has always hoped he would see your father again.”

“I think you mean well, but you cannot ask me to break faith with my father.”

“As you wish, but ask your spirit guide about it and follow his advice.”

“I will do so, Cousin. I have heard of Kuriltaibalikh; it is far to the east. I hear one can get knives repaired there in the summer.”

“It is true. The smith comes to visit our kinsman, Kiskap, in the summer and in the winter. I went there with him.”

“Kiskap; I will remember that name in case I go. Meanwhile, good luck on your journey and remember, your food must be up a tree at night.”

“Good luck to you also, Cousin. I will follow your advice. It was wonderful meeting you, and I hope we meet again.”

“If you stay in these mountains, it is possible.”

With that he got up and went over to the bear to skin it. I put together my things (I no longer needed the travois) and set off southward to find the other river. Near midday I came upon it. It was not as big as the first river and seemed to be free of ice, but swollen with meltwater. It flowed west and a little south at this point and seemed to come from the mountains in the southeast. I followed it downstream on its northern bank. The first day I crossed three small streams all fairly shallow and ice-free. Patches of ground were beginning to show through the snow and a few brave plants were poking out of the snow. The days were mild, but the nights were still quite cold. (I remembered to put my food up a tree a discreet distance from where I slept.) The second day, the river turned more to the south, and I crossed another stream. At the end of the day I came upon a bit of a canyon where my river joined a much larger one. I decided to stay above the canyon for the night at least.

The following morning, I wandered a bit toward the west and found another river that dropped precipitously down into another canyon very likely to also join the main river. I decided to cross this one up here on the rim if possible. I wandered a bit upstream of this other river and finally found a barely fordable spot. I stayed up on the rim of the canyon and found another small stream that broke through the rim toward the large river. I crossed it fairly easily and continued southwest. The next day, I came upon yet another river, which had carved its own considerable canyon on its way to join the large river. It took the rest of the day to find a fordable spot upstream on the canyon rim for this river. The following day the mountains forced me to walk along the western rim of the river's canyon almost the whole day until it joined the canyon of the large river. I noticed that there was a huge snowcapped mountain some distance south of the river that reminded me of the mountains of the Khanate of the Clouds. It was quite a sight at sunset.

The next morning I followed the canyon rim of the large river southwest. By the end of the day, I could see that the river was dropping farther away from me and I had best find a way down into the canyon if I ever hoped to meet my relative. I came upon a small creek that seemed to make a passable cut through the canyon wall so I crossed it and waited until morning to make my descent. In the morning I began my descent. The way was steep and rather rough, but did not present a problem. I did notice that as I descended it grew considerably warmer and there were flowers and flower buds everywhere. The large river was still a raging torrent, but I didn't think I would have to cross it anyway. There was no snow on the ground in the canyon, and the firs began to give way to spruce and hemlock. During the day there was actually a rain shower. The air was humid, but temperate. I came upon a small stream and found the water merely cold, so I cleaned up my clothes and myself and changed out of my winter clothes before continuing on. By the end of the day, I seemed to be in something of a forest along the bank of the river. Just as I was about to look for a place to camp, I noticed a wisp of smoke just a little downstream from me. I went on down to investigate.

I reached the spot at twilight and found a lone man sitting on an overturned boat by a small fire. He was a strange-looking man, very gaunt almost haggard looking. He was at least twenty years older than me. He wore his hair very long and it appeared matted as if it had not been washed in some time. He had a small beard and mustache and wore a strange large almost conical hat made of some sort of painted material (cedar roots, it turned out). His clothes were leather, probably deerskin, but he wore a cloak (made from cedar bark and wool) that was painted with yellow, black and white designs, symbols and faces, and had a long wool fringe hanging from the bottom. There was something oddly familiar about the man, so I stepped out of the trees and approached him.

"At last! The Crow has arrived!" he greeted me.

"Are you the relative I was to meet?"

"Indeed. I am Ganook, brother of Kudeitsaakw."

"My brother Sealth's wife. How are they?"

"Well, well indeed, at least at their last visit. They have three fine children now, you know."

"No, I haven't heard from them since I was a boy. Is Sealth still with the Salmon Ordu?"

"No, he is running a yam in the lands of his people now. They will be coming again to visit this next winter and plan to leave their eldest son with us for a few years."

“Perhaps I can become reacquainted with them and meet the children at last.”

“No, that would not be wise, my son. It is best that you see only me while you are here. That way no one needs to lie about seeing you.”

“You don’t mind lying?”

“No one questions a shaman. We can come and go as we like and stay away as long as we wish. Why do you think your brother asked me to meet you?”

“Is Theodore here?”

“Not yet.”

“I need to warn him that the Khakhan is suspicious of him.”

“The Khakhan is suspicious of everyone. Other than that, he is one of the best we have had in years.”

“Actually, he impressed me favorably, also, but he considers me something of a threat to him. That’s why I’m here.”

“Yes, I know. Have you anything to eat?”

“Yes. I have been eating dried meat and berries, since I was warned not to cook meat.”

“Excellent. I arrived a few days ago, and have been fasting.”

“Why were you fasting?”

“In case you got lost, my guides would show me where you were. As it is, they told me not to worry you would come today.”

“Is that why your hair is so...”

“Unkempt? No it is the custom of a ‘Lingit shaman never to wash or cut his hair. It was difficult at first, but I have gotten used to it.”

“I am sorry, I meant no disrespect.”

“Your honesty is refreshing and not unexpected. Your brother had the nerve to tell me it was unhealthy. I pointed out to him that the spirits talk to me unkempt hair and all rather than to him. Thus while he has to grope about blindly to cure, I am led right to the problem and told what is best for the patient.”

“And sometimes, death is best for the patient.”

“Yes. Your brother would save himself a lot of trouble if he would learn to accept that fact.”

“I’m afraid he got that from my father. They are both personally affronted when they lose a patient.”

“You have correctly diagnosed your brother. I have yet to meet your illustrious father. I heard he had been traveling along the coast some years ago, but he never stopped at our village.”

We shared some of my food and chatted a bit more about family. Then I told him about my dream. He was most impressed. It seemed he was planning to take me to an abandoned village that had belonged to his people. It was in some ruin, but he had managed to fix up one of the houses. As it happened, there was a raven carving on top of one of the carved poles. It stood alone near what was the center of the village. I asked why the village had been abandoned. He said it had been wiped out by the Zhen plague about five years ago. The few survivors moved away. It was in an out-of-the-way place, not on the sea, but on a river that flowed into the sea. It was unlikely that anyone would look for me there, since few knew of its existence. Still, it was not far from his village, Stikine, which was on this very river (also called the Stikine), some distance downstream. We would have to pass it on the way to the abandoned village.

The next morning we rose early and ate some more of my food. We then launched Ganook’s boat. It was a large, heavy, dugout affair, rather much for one man to handle, I thought, but he handled it with ease. The river was bloated with meltwater and flowed rather swiftly. We stayed near the north shore, and floated easily,

merely steering around rocks and fending off the occasional tree floating down the river with us. There were many large and small islands in the river. There were snowcapped mountains visible on either shore. At dusk we put in to shore and hauled the heavy boat out of the water. I continued to supply the food, but I didn't mind since I still had plenty.

On the third day we passed a glacier on the north bank, near midday. It had to be about eighteen li wide along the river and filled a valley between two high mountains. It came within a few hundred feet of the Stikine River. I had never seen a glacier before and was amazed at the deep blue color of much of the ice. Not long after passing the glacier, we approached his village, and he had me lie down in the boat so I could not be seen from shore. I could hear people calling to him in greeting from the shore in the 'Lingit language I had learned long ago. He waved and called back but continued a little farther out in the current than usual. We were soon well out of sight of the village and he had me get up again. I noticed the river turned sharply to a little north of west past his village. We spent that night on a large island in the river and did not light a fire. Ganook felt we were too close to his village to camp on the mainland. Besides, he told me the north shore was too swampy and the south shore was too steep.

Shortly after we left our island the following morning, the river turned to south of west. There were two more glaciers choking valleys on the north shore, the second larger than the first, but neither as large as the one near Ganook's village. Around midday we steered through some long narrow sandbars to get to a northern channel. About three li downstream, we turned into a narrow channel between a large wooded island and the shore and put into shore at the end of the island. We hauled the boat well up on the shore among the trees. From here we would go on foot.

The land was heavily wooded, mostly spruce and hemlock with the occasional cedar. There was quite an abundance of shrubs (mostly berry bushes), ferns, mosses, flowers, and lichen. The tall trees made it rather gloomy if we strayed away from the open areas near the river and the various streams. We walked north along a creek that emptied into the Stikine River within a few feet of where we hauled out. It soon split into two forks and we followed the east fork. The east bank of the creek was quite steep but the west side was less so. We crossed a small tributary that joined our creek from the east. We camped for the night in a small level area where the creek veered to the west and disappeared into the hills. In the morning we continued north and soon crossed another creek that flowed out of the mountains to the east. We followed it downstream. Although it was heavily wooded, it was quite obvious that the terrain was very steep on both sides of the creek. Another creek joined it from the west not long after we crossed it. Near midday yet another creek joined from the west and soon we arrived at a sandy area leading to the tiny bay where the creek emptied into the sea. There on the east shore of the bay was the large carved pole with the raven on top just as in my dream. And behind it were the dilapidated plank houses.

"Welcome home, my son," Ganook said with big smile.

24

Exile, 98 K

(South Shore of Leconte Bay, AK, 1466)

I couldn't help going straight to the pole to look at it. It was badly weathered. Under the raven (which actually looked more like one of the large-billed birds called tupi found in the Khanate of the Clouds) were some other stylized creatures I couldn't readily identify. Ganook helpfully identified them as (in order under the raven) a wolf, a frog, a shark, an otter, and a bear. I could almost see a resemblance once he identified them. He explained that they represented the family history of the man whose house was behind the pole. He led me to the house he had repaired. The houses were in a single row facing the shore on the east bank of the bay. There was a large sandy area at the end of the bay and the stream emptied into it close to the west side. The bay was almost a li and a half long and less than three hundred feet wide. The house we approached was near the center of the row of houses, a little to the right of the raven pole. It had a very faded painted front. The door was square and above the level of the ground. Inside was a large room, perhaps fifty feet square, completely made of cedar planks. Even the floor and the sunken area in the center were lined with fitted cedar planks. The planks on

the walls were tightly overlapped to keep out draughts. There were racks for smoking meat high off the ground around the hearth. The roof turned out to be made of heavy split shingles. There was a smoke hole right over the hearth and windbreaks and shutters protected it. There were nets, traps, fish spears, baskets, cedar bowls, and even snowshoes for my use as well as some blankets, in the sleeping area. Ganook had cannibalized from all the other houses to rebuild this one into a work of art. The house seemed to glow inside. I thanked him for all his help, especially for the incredible house.

“Don’t mention it. I enjoyed working on it.”

“It must have taken quite a while.”

“About a year, I would say.”

“A year! So this was not originally meant for me?”

“I don’t know. The winter before last your brother asked me if I could fix up an out-of-the-way place somewhere in the vicinity of my village. I promised I would, but told him to give me a year or so. I got a note about you only this past midwinter. Perhaps he originally intended it for someone else, he never said, and I wouldn’t have asked. When did you know you would need it?”

“It was near midwinter when I was exiled. He must have sent you the note right away with a dispatch rider for you to receive it so soon. But how could he get the use of a dispatch rider?”

“Never underestimate your brother. Anyway, I’m glad you like the house, but of course, you won’t need it much until the fall.”

“You don’t live in these houses until fall?”

“Of course not! They are too warm and they are placed for shelter from the winter storms. You will have to stay in summerhouses while you are gathering food for the winter. Tomorrow I’ll show you where they are. I think you will like them also.”

We ate more of my dried meat and berries while he explained how the ‘Lingit use the various things in the house. We spent the night in the restored house. It was still rather cool at night so we were quite comfortable. I dreamt that night of setting up housekeeping with Carlotta that autumn in the wonderful cedar house. The next morning I made up my mind to catch enough food this spring and summer to feed at least two this winter, just in case my dream came true. Before we set off, Ganook presented me with a ‘Lingit hat. It was like his, but unadorned. He explained that it would not be proper for anyone but me to adorn it. He told me that it was made from the roots of the cedar tree. He assured me I would appreciate the hat when it rained, which, I would find, was often. We left for the summerhouses right after breakfast. While crossing the sandy area at the end of the bay, he mentioned I could catch herring and smelt right there on the beach in the spring and summer. We scrambled across the stream below the fork (an excellent spot to catch the oil fish) and followed the western fork upstream. It began to rain, and he was right about the hat. In about an hour we arrived at the first summer “house.” It was a little above the west bank of the western fork near the point where another stream joined it from the west. The “house” was a shack covered with bark. Inside was a thin blanket rolled up on one side and a small table on the other. I wondered how it would survive a summer storm, but he assured me it would. Ganook explained that the summerhouses were placed near hunting and fishing sites. He assured me that this first one was an excellent fishing site. Especially when the salmon came in the summer and early fall.

We moved on to the next shack. This one required a climb up to the source of the stream that joined the western branch. This proved to be a small lake (which also had fish). We then scrambled down the western slope of the mountain toward the sea. Near the bottom of the slope on the bank of another stream was the second shack. Again I would find excellent fishing especially in the spring and summer when the small oil fish came up the stream. It was also near an excellent place to hunt ducks, swans, geese, and cranes in the spring and fall, and the small shore birds all year long, if I was so inclined. The migratory birds landed in droves in the marshes to the west and northwest. Needless to say, I would also catch salmon here.

We moved on to the third shack. This one was about several li south of the second one on another stream near its lake-source. It would also be ideal for the same fish as the second one as well as hunting game around the lake. The final shack required a climb back over the mountain to the stream between two small lakes, which were the sources for the stream that flowed by the second shack. Here I could also find fish, of course, but it was best for hunting. Deer, moos, bear, beaver, raccoon, and rabbit could be easily caught here. Indeed, I was able to get a deer right away. Together we performed the thanking ritual to the deer spirit and I carried the deer over my shoulders back to the house. We got back late in the afternoon and set to work on the deer. Once we had finished butchering it, I worked on the skin, while Ganook prepared some of the meat for our evening meal. I asked about cooking meat and bears, but he assured me that he had power over bears and they would not bother us. I asked if his power extended in any way to me. He admitted it didn't, but he would place a protective mask to keep away all harm from the winter house. That way I could bring back game and fish here to smoke and store. He would show me how the 'Lingit smoked meat. Otherwise it would be best to keep my spear nearby while hunting and fishing. Of course, he would ask the bear yek to make the bears leave me in peace. A yek was a spiritual helper he used to make contact with the spirit world. He knew how to control them to the benefit of his people.

As we went around to the summerhouses that day, he also showed me other things to eat and things to avoid. He gave me the 'Lingit names for them, but I forgot those long ago. There was a kind of seaweed, some manoomin, a sort of pea, the soft layer under the bark of the hemlock, and a plant with huge leaves and large hollow stems (one peeled and ate the stems, either raw or cooked). There was a poisonous plant that also had huge leaves and stems, but the leaves were prickly and the stems had poisonous spines. This plant also had berries that had to be avoided.

There was nothing particularly notable about the 'Lingit method of smoking meat. It consisted of using racks high about the hearth, placing thinly sliced pieces of meat on them and building up a large smoky fire with evergreen branches. It also required keeping low to avoid choking on all the smoke. I began to see the reason for the sunken area around the hearth. He told me I could also smoke the meat and fish where I caught it, but it could attract attention from the sea. The extensive mudflats west and south of this area tended to keep away the trading traffic, but billows of smoke near the western or southern shore (there were 'Lingit settlements in those directions: Seet Kah on the north end of the large island to the west and Kaachxana-aakw near the north end of the large island to the south beyond the small islands) might invite the curious, so it would be best if I did all my smoking in the house. The mask he would put on the house would also keep away any 'Lingit since they would think it was the burial place of a shaman and would not want to disturb it. He showed me the mask. It was carved of wood, and painted blue with a red mouth and dark blue eyebrows. The face showed surprise, I think. He placed it on the front of the house next to the door. He explained that he used masks to control the yeks, but he had already replaced this one at the request of the yek and had been assured it would still work in the capacity of a shield.

After breakfast the following morning, Ganook announced it was time for him to leave. He promised to look in on me once in a while and assured me he would have his yeks watch over me. I watched him leave, and then wandered down to the mouth of the little bay. To my surprise, there was a huge glacier across the large bay of which my little bay was merely an inlet. The glacier was perhaps six li up the bay from my inlet. It was at least three li wide and a few hundred feet high. While I watched, a bit of it fell off into the sea and sent a large wave down the bay toward me. I moved up the slope a bit, but it really didn't come close to being a tidal wave. I climbed up the slopes east of the village to do a little hunting. I was able to get two more deer before midday and brought them down to the house to prepare that afternoon.

The next few days, I continued to hunt near the house and was successful almost every day, at least with deer. I decided to try out the summerhouses at last, once all the meat was smoked to my satisfaction. I set out to the first house and tried my luck with fishing. I was moderately successful, but was only catching enough to feed myself while I fished. I moved on to the second house, because it was about time for the migrating birds to be arriving. Sure enough there were a few geese feeding in the marsh when I arrived, but I noticed there were hundreds of the white-headed eagles fishing along the shore. I had never seen so many of them in one place. It was hunted for its feathers in the Blue Sky, but I could never kill a bird for its feathers. I retreated to the second

house and tried fishing in the stream until the birds arrived in force. On the third day, the morning was filled with the unmistakable racket of migrating birds. I worked my way down to the marsh and bagged about fifty of them, mostly geese, by early afternoon. I had to make a travois to haul them back to the house. I had a very long evening preparing all of them for smoking. Indeed I was still at it the next day. I finished in the late afternoon and then spent the next two days smoking all the meat.

So it went that spring, I visited each of the summerhouses, hunted or fished then hauled the game to the house to smoke it. I found it necessary to sleep outside of the house as spring wore on since it became much too hot to sleep in the house. It was never really that hot outside, and it seemed to rain often, but the house would get quite close to hot, since it only had the one opening. Late in the spring Ganook came to visit again. He praised my industry, but felt I should take it easy for a while since I nearly had enough meat for the winter and it wasn't time for salmon. He reminded me of the need to pick and dry berries during the summer. I assured him I had not forgotten about the berries, although I still had a few dried ones left. He took the occasion of this visit to show me how the 'Lingit made cloth. It seems they shred cedar bark into a soft flexible state with a shredding device. Then it was woven into cloth. I didn't have the patience to do much weaving, but by the end of the summer I did manage to make one blanket-sized piece of cedar cloth. As my clothes wore out I replaced them with deerskin. I had learned how to make clothes from deerskin in Itsati, when I was still a boy. I didn't find myself missing cotton, since it was rather cool and wet that summer. He also showed me how the 'Lingit caught and extracted the oil from the oil fish. They caught them with dipnets made from sinew, although some were experimenting with a pole with iron tines at the end. Once caught, the fish were placed in a boat, half buried in the sand and allowed to ripen at least ten days. Then the boat was filled with water and hot stones from a fire near at hand. As the mixture was stirred, oil would rise to the top and I could scoop it with a spoon. I could further press the residue through a basket to extract the last bit of the oil. The fish could also be eaten raw, dried, or smoked and even used as a candle when dried. He showed me where he had hidden a boat for my use. Finally, he gave me a vile-looking substance that he promised would keep away the clouds of mosquitoes that plagued late spring and early summer whenever one was out of the breeze (there was a general northeast breeze). It was a rather greasy mess but actually worked. I didn't want to know what was in it. Once again I marveled at the way the nose adjusted to grave insult.

Ganook only stayed a few days, and then he was gone again. He had not heard from my brother yet, or anyone else for that matter. I tried relaxing a bit, but it was no good. I would think about Carlotta and begin to miss her too much. I felt myself slipping into depression, so I went back to work. I spent much of the rather mild and pleasant summer catching and preparing (smoking or rendering) fish and gathering and drying berries (Ganook had told me that the 'Lingit also preserved berries in the fish oil, but that idea didn't appeal to me). It was amazing how many berries there were.

It was while I was picking berries one day that I ran into one of the great bears. I had been working the bushes along the slopes of the western branch of the stream that emptied into the inlet. I was at least three li from the house and had been picking all day, filling the large basket, and carrying it back to the house three times already. It was getting late, but I was determined to fill it once more. I had been working my way back toward the house during the day. I had just dumped the contents of the small handbasket into the large basket when I heard a distinct huffing noise. I recognized that sound from my youth and reached down for the spear. I raised it up and looked toward the sound, just a little downstream from me, but across the creek. The huffing was soon accompanied with some grunting and I inched back into the trees dragging my berry basket with me. I continued to look toward the sound and finally a huge brown bear poked through the bushes greedily consuming the berries as he went. Once he reached the stream, he stopped for a drink and went back to eating his way along the bank. Suddenly he stopped, and raising himself on his hind legs to a height I never could have imagined, he began to sniff the air probingly. I did not want to have to kill such a magnificent animal, so I crouched down low hoping to cover my scent among the berries. He continued to sniff and was pointedly looking in my direction, but finally felt satisfied and went back to gorging on the berries. Occasionally he would glance back toward my hiding place. Eventually he moved back up the slope and his huffing and grunting grew fainter. I was in awe of the creature. It made me really hope my cousin Henry's spirit guide would stop his bear killing. Once I could hear no more, I ended the day's berry picking and dragged my basket back to the house.

Toward the end of summer, Ganook came again to make sure I followed the ritual when I caught my first salmon. He was surprised that I hadn't already started catching them. He told me the run had already begun in this area. In any case, I was to take the first one I caught, thank the salmon spirit, cook and eat the fish, then carefully return all the bones to the stream with the head facing upstream. This was essential or the salmon would stop coming back every year, and his people would starve. I assured him I would do everything just as he said, and even wrote down the prayer just as he said it in 'Lingit so that the salmon spirit would understand it. He was very pleased with me, and told me that I could get my first salmon in the stream by the third summerhouse, tomorrow. He then showed me how the weirs and traps for catching the salmon worked and helped me make leisters and gaff hooks for spearing them out of the streams. He left the next morning.

He was exactly right. That midday I was by the third summerhouse and saw the salmon coming upstream. I quickly speared one and followed all the ritual just as Ganook had taught me. After that I was very busy for many days catching and smoking salmon. I moved from one stream to another, catching, cleaning, hauling to the house and smoking. By the end of the runs I was exhausted. I estimated that I had enough food to feed four or five people all winter long. Still, I was not done and after a short rest I went back to berry picking. I would still see the occasional salmon in the streams, but I bothered them no longer. I found it best to keep away from the streams since the bears were still catching and eating the salmon with much gusto.

By early fall I felt there was no point in gathering any more food. I decided to cut firewood for the winter. I set to this task with my usual energy and soon had a mountain of it. Next I thought it would be a good idea to protect the wood from the rain, so scavenged enough planks from the other houses to build a sort of shed for the wood, near the house. It was not completely enclosed, but was open on the side toward the house. Next I built a tub out of wood and placed it in another larger shed with a hearth and a smoke hole. Finally I decided to build a sweathouse. I placed the new structures so that they would not be easily visible from the bay.

I was toying with the idea of building a separate smokehouse, but instead decided to wander around a bit and leave that project for the winter. On a whim, I climbed up the mountain between the first and second summerhouses. It was quite a climb, but the top was bare stone and I had quite a view from it, once it stopped raining. To the east there was a snowcapped ridge separating my peninsula from the mainland. To the northeast I could see some of the bay and part of the glacier. To the north was an area much like mine: cut off from the mainland by mountains, but not snow-capped from my vantage. To the west was the sea, huge mudflats on the near shore, a channel and a large island in the distance. To the south were more mudflats and several islands smaller than the one to the west. To the southeast was a larger and higher mountain than the one on which I was standing. It was really more of ridge. I decided I would have to climb it the next day.

I made an easy passage to the other mountain by going by way of the fourth summerhouse. This greatly reduced the climb and I reached the summit only to discover there was another summit a little farther to the east. Once I reached the latter, I could not be sure which was higher. From this latter vantage I could see up the Stikine River for quite a few li and I could see some boat activity on it. I could also see the southern shore of the river. It looked less mountainous and was obviously occupied from all the smoke rising from various areas. There didn't appear to be anyone on the small islands south of my position, but there were quite a few migratory birds in the marshes on their south sides. I could just make out some smoke coming from another island beyond them, but it was too far away to see clearly. I could also see some smoke coming from the large island to the west, but it seemed to be away from the near shore, either well inland or on its west coast. It was hard to tell from here if it was really an island or a very long peninsula. Not wishing to spend the night on the mountaintop, especially since it was raining again, I retraced my steps to the fourth summerhouse for the night. The next day I returned to the cedar house.

It was around this time that I started noticing the northern lights. I had, of course, seen them once in a while on my trek through the Tinneh lands, but I was usually too tired to pay them much attention. Now that I finally had some time on my hands, I could really enjoy them. I remembered that Grandfather had mentioned them in his book and wondered about them when I read those passages. Until this trip, however, I had never been far enough north to see them. They were remarkable and I would often look outside after dark on clear nights to see if they were there.

When I got back to the house, I once again had nothing to do, so I decided to draw a map of the area. That would keep me busy for a while, especially since the rain would interrupt me constantly. I climbed up to the snow line on the eastern massif and sketched in the northern shore from that vantage. I went on to the other two mountains again to get the eastern and southern shores and a crude outline of the islands. Next I went along the shore to get the smaller details and note the limits of beaches and marshes. All the tree cover and the rain made this a very difficult task, exactly what I needed. It was late fall by the time I finished. It had been raining almost continuously for several days and was beginning to get rather cold, especially at night. I was admiring the finished map when a visitor announced himself. It was Ganook. I went out to greet him and found he was not alone. Theodore was with him.

“Well, little brother, how do you like exile?” he grinned.

“Actually, it’s a little lonely. How is Carlotta?”

“She is well. In fact she will be joining you soon.”

“She is here? How did she get here? What about Hiacoomes? Don’t tell me you let that poor old man make the trip here?”

“Can’t you just ask one question at a time? She is near here, but obviously not here. She got here overland and by boat like most people. I am sorry to tell you that Hiacoomes died in the spring. He was not ill, just very old. I was with him at the time, and he insisted that I bring Carlotta to you after he died. Of course, I would not have let him make the trip here even if he insisted.”

“Hiacoomes is dead? Did he suffer much?”

“No it was a very peaceful death in his sleep. He knew it was his time and was quite content since he knew Carlotta was safe and would be protected.”

“If you brought Carlotta with you, where is she?”

“She insisted on staying in Stikine with Ganook’s wonderful wife, Kaatkwaaxsnei, to learn how the ‘Lingit women perform wifely tasks. She did not want to be unable to fulfill her duties because she was unfamiliar with the resources at hand around here. She is a very wise woman. You have found a real gem there, Karl.”

“I know. Still, I wish she had come with you. I miss her so much. I wouldn’t care if we had to struggle for a while trying to figure out how to do things.”

“Much as I am loath to give unsolicited advice, never argue with your wife about her domain. You have neither the knowledge nor the right. Let her do it her way. She’ll be here sooner than you might think. I just had to make sure you were still alive and in one piece before I brought her.”

“Were you followed?”

“Of course, but I lost them near the Salmon Ordu.”

“How?”

“Well, I logically took Carlotta to visit her new relatives during your exile. Then while we were there, two more relatives of ours, a man and a woman came to visit. They rather looked like us and somehow our followers followed them the next day as they went to visit my family. Then we slipped away. I darkened Carlotta’s skin as she said you had last summer, and then we turned her into a boy for the rest of the trip. She is still a boy in Stikine.”

“I can’t even imagine that.”

“After getting to know her, I can assure you she will not be a boy when you see her again.”

I invited them in and they both marveled at all the food I had stockpiled for the winter. I offered them whatever they wanted and Theodore accepted a sack of smoked salmon and a sack of dried berries very gratefully. I told him about the Khakhan’s suspicions about him, but he shrugged it off and told me not to worry about him. I asked after the rest of the family and he brought me up to date. My father was somewhere on the west coast

south of the Salmon Ordu. Mathilde and the children were well and still at the Panther Ordu. Aspenquid was still on campaign in the Green Mist and in fine shape so far. Sarah, Tepeyolotl and all their children were well. He had run into them in the lands of the Totonaca. Their eldest, Teypachtli, will soon go on campaign in the Clouds. Ignace and Goa were well also; he had come across them in the lands of the Ben Zah. Ignace had been made a minor official there. His son John was assisting him; his son Theodore was with the Monkey Ordu somewhere southwest of Purepecha lands. Paula was married to a Putun Maya, of all things. He couldn't imagine where she met him, but Ignace was not pleased about it and wouldn't even mention his name. The youngest, Leo, was in the Pelican Ordu now; he was training to be a cannoneer. Sealth and Kudeitsaakw were expected in Stikine soon with their three children. Taiwit was quite ill, but Simahi was taking good care of him.

I pointed out he had neglected to mention his family. He chuckled, and told me that Mahwissa and the children were well and waiting for him with some of our relatives (and his and Carlotta's stand-ins) near the Salmon Ordu. I pressed him that he had never told me much about his children. He shrugged and told me that they were still young. Sarah was twelve and very much the dreamer like her mother. John was nine and had shown some interest in healing. Paula was only six and had shown interest in reading. She seemed quite bright and he hoped to get her back to Cuauhnahuac where she could read all of Grandfather's books.

I then told him what I had learned about our Siksika relatives from Kiskap and my chance encounter with our cousin 'Enri. He was amazed that I had come upon him. He had heard about Leo, of course, but had thought he had been killed by a bear by now. He would tell the Siksika relatives about 'Enri and urge them to seek him out and bring him into the family sphere if at all possible. I could not get anything about his apparent clandestine activities out of him. He laughed it off and said I had an overactive imagination. I couldn't even get a straight answer out of him as to for whom this house was originally intended. He told me it was just in case it was needed by someone and I happened to be the first one who needed it.

I showed them my map of the area and told them about the various places and my "adventures." Ganook was pleased by the bear story, but little else surprised him, except my failure to adorn anything. He wondered if I was not artistically inclined. Theodore, remembering my adventures in the Texcoco calmecac, found that very funny. I had to admit, that my artistic abilities had never been marked by anyone. Ganook thought that was most unfortunate, and genuinely pitied me. He told me that so far, none of his people had any idea that I was here, so I had done a good job of keeping a low profile. He was also quite happy that the mask had kept away any harm. I thanked him again for all his help.

I showed them my new outbuildings. Both were impressed. Theodore wanted to try out the bathhouse immediately. Ganook was curious about the sweat lodge. I decided to join Ganook in the sweat lodge so I could show him the Ani Yun'-wiya way and he very much enjoyed it, as did I. Theodore also praised the bathhouse. I mentioned my plan to build a smokehouse that winter. Ganook thought it a rather odd idea, but Theodore could see my point immediately, since the house was still smoky.

The next day they left to go back and get Carlotta. I scurried around getting everything cleaned up. I noticed that the planks that formed the walls of the house could be easily removed, so I removed some of them on opposite sides of the house to blow out the still-noticeable smoke. It was actually rather dark in the house since the only openings were the door and the smoke hole. I wondered if I could cut windows into the planks and perhaps cover them with shutters. I began this project right away and was done by the next day. Since it was just possible that my brother would return that evening, I thoroughly washed myself in the bathhouse and all my clothes in the stream. I was all ready and quite excited.

That evening I prepared a meal large enough for four, and while it was cooking, I kept wandering to the door to look up the stream. Finally, near dusk I saw three figures emerge from the trees onto the sandy beach. One was definitely a woman. I could wait no longer. I took the food off the fire and ran to meet her. As soon as she saw me, she ran to meet me. We were still embracing and separating to look at each other and embracing again while Theodore and Ganook passed by and continued on to the house. I excitedly wanted to show Carlotta everything, and then I remembered Hiacoomes and consoled her on his loss. In retrospect, I must have seemed mad, flitting around everywhere, unable to keep any thought for more than a moment. Finally, Carlotta took my hand and led me into the house to eat. It had been almost a year since I had seen her, and if possible I loved her

even more. She easily took over the entertainment of our guests and praised everything I had done. She was particularly pleased with the windows but actually liked the lingering smoky smell of the house. Ganook was rather puzzled by the windows, but after examining them decided they were an interesting innovation.

That night Theodore and Ganook insisted on spending the night under the stars up near the stream. I couldn't have been more grateful, and Carlotta did not try to dissuade them. I remember every moment of that night as if it were yesterday. I always will.

Theodore and Ganook only stayed until midday the next day; then they left. Ganook promised to look in on us again in the spring and Theodore promised to write to Ganook so he could tell us what was going on. He told me that Ganook would take him to Kaachxana-aakw and from there he would work his way back to his family. I noticed he was dressed like a 'Lingit and he confirmed that he was traveling in disguise. Ganook explained that his village assumed he was taking Theodore and his "nephew" to Kaachxana-aakw. The people there would see two 'Lingit arrive and one go one back north and the other south. No one would mark the event. That way we could continue undisturbed. Still we must remain vigilant, and if we saw a boat in the bay, we must disappear into the woods at once.

We embraced them both, then stood with our arms around each other and watched until they disappeared from view up the stream. We returned to getting reacquainted.

Before long the first snow fell. It was heavy and very wet. It was just beginning to melt when a heavier snow fell. Carlotta set to work at wifely tasks while I worked on the smokehouse. I picked a house near ours, but downwind. It did not have to be as free of draughts as ours, but did need to be fairly solid. It took quite a while to fix it up. Meanwhile, Carlotta had made blankets, clothes, baskets, and any number of small things to make life easier that hadn't even occurred to me. I had never seen quite so much snow in a winter before, and one time when it seemed clear outside, it proved to be bitter cold with a brutal northeast wind howling, but it wouldn't have bothered me if there had been twice as much snow or an even colder wind. It was the most wonderful winter I had ever had.

25

Exile and Return, 99–104 K

(SE AK to NW IO, 1467–72)

By the time Ganook came to visit the next spring, Carlotta and I were so attuned to each other, that we would anticipate what the other needed and finish each other's sentences. It was rather strange but wonderful. I had finished the smokehouse and moved all the drying racks into it. Ganook was pleased to see that we had prospered the past winter and suggested that I not catch quite so much game this year, since I still had so much. I asked if he knew of any family that might need some extra food, but he explained that there was always an abundance of food among the 'Lingit—no one ever went hungry. I was able to get him to take some of the fish oil with him since we did not really use it very much and his people never got enough of it. He told me that Theodore had written that the Khakhan's agents had followed my father all the way down to Raven Bay thinking he was going to visit me. Instead he had led them all the way around the bay looking for a mysterious reed that did not exist. He would continue to wander around far to the south until they gave up on him. The ones watching Theodore and Carlotta's stand-ins had not noticed his return and followed him when he took Carlotta's stand-in with him to visit Mahwissa and the children. He was sure they would soon conclude that I had indeed gone to the old land and give up the surveillance. Carlotta's stand-in would stay with him until they did give up. He had no news from anyone else since he had spent the winter with his family visiting my mother's relatives. Only he, my father, and Ganook and his wife knew where we were.

The next few years flew by. Carlotta and I were so happy together, we didn't even mind that no children came. Ganook was puzzled about it, but said his yeks could find nothing wrong with either of us. He was certain there was no evil spirit thwarting things, but he would continue to look into it. Carlotta was afraid I would be upset, but once she realized I really didn't care she was greatly relieved. If anything, the absence of children enabled us to concentrate completely on each other and we became extremely close—perhaps too close.

Ganook would visit us a few times each year and bring any news from my brother. Theodore did not come nor did my father. The second year of my “exile” my brother sent word that my cousin George the Khan of Anahuac and his wife Chabi had had a son. He was named John. Later that year he sent word that cousin George had died of a strange ailment and his infant son John was now Khan with Chabi as regent. My cousin Theodore was very protective of the boy and was looking out for him as was my old friend Acapipioiltzin who was the boy’s cousin. It was obvious to me the Khakhan had waited until his grandson was born before moving against George. The strange ailment was probably a strange poison. He had been right; he had far better agents than did George. I just hoped he would not harm cousin Theodore also. I had to admit it was the most prudent way of removing a potential rival and almost bloodless. But I couldn’t believe the people of Anahuac accepted a woman as regent—in the Blue Sky that might work, but never in Anahuac. There had to be some official fiction to smooth that over.

During the late spring of the fourth year, Carlotta and I were smoking some game when I heard a shout and looking out of the smokehouse saw a large boat pulling into our bay. We slipped out of the back of the house, crept into the woods behind the houses, and climbed up the slope to our vantage point. It was a place where there was a small cliff from which one could see the settlement, but could not be seen. The boat pulled into the beach in front of the houses. The men on board were mostly from the south, very likely soldiers from the Salmon Ordu on patrol. There was a single ‘Lingit with them. He went ahead and as he approached our house suddenly stopped and ran back to the boat urging the men back aboard. I could see that the commander was somewhat reluctant, really wanting to investigate the smoke from the smokehouse, but finally they put back out to sea and turned back up and out of the bay. I assumed the man had seen the mask and fled the house. The commander probably thought the man was a fool, but the standing order in the army is to respect the beliefs of our allies, so he had to withdraw. This incident made us a bit nervous and we both found ourselves looking up the inlet and up the creek frequently. When we recounted the incident to Ganook on his next visit, he was very pleased that his mask had done its job, and assured us we need not concern ourselves.

There were no other “visitors” (except Ganook, of course) during the rest of my exile. In the fall of the fifth year, I decided we might as well remain another year. We had a great deal of smoked fish and meat and dried berries, and my exile did actually begin in the middle of winter, so it seemed prudent not to show up in the Khakhanate too soon. I sent my brother word that I wanted to stay an extra year. Eventually he wrote back that he thought it was a good idea. He felt it would really throw off the Khakhan, since he would be expecting me back next year. He promised to come to get me in the spring of the following year. He would be in touch to advise me just when he would come. Actually, we were in no hurry to leave. We were having a wonderful time in “exile.” It was true that the weather was rarely as warm as we liked (the winters lasted almost half the year), and all the rain and snow were growing tiresome, as were the disconcertingly long days around the summer solstice and the irritatingly short ones around the winter solstice. But when it did clear up, it was beautiful, and it could get quite warm in the summer, although never for long, and there was an unquestioned abundance of food. Also, any night we cared to look we would be treated to the often spectacular display of the northern lights. Any night that was clear, we would take a look—especially during the long winter nights. They were usually blue and yellow, but sometimes they would be green, white, pink, and even red. Their shape was often snaking ribbons, but could also be balls and streaks. The Dzitsiistas said that they predicted bad weather, but I never did see a connection.

I stockpiled quite a bit of the smoked salmon and dried berries over the next year with a view of trading them in the south when we returned. I calculated that this would certainly pay our way all the way back to Anahuac, where I decided I wanted to go. Carlotta was excited about visiting Anahuac and looked forward to our journey. We were quite comfortable that last winter since we only ventured out to get wood or use the outbuildings. I remember wondering if someone else would be using the house after we left.

As soon as we could determine that last spring had arrived, we busily got everything packed up to go. I also made some travois so we could carry it all. We had just gotten everything ready when Theodore and Ganook arrived. They were pleased to see that everything was ready. They spent the night and Theodore brought me up to date on the family. My father was somewhere in Anahuac. Aspenquid had returned from campaign as a jagun commander and had decided to remain in the army. He, Mathilde, and the children were moving to the Pelican

Ordu where he would remain for a few years before going on campaign again. Sarah and Tepeyolotl were well and trading in the Khanate of the Clouds. Teypachtli was still on campaign there but should be finishing soon and return with them. Ignace had left the service of the Khanate and was now running a sort of inn in the city of Cholula. As to Ignace's children, John went on another campaign, as did Theodore. Leo was badly injured in an accident with cannon and had died last summer. My brother had run into the "prodigal" Paula and met her fine husband, Ek Muyal. He very much liked him and was further convinced that Ignace was being ridiculous. My brother Sealth and his family were all well and still didn't know that we were here. My brother Taiwit, he was sorry to report, died this past winter, and Simahi was inconsolable, although Mathilde was trying.

Again I had to prod him about his family and he told me they were well and waiting for him in Cuauhnahuac. Again I pressed him about the children and he reported that Sarah had married a young man from Cuauhnahuac named Ghazan, whose great-grandfather had been one of the original Mongols who came from the old land with our grandfather. John was learning to be a healer and he had left him with a load of work. Paula was reading her way through Grandfather's library, much as I had. Our Siksika relatives had managed to find 'Enri and at least partially bring him into the family circle. He did stop his war on the great bear at the urging of his spirit guide. It had been very difficult for him since it had been the focus of his life for so long. He wandered around aimlessly for a while, then found his way to Kuriltaibalikh and our cousin Kiskap. The latter took him under his wing and brought him to see the other relatives. He had since married and settled down in Kuriltaibalikh next to Kiskap. I asked about my mother's relatives, but he said I could find out for myself when I finally met them on my return.

I asked after cousin Theodore and was relieved to hear that he was well and still watching over his nephew John like a mother bear over her cub. Chabi was happy to let him, since she was more interested in running the Khanate than bothering with a small boy. Fortunately, she was grudgingly accepting some advice from Nezahualcoyotl. The latter had probably kept her from running the Khanate into the ground. He was not sure what the Khakhan was up to but planned to find out. I urged him to be careful and he laughed, as usual.

The next morning we rose early, ate a light meal, loaded up the travois, took a last look around, and set off south up the stream toward the Stikine River. The walk was beautiful with all the wildflowers in the clearings and all the blossoms on the berry bushes. It actually didn't rain during this last walk, and the air was fresh with a gentle southwest breeze. I actually regretted leaving. We arrived at the river in the midafternoon and loaded up the large boat Ganook and Theodore had left there. We set off down the river around the north side of an island in the middle of the river and through a bewildering maze of channels among the mudflats finally emerging near an island south of the large island west of my peninsula, late in the afternoon. There one of the very large, four-masted Koryo ships was waiting at anchor, and we were taken aboard with all our goods. We settled on our fare and were shown our spot on the lower deck. Ganook tied his boat to the ship with a long rope. The ship weighed anchor and started south. I asked Theodore how he knew the ship would be waiting here for us. He shrugged and admitted that he had sent a message to a friend in Sitka, where the Koryo ships always stop, and asked him to pay the captain to wait for us here until dusk today. Sitka was another 'Lingit village on an island to the west. During the long dusk that prevails here at this time of year, we arrived at Kaachxana-aakw and dropped anchor again. We stayed aboard at Theodore's request and Ganook bid us all farewell and quietly slipped into his boat and paddled ashore for the night.

The ship left the next morning (after the very short night) and continued south stopping occasionally at very large villages. I noticed no passengers got on or off along this way, but goods were exchanged, mostly fur for silk. The coast was quite striking from the vantage of the boat. Huge snow-capped mountains seem to rise right out of the sea all along the coast. The trees would begin right at the ocean and climb partway up the mountains, then give way to rock and ice. Sometimes there would be a pebble beach along the shore. Even the offshore islands seemed to be mountainous, but not as high, and many of them were completely covered with trees. In some areas a mist clung to the shore, partly or completely hiding it. At times we could see bears along the shore, we could almost always see the white-headed eagle, and once in a while we could just make out one of the mountain goats way up on the rocky slopes of the mountains. The sea was filled with the colorful boats of the various people of the coast, trading, hunting sea animals, fishing, or even traveling. All would wave and shout greetings to our boat as we glided by them on stiff sails, made of bamboo battens with matting stretched

between them. The large ship moved gracefully and quickly through the channels easily outpacing all other craft. We also came upon whales, sea otters, and seals along the way.

We soon passed through 'Lingit lands and came to the areas of the Xa'ida and the Tsimshian. The former lived on islands well offshore. We stopped at a village of theirs called Kayung, near the north end of a large island at the mouth of a river. They looked much like the 'Lingit, and spoke a vaguely similar language. The latter lived along the Tsimshian River on the mainland. We stopped at a village named Kitwilksheba north of the river. They reminded me of 'Lingit in looks and housing, but their language was quite different. Both people used the large carved poles—just like the 'Lingit.

We bypassed a people called the Bi' Ixula, who lived just south of the Tsimshian, but stopped at a village called Kwakwakas belonging to the Kwakiutl, their neighbors to the south, with whom they had a similar language. They were shorter than the northern tribes, but from the looks of things they had also adopted the prevailing housing and customs along the coast. I had to wonder who started it all. Theodore said these latter people spoke a language vaguely like that of my mother's first husband's people, the Salst. I had learned that language as a child, but had not used it in a long time and frankly, could detect no resemblance at all. But, I was hardly an expert and Theodore had actually spent time among them. The next tribe we encountered was the Catlo'ltx. They lived along much of the east coast of a very large island as well as the smaller islands to the east of it. They were tall like the northern tribes, but darker more like the Salst. I could detect some similar words between these people and the Salst. Next we encountered the Halkome'lem, yet another tribe much like the Salst in language and appearance, but also using the plank houses and the carved poles.

Finally, we reached Dsidsila'letc, a bustling town in the lands of the Coastal Salst (related to the Mountain Salst to the east) near the mouth of a river called the Duwamish. This was a town that had developed from a small Salst village into a major port town. There was a large Koryo settlement with their distinct houses, adjacent to the spreading town, with mostly large plank houses, but also some of the conical hide tents and even a few yurts. There was a large army camp just south of the town, the relocated Salmon Ordu. Once it dropped anchor, the ship was met by officials of the Khakhanate who inspected the cargo and the passengers. Most of the other passengers were Koryo immigrants. They were waved through without comment. When the official, a Hotcangara (of all things) named Waywee Kayme, came to our group, he stopped and smirked.

"Well, I was expecting you last year. I suppose you enjoyed Koryo so much you couldn't tear yourself away. I didn't realize your wife accompanied you in exile, or did your brother bring her to meet you."

"Actually they call it Choson now," I replied. "And my brother did bring my wife to meet me. Thank you for your interest."

"Where will you be going?" The smirk faded.

"To Cuauhnahuac."

"Have a pleasant journey." He coldly dismissed us.

Theodore was very pleased with my answers. He was quite sure the Khakhan knew I had not gone to Koryo, but after that exchange was duly passed on, he would not be so certain. It was always best to keep potential enemies confused, he assured me. I asked if he still thought the Khakhan considered me an enemy. He wasn't sure, but felt it was prudent to assume he did. I was rather sorry to hear that. I didn't particularly wish to look over my shoulder all the way through the Blue Sky. We debarked and were met by Sealth and his family. Kudeitsaakw made a big fuss over me and introduced me to the children, Paula (age seventeen), Taiwit (fifteen) and Skolaskin (twelve). We went home with them since they now lived in the town in one of the plank houses. The house was similar in appearance to our 'Lingit house only on the outside, although even there the house was rectangular and sited parallel to the river, and the oval door (on a smaller side) faced downstream. Inside the house had a plank floor, but it was not fitted like ours had been, and there was no recessed area in the middle, but rather built up benches around the hearth. The roof was made of planks and slanted. Other houses in the town had different-shaped roofs and some had porches built on the front of the houses.

Once we were alone with our hosts, we told them where we had actually been and about all Ganook's help. They were amazed that we had pulled it off. Kudeitsaakw couldn't believe her brother and his wife managed to keep it secret from them all these years, especially since they visited with them almost every year. We prevailed on them not to mention it to anyone.

We spent a few days with them while Theodore went on ahead, and then went with them to visit some of our other relatives in the area. I finally got to meet some of my mother's relatives. I always thought it odd that Grandfather only mentioned three of my other grandfather's children and, in fact, barely mentioned him after their assignments separated them. Perhaps he wasn't that much of a friend. In any case, it seemed the legendary Pdraig had seven children. Four (Cloe, Moira, Philippe, and Karl) had died as children. Of those that reached maturity, the eldest, Pierre, had settled in the east, rising to tumen commander during several tours of duty in the Green Mist. He and his wife had no children (small wonder since he was never home). The second child was Nial; my grandfather had mentioned that he had been sent to rescue our family during the Zhen plague. He had settled near the old site of the Salmon Ordu and had died the year I was born. He had two surviving children, Pdraig and Mathilde, both of whom lived near enough to visit. Pdraig had been in the Salmon Ordu for a while and had done a tour in the Green Mist, rising to the rank of minghan commander, but was now retired and running a yam east of the town. He was quite old and in poor health and had recently lost his wife, a Salst. He had four living children, Pierre, Cloe, Philippe, and Moira. The two sons were in the east, Cloe had never married and was still with her father, Moira had married a Salst and lived in a nearby village. She came by to visit, bringing along her young child. Cloe was a handsome woman of about forty years. I was surprised she never married, but it was none of my business. Mathilde had married a Nimipu and we visited them as we went east. The last of the elder Pdraig's children was, of course, my mother.

My cousin Pdraig remembered my mother as his favorite aunt, happy, laughing all the time, with a wonderful sense of humor and something of a tease. She was only a little older than he, and had taught him to read and write. She and her first husband Skolaskin had been so in love and so happy together it made him want to get married also. When Skolaskin died she changed so abruptly, he couldn't bear to see her. He was relieved when my father came and they decided to keep each other company since they were friends, rather than pine away alone. He could never bring himself to visit Cuauhnahuac since my mother had changed so much. My father had always been rather quiet and cold, so he was no draw either. Still, he regretted that he had been unable to comfort her in her loss and was sorry he had not forced himself to visit us while she was still alive. I was glad someone remembered my mother that way, but I couldn't imagine it, myself.

My cousin Mathilde lived in a rather large Nimipu village near the junction of the Nimipu and the Kimooenim rivers. She confirmed my recollection that Grandfather had visited this town on his first expedition to the west. She was seventy and had lost her husband some years before. She had five children but only three were still alive. She was living with the eldest, Paula, named after my mother, also her favorite aunt. Her son, Hallalhotsoot, had been a jagun commander in the Antelope Ordu. He had retired a few years ago and now ran a yam near the Ordu. The youngest, Miriam, was married and lived in a nearby village. She stopped by to visit before we left. She had three grown children who had all moved away from home and now lived in the east. Both daughters were quite striking, tall and slim and just a shade lighter than the dark Nimipu. They were all very pleasant and friendly people. Paula's husband was back from campaign, but had to train recruits for a year before he could come home again. Miriam's husband was away on a hunting expedition. He had never gone on campaign.

It had been nice to visit these relatives I had never met before. They welcomed Carlotta and me into the family as if we had been coming to see them for years. I enjoyed hearing their stories of my other grandparents, Pdraig and Mathilde. He was apparently a very tender, loving man, who doted on his children and grandchildren. She was a charming, stunning woman who captivated everyone who met her. It was strange that they only had ten living descendants while my other grandparents had at least fifty. It made me wish I could have known them all, especially my mother the way they remembered her.

Sealth and his family returned home while we continued east along the yam system with no more stops until we reached Sharbalikh. There I looked up Atot'ain and his family. He had already left for the north, but we had a nice visit with Wunoantome and the boys. They were delighted that I had made it back and that I had thought to

stop by. While there, I took Carlotta to see Sakcewescam and all his dogs. He, too, was pleased that I had thought to look him up. The dogs were loud and quarrelsome as usual. Carlotta couldn't imagine putting up with all the noise.

It was late summer by the time we reached Khartsgaibalikh. I went to call on cousin George. He and Ba-ahnoce were pleasantly surprised to see us. Theodore had stopped by with Carlotta on their way west, so they were pleased to renew her acquaintance as well. I tried to return the spear he gave me since I hadn't needed it, but he wouldn't even consider taking it back. I mentioned meeting my cousin 'Enri while on my trek and he admitted that Theodore had already told him about it. He mentioned that he had known of Kiskap for years, but hadn't realized he was vaguely related. I asked about my uncle Ignace's children since it just occurred to me that they had been sent to Khartsgaibalikh when they were children and had returned and left again never to return long before I was born.

He was lost in thought for a while, and then told me about them. There were four of them, Simon, Ruth, Peter, and Paulina. They were about a year apart in age. They had come as children to the Hawk Ordu to stay with his grandfather's family before he was born. They were well liked by all and when they returned over the years he had come to know them. They had all died over the years, but had lived full lives. Simon had become a smith and had served in that capacity with the Alligator Ordu. He had married a Timacua woman and they had three children that survived childhood. All of them still lived among the Timacua. Ruth had married an Anishinabe and moved east to live in his village. They had two children who still lived in the village. It is a large one near the west coast of Gichigami Lake. Peter had joined the Ordu and served variously in it for many years. He died of wounds in the Green Mist when he was near retirement. He had never married, but knowing him, had probably left issue all over the Khakhanate. Paulina married a young man in the Hawk Ordu. He left the army after a tour in the Green Mist and they settled down in his home village. He was a member of the tribe called Tsoyaha. They had four children, all of whom still live there. He was pleased that I had brought them up, he hadn't thought of them in years, and it had brought back a flood of pleasant memories.

I remember thinking that this was one of the legacies of the Mongols. Families became scattered as many young men and women moved away and some people never met many of their relatives. It would happen before the Mongols when a person was captured and adopted into a new tribe, but it was rarely by choice the way it was now. I wondered if all the freedom of movement had somehow undermined the cohesive family unit. I also wondered if that was necessarily a bad thing. I suspect all this wondering was the reason I never amounted to anything. I suspect my grandfather did very little wondering.

I was at the point where I had to decide whether to visit or bypass Khanbalikh. I put off the decision until I was at the point where the trunk road to the capital turned east and the smaller trade trail crossed the Mongol River. Carlotta had already told me the decision was mine and not hers. At the last moment I turned east. I decided it was best to visit the city openly and if the Khakhan had anything to say to me, he could easily do so, and if not I could continue home without looking over my shoulder. I hoped I was not being rash.

It was already fall when we reached Khanbalikh. We arrived in the late afternoon and were saluted by the sentries at the entrance to the city. We rode slowly weaving our way around all the other traffic on the road. Soon the Khakhan's compound was visible in the distance looming above the sea of tents and yurts. I knew the inns were on the south side of town near the bridge across the Mongol, so we soon turned aside on one of the side streets and made our way to the main south road. We soon came to the inns, little more than bunches of yurts and tents with large corrals. We had to go to a few of them before we found one with a tent we could use by ourselves. It was rather costly but a few dried salmon easily covered it. I had never spent a night in one of the tents before, so it was fun looking over everything and figuring out how it worked. An attendant came by to show us how the smoke hole worked should we wish to have a fire. I enjoyed learning how it worked, but it wasn't quite cold enough for a fire and since we ate with the rest of the guests, we didn't need one to cook either.

The other guests were mostly merchants, but there were also some who had come to see the Khakhan. He was supposed to be available to anyone who asked to see him, but in practice he would have them speak to his younger brother, Orduja. From all accounts Orduja was very gracious and conscientious. No one seemed to

mind seeing him instead of the Khakhan. I had never heard of him, but it seemed he was a cripple. He had been injured in an accident and was unable to walk. Instead of becoming bitter or suicidal he had become patient and compassionate. I supposed since he was a cripple, he was not seen by his brother as a potential rival.

The next morning we rose early and were getting ready to leave when there was a call at the entrance to our tent. I opened the flap to reveal one of the Khakhan's private guards or Kashik (they all wore black). He saluted me and told me that the Khakhan wished me to be his guest for a few days until he could see me. Knowing there was really no option involved, I thanked him and told him we would be ready as soon as we got our horses. He said that he had already taken the liberty to get horses for us and if we were ready, he would be honored to show us to our quarters. We gathered up our things and put them on the packhorses, then mounted up and followed the man back toward the Khakhan's compound.

He led us all the way to the first circle of yurts below the compound. This yurt was somewhat larger than the one I had stayed in before, but otherwise the same. Carlotta had never been in a yurt before, so she enjoyed herself looking all around it. We finally settled into one of the curtained-off sections, and then I took Carlotta out to see the compound. We walked all the way around it, since one was not allowed in it without invitation. Then we wandered about the town a bit so Carlotta could get the flavor of the city. We both enjoyed walking around and watching all the activity. We returned in the evening and a guard brought us our evening meal. I decided to see if there was anything interesting to read on the bookshelf. There were many of the same books that were in the other yurt, but there were also a few different ones. One was a book describing many of the plants in the Khakhanate and giving their names in several languages. Carlotta enjoyed that book. Other books did the same with animals and fish. There was a book about the sea and the currents and prevailing winds. It was apparently a translation of a Koryo book written by one of the Koryo immigrants. There was a book on the laws of the Khakhanate and another book claiming to be a history of the Khakhanate. It began with the unification of the Mongols by the great Chingis. It did seem to stick with the facts as I knew them, but tracing our Khakhanate back to anyone but Kaidu was ridiculous. They made the transition by having the unfortunate Toghon Temur being deposed in favor of Kaidu because he retreated from the lands of the Hanjen. I didn't understand the need for this forced continuity, but otherwise it wasn't a bad book and I enjoyed reading it over the next few days.

In the morning we were served breakfast and after eating went out again. I decided to sell some of my salmon stores for something more convenient to transport. I was able to exchange some for silk and some for gold coins. The Khakhan had recently decided to adapt the Hanjen system of coinage and it was gradually becoming more acceptable. The coins were all about the same size and were identically marked with the name of the Khakhan on one side and a depiction of the fifteen horsetails on the reverse. They were made of gold, silver or bronze. The value was set at twenty bronze to one silver and twenty silver to one gold. There must have been a recent immigrant from the Koryo mint.

We continued to wait for a several days, passing the time reading, walking around the city, and even taking rides out of the city to the north and east. It was still fairly mild, and we encountered quite a few burned-out areas on the plain, but we enjoyed the rides very much. I was beginning to wonder if the Khakhan planned to keep us here until winter. Then one evening just after we had eaten, a guard arrived to take me to him.

26

Return to Cuauhnahuac 104–5 K

(NW IO to Cuernavaca, MX, 1472–3)

Nothing had changed in six years; the routine was just the same. Some of the guards' faces were different, but the old Mongol was still there and once again ushered me into the same room set with two chairs and two cups of kumis. I remained standing until the Khakhan entered the room. He was still dressed simply and still had that intense, probing look. He waved off my bow and urged me to sit down, while he took his seat.

“I'm glad you came here. It shows me you have no reason to think I mean you ill. It might show you have a death wish, but I know you well enough to doubt that. I trust your 'exile' was pleasant. I will not put you on the spot by asking details. I know you left the Khanate northwest of Kuriltaibalikh and were confirmed as heading

north and west after that, but then you disappeared, only to reappear on a Koryo ship heading south along our northwest coast six and a half years later. There was a report of a deserted village north of the Stikine River that had smoke coming from one of its houses, but local customs prevented its thorough investigation. In any case, you were not seen in the Khanate for five years as ordered, so you have no reason to think I mean you any ill.”

“Thank you, sire.”

“Is there any particular reason you stayed away six years instead of five?”

“It was just more convenient, sire.”

“I know your wife joined you, I don’t know how or when, but I know that she disappeared somewhere among your relatives the year after you left. I’m sure your brother had something to do with that. No need to say anything—since you were just married, I’m glad she joined you.”

“Thank you, sire.”

“I assume you have heard about the premature demise of your esteemed cousin, Khan George?”

“Yes, that was most unfortunate.”

“Hardly, but it was polite of you to say so. As you can see, I indirectly took your advice, for it was quite sound advice, and I appreciate it.”

“Thank you, sire.”

“Does your loyalty to your late cousin now fall on my grandson?”

“It does, sire.”

“Even though the child may not actually be related to you?”

“I have no reason to doubt your daughter’s virtue, sire.”

“Of course, you don’t. You don’t know her. I do know her and the only thing I’m certain of is that the boy is related to me.”

“That is why some of the tribes believe in matrilineal succession.”

“Yes. In some cases it makes a lot of sense. Does knowing that the boy may well not be George’s undermine your loyalty?”

“No, sire. Considering George’s lack of virtue, that would probably be just as well.”

“The continuity of the regime is more important to you than its, shall we say, legitimacy?”

“As long as the boy is accepted in Anahuac as George’s heir, he is acceptable to me.”

“Interesting gauge. Now tell me, do you think your cousin Theodore has any designs on his nephew’s title?”

“Absolutely not! He used to pray every day for his brother, so that he would never have to be Khan.”

“Excellent. That confirms my reports on him. My daughter doesn’t seem to care for him, but I suspect that’s because he doesn’t bow and scrape to her satisfaction. I regret saddling Anahuac with that harridan, but it is preferable to leaving that patricidal miscreant unpunished. As soon as John is about fifteen, I will end her regency.”

“I heard she has been taking the advice of Nezahualcoyotl. That should hold her in good stead.”

“Actually, I told her that if she did not run everything by him, I would appoint him regent instead of her.”

“I see. How did you get the people of Anahuac to accept a woman as regent?”

“It’s really quite simple. Nezahualcoyotl is thought to be the regent and she is thought to be a figurehead to honor me. All decisions are apparently made by him.”

“I was wondering how that worked. A very wise arrangement.”

“So, you seem to agree with my confidence in him.”

“Indeed. He is a fine man with a good head and much common sense.”

“Well, his family has a history remarkably free of treachery for Anahuac. I suspect they would have been wiped out long ago had we not intruded ourselves on their affairs. He does have the odd habit of wandering about in disguise to mingle with all sorts of riffraff and find out what they are thinking.”

“I didn’t know he did that.”

“I’m not surprised; it took my spies a few years to discover it. It seems rather eccentric, though. What do you think?”

“While it is unusual, it is probably a good way to discover unrest and nip any potential problem in the bud.”

“That’s why I have spies. I pay them to keep me informed. It’s rather like an Ordu commander scouting.”

“He is very astute and perhaps trusts his own observation more than another’s.”

“The biggest drawback of using spies is getting filtered information. That’s why I employ several spies who work independently and are not aware of each other’s existence. I suppose it might be interpreted to show his lack of guile.”

“He always seemed straightforward to me, with no hidden agenda. Cousin Theodore is like him in that way, but he is more gullible.”

“By all accounts he has been more than a father to young John. But after dealing with his brother, who never met a truth he couldn’t bend, I have been keeping a close eye on him.”

“If there is anyone in Anahuac you can trust, it is he.”

“And what about you? Can I trust you?”

“I wish no part in intrigue. I only want to live in peace away from all contention, perhaps as a merchant.”

“You will never be a merchant, at least not a successful one. You should return to the army. There you are respected and would likely be made a tumen commander on campaign.”

“Campaigns are for the young men and the grizzled veterans. The rest of us are done with it.”

“You know the same thing happened to my uncle, Argun. He returned one day from campaign and refused to go again. He moved away from Khanbalikh and lived simply out on the plain raising a herd of goats of all things. He had been fearless in battle and had personally led charges and ambushes when he was on campaign. It was a shame, he really wasn’t very good with goats, but he was very happy. I hope you find happiness.”

“Thank you, sire.”

“One last word of advice. Since you are returning to Anahuac, be careful of my daughter. She has always been somewhat degenerate and with her husband safely cremated, she now openly satisfies her whims as they occur. Try to avoid her if you can; she may be able to do you harm before I can intervene to save you. I would regret that very much.”

“Thank you for your concern and advice, sire. I will avoid her at all costs if you think that best.”

“I do. Should you ever change your mind and wish to go on campaign in the Green Mist, let me know.”

“I will, sire.”

“You may go now.” He waved me off.

I was much relieved as I returned to the yurt and Carlotta was even more relieved when she saw me, for she had feared the worst. I told her about my interview and she smiled ruefully and told me that he was right about my not making a good merchant, because I was too fair. Hiacoomes was the same way. He barely survived as a merchant, but he very much enjoyed the life. Perhaps I would also, but she wasn’t so sure. I had to admit I

hadn't really thought the idea through. I really wasn't sure what I wanted to do, but whatever it was I wanted her with me. She jumped into my arms and squeezed me to second that idea.

The following morning we rose early, got everything ready, ate the light breakfast waiting for us, loaded up the horses, and rode down the south road out of the capital. We crossed the bridge over the Mongol River, now shallow, sluggish and muddy. We regained the plain on the far side after passing through the already harvested fields of centli on the river bottom, and climbing back up to the plateau. There were still some dry grasses on the plain, but mostly we came across burned stubble from the summer wildfires. We were on another trade route that led more directly to the site of the Pelican Ordu rather than the trunk road which followed the Mongol River all the way to Murenbalikh, before turning south. The yams were smaller along this road, but were still at the usual intervals, and we generally had comfortable quarters, especially once we reached the Chahiksichahiks towns. Occasionally one of the merchants we encountered would look at Carlotta as if trying to place her, but would usually give up. It had been many years since any of them had seen her and then it was probably only fleetingly, since she was never involved in the trading. No one on this road seemed to recognize me. I didn't mind at all.

It was early winter when we reached the Ishak River. We turned southeast to follow its course. Five days later, we reached the yam where I had met the Mongol, Nambi, so long ago. I asked about him, but the new keeper didn't know him. He had taken over from a Dinne about three years before. The next day we arrived at the Pelican Ordu in the early afternoon. It was not far from where it had been when I first visited it some twenty years before. I paused a while drinking the sight in and remembering back to that first time. I had come from the south then and a large force had been practicing maneuvers. This time I could see that about half the tumen was gone, probably hunting, and most of the rest were very busy dressing hides and drying meat strips. The fields, hard by the river, were just stubble. We approached the sentries and asked directions to Aspenquid's tent. We rode on according to directions and dismounted in front of a bevy of activity.

Mathilde was busily cutting oxen meat into drying strips. A young girl and a little girl were helping her. Aspenquid was spreading the strips on the drying racks. An older woman was working on hides. We dismounted and tied the horses to the post next to the tent. We then approached the maelstrom. It was Aspenquid who first noticed us. He stood stock-still, staring in disbelief, drawing the attention of Mathilde who turned to look, then seeing me, jumped up and oblivious to everything else ran up to me and threw her arms around me.

"Theodore said you would come!" she greeted me. "This must be Carlotta. What a beauty! No wonder you searched the Khanate for her. Welcome, welcome." She gave Carlotta a bear hug.

"There is still plenty of daylight. Let us help you with this work," Carlotta insisted and got right down to help cut up the meat.

We worked until dusk, getting all the introductions out of the way and catching each other up on the news all the while. The two girls were, of course, Paula and Sarah, aged eighteen and eleven, respectively. The older woman was Simahi. She was probably in her forties, but she looked much older and was very withdrawn. Her struggle to help Taiwit had taken much from her and, not surprisingly, she died that winter. It was almost impossible to engage her in conversation, but she worked hard, almost frantically on the hides as if to escape her thoughts. The girls were beauties and full of personality, just like their mother. Paula would soon be married to a young man in the Ordu. Sarah would be going to visit Sealth and Kudeitsaakw in the spring and stay a few years. Aju was on campaign in the Green Mist, giving Mathilde something to worry about, and the other boy, Bedagi, now fourteen, was still visiting Aspenquid's relatives and would not return for another year.

I asked Mathilde what she was going to do with all the children gone next spring and she laughed and pointed to her belly, announcing that there would be another one by then. I congratulated her and Aspenquid. They seemed quite pleased by the pending addition to their family. I noticed no one inquired about our lack of family, or even gave Carlotta furtive accusing looks. I was very grateful for that, and I did not mention it either.

We cleaned up after finishing and had a cold meal of some of our smoked salmon and dried berries, quite a treat for everyone. We chatted a bit, then turned in early since all were rather tired. I awakened in the night to hear a

quiet sobbing coming from Simahi's corner of the tent. I started to get up, but could soon hear the comforting whispers of Mathilde and the sobbing stopped. I felt so sorry for the woman, but I didn't know what to do for her.

The next day we all went back to work on the winter meat and hides. Mathilde and Carlotta had quickly hit it off and were discussing all sorts of things from relatives to household chores. Both would constantly engage the girls and Simahi, but the latter barely contributed. Aspenquid and I talked about the Ordu and I asked after some of the people I knew, especially my Pansfalaya friend, Halbi and his family, but Aspenquid had never heard of them and assumed they had returned home before he arrived. We also talked about travel and things we had seen and hunting, but neither spoke a word about campaign. He was kind enough not to remind me of the way I had annoyed returned veterans in the Panther Ordu when I first visited there some eighteen years before. We continued thus for a few more days, until all the meat and hides were prepared. Then we just relaxed a bit. Aspenquid and I tried a little fishing and we all went for rides into the woods or out on the plain. Carlotta and Mathilde coaxed Simahi into joining them for some long walks and the three of them and the girls worked on clothes for Paula.

The rest of the Ordu returned with their winter meat and set to work on it, so Aspenquid had to go back on duty. I decided it was time to move on. Before we left early one morning, I gave them some of our salmon and berries and they gave us some dried ox meat in exchange. Mathilde urged me not to get exiled again and told Carlotta to take good care of her little brother. We wished Paula the best with her marriage (I didn't get to meet the boy until years later since he was away visiting relatives and wasn't expected back until midwinter). We assured Sarah she would love staying with Sealth and Kudeitsaakw and their children. We then hugged everyone and set off to the south. Carlotta loved Mathilde and her family and felt the greatest sympathy for Simahi. She told me that she would be at least as bad as Simahi if anything happened to me. I assured her my family would step in and help, but she said it would make no difference. I realized that it would be the same with me. If anything happened to her, I would also be destroyed. That was not a comforting thought.

We continued down the road along the Ishak until it crossed the trunk road; then we turned west on the latter crossing the river, then continuing southwest, then south with the road. Everything was new to Carlotta, but I had gone this way when I returned from the Ani' Yun'-wiya some fourteen years before. Little had changed in all that time although some of the yams were better and many of the smaller villages were deserted and in various stages of ruin. I could find few traces of the once-large village where I had met Kopte and his wife. No one lived there anymore. He had been right; the Khanate had forever changed his people.

It was midwinter by the time we reached the Huasteca lands and I made sure we stuck very much to the trunk road. I had no wish to renew my acquaintance with any rebels. We reached Panuco after a few days and I took Carlotta to see the carving of my grandfather and Smoking Mirror in all their glory. It was still in perfect condition and had obviously been repainted recently, for all the colors were vibrant. Grandfather's skin was still too pink. Carlotta was awestruck by the artwork. She could not even imagine such a thing and stared wide-eyed at it. I looked around the square, but no visiting merchants approached us. Once I could get Carlotta away, we went to the house of Yqingare to see if he was still here. The owner of the house remembered Yqingare, but told me he had died some years before, and his family had sold everything and returned to the lands of the Purepecha. I found an inn for the night and told Carlotta about Yqingare and Kikthawenund and how they had tried to enlighten me away from my youthful ill-advised idealism.

We continued south the next day (after Carlotta took another look at the carving) eventually reaching Totonaca lands. I decided to tarry a bit so that we would not be climbing into the mountains until spring. We had been going at a fairly leisurely pace, but we took to stopping at all the larger cities along the way for a day or so. The Totonaca cities were almost as colorful as those of the Huasteca and the people were very friendly and hospitable. We went down to the sea and enjoyed the beautiful beach and the pleasantly cool water. This was definitely the place to be in the winter. We left the coast and turned west once we heard the passes were free of snow.

It was mid spring when we reached the high plateau and the city of Texcalla. We decided to visit the city. It had been rebuilt some time ago and was a very attractive city. The market was quite large, although not nearly as

large as that of Tlatelolco. I wasn't really comfortable in the city because of all the trouble they had been in the past and my own trouble with the miscreant, Aztahua. We had no trouble at all, however, and were everywhere treated courteously. We went on to visit Huexotzinco and Cholula. Their size and their large temples impressed Carlotta. Once in Cholula, we looked for my brother Ignace's inn and with some trouble found it. It was poorly placed away from the main roads down a side street in the southern part of the city near the old city wall. It was a rather old building showing some signs of wear. We were ushered in by a servant and found the inside very neat and clean if a bit bare. I told the man who I was and he went to get Ignace.

It had been many years since I had seen Ignace. He had come to visit briefly the year before I left to stay in Itsati. He had been a young man, a little younger than I was now, strong and powerful, though impassive and nearly motionless. Now I was looking at an old man, he was about fifty, but he looked older. His hair was white, his posture was stooped, and he was clearly overweight and moved slowly as though he was lame, but he was still without expression. It was something of a shock. Of course, I was a boy of eight the last time he saw me and here I was, a full-grown man taller than he with a wife in tow. We stared at each other for what must have seemed a rude interval to Carlotta.

"Ignace," I finally managed, "it is good to see you after all these years."

"You have grown up, Carl. Is this Carlotta?"

"Yes. This is my brother, Ignace," I introduced them.

"I must get Goa." He lumbered slowly away.

We waited for an uncomfortable length of time before they both appeared again. If possible, she moved even more slowly than he, looked slightly older and was more stooped. I couldn't imagine what had happened to age them so much and didn't know how to find out politely. She also stared at me for a while as if trying to fit the little boy in her memory to the large man before her.

"The eyes are still blue," she blurted out, bewilderingly.

"Yes, they are," Ignace confirmed.

"It is good to see you again, Goa." I struggled hard not to exchange a glance with Carlotta.

"Yes, you have grown," she affirmed.

"He has," Ignace agreed.

"How are your children?" I hoped to move this conversation along.

"Well, thank you," they both replied Goa a little behind Ignace.

"Except for Leo, of course," Ignace appended.

"Except for Leo," Goa echoed.

"We're very sorry about Leo," I was embarrassed that I had already forgotten about his death.

"Yes. We were sorry also," Ignace added.

"Yes, sorry," Goa agreed.

"We had to disown our daughter, you know," Ignace offered.

"We did," Goa confirmed.

"I heard about that from Theodore. Don't you think that was rather harsh of you?"

"She married a Maya," Ignace replied evenly, as if that settled it.

"Yes, a Maya," Goa underscored, almost, but not quite, making a disagreeable expression.

"I served with the Maya on campaign and found them a very warm, generous people although rather set in their ways," I suggested.

“You are very kind,” Ignace allowed.

“Kind,” Goa repeated.

“In any case, she married a Putun Maya, and they are just like the Chalca as far as I can see,” I tried again.

“You are generous, also.” Ignace ignored my point.

“Generous,” Goa agreed.

“Well, John and Theodore are still well?” I changed the subject.

“Yes, as far as we know.” I think he almost shrugged.

“As far as we know,” Goa confirmed.

So it went. It took a while before they actually realized we wanted to spend the night and I insisted on giving them some of the salmon as a gift. They put us in their best room, which was large and bare, but very clean. Their central courtyard had few plants and no flowers. The roof garden had been planted and was taken care of by a very hardworking woman servant who also cooked all the meals. The other servant, a man, cleaned everything every day, admitted guests, and took care of the horses. The two servants seemed almost protective of Ignace and Goa and took pains to make them comfortable. They, in turn, seemed to let them run the inn with no input from them at all. It was all rather strange, but then, they were rather strange. As we left just after noon, Ignace and Goa stood by the door to see us off, but only offered a “good-bye” in return for our best wishes for them and their children. Carlotta insisted that Ignace had to have been a foundling. She could not believe he was related to either Theodore or me. I reminded her that she had not yet met my father.

We stopped at the yam where I had met Aztahua. It was run by a man from Xochimilco named Ixcozauhqui. I immediately suspected him of being a spy and I wondered whose he was. If he was a spy, he asked no probing questions and in fact did not seem particularly interested in us at all. That really made me suspicious of him and I urged Carlotta to be very careful what she said in his hearing. She thought I was being silly.

We left early the next morning and were soon climbing up to the pass between the two volcanoes. Neither was smoking at the time, much to my relief. It was quite windy and cold at the top of the pass, and we were, of course, very glad to regain the tree cover on the far side. We continued along the main road through Amecameca, Chalco, and along the southern shore of the lake. At the western edge of the lake, we took the road that turned south into the mountains. As usual for travelers to Cuauhnahuac, we spent the night in Coaxomulco. In the morning we continued up the road to Cuauhnahuac. We reached the road leading to my house near midday and soon the old compound came into view. We dismounted in front of the house. Two youngsters came out and took the horses. I looked around for a moment, then started telling Carlotta what each of the buildings was. Soon an ear-piercing screech pierced the peaceful scene and Tetl appeared carrying Cuauhtzin.

Carlotta covered her ears while I reached for him. He made all his various noises and spoke a number of Otomi words, as usual. It was as if he had last seen me recently instead of about thirteen years ago. I had thought he would have forgotten me by now, but he was just the same, climbing all over me. Carlotta was amazed by him, but was understandably concerned about his rather large beak. He was very friendly and I finally got her to pet him a bit, but he really enjoyed my preening his head feathers. He could not be coaxed off of me until dark.

I introduced Carlotta and Tetl as soon as I could make myself heard again. I explained that he had been my best friend after Mathilde, and the only one who appreciated my little friend, Cuauhtzin. Tetl bowed formally to Carlotta and assured her it was I who was friend to him, first. He added that one rarely got the opportunity to hear the more colorful elements of the Otomi language delivered with Cuauhtzin’s characteristic vigor. He was honored to consider both of us as his friends and delighted to meet the wife of his friend. Tetl then told me that my father was not back yet, but was expected soon. Theodore had taken his family to visit some friends in Xicalanco last fall. He wasn’t sure if he would return or go on back north to the Blue Sky.

With Cuauhtzin attached to my shoulder, I showed Carlotta around the house. It was a large house in the usual design of rooms around a central courtyard, but the rooms were large and airy with high ceilings. The courtyard was full of plants and flowers many of which were just beginning to bloom in rather stark contrast to Ignace’s

courtyard. The entranceway led directly to the courtyard and all the rooms opened only into the courtyard except for the entry hallway and the kitchen, which also opened to the outside. We sat in the courtyard with Cuauhtzin discreetly positioned to fertilize the flowers, while Tetl served us chocolatl and brought me up to date on the staff. As could be expected, some had gone and others had come, but the complement was still intact. He was now the head of the staff.

“My father is in his seventies. Why is he still wandering around the Khanate?” I asked him.

“I don’t know, Cacalotl, but he is still vigorous for his age. He looks like he might be fifty.”

“Has he changed at all?”

“Not much, but you have.”

“I have?”

“Yes, you have matured since you were last here. You were on campaign for three years, then searched for your beautiful wife, then got yourself exiled for five years. It has been thirteen years, and you were little more than a boy when you left. You should have changed.”

“Well, you’re right, of course. But the changes must have been incremental, because I didn’t really notice them.”

“Your mind was on other things. That’s how we mature; we think of other things instead of ourselves.”

“You have changed yourself, Tetl.”

“One only stops changing when one dies.”

“Do you know what happened to Ignace?”

“You knew he was serving the Khanate in the south?”

“Yes, he was somehow helping the governor of the Ben Zah.”

“Not exactly. He was sent to spy on him by the late Khan George. He is not a very perceptive man and was easily fooled by the governor. George eventually caught on and recalled him to Tlatelolco where he publicly humiliated him before dismissing him. He showed no emotion at the time, of course, but aged considerably and seems to have become a bit senile.”

“How could George think to send Ignace to spy on anyone?”

“He had been impressed by his impassiveness. He thought it would make it hard to discover him. Of course, the Ben Zah knew anyone he sent had to be a spy.”

“George always thought he was more clever than he was.”

“Indeed. He is not mourned.”

“Do you know anything about Ignace’s servants? They seem to be making all the decisions for him.”

“They were slaves that he purchased and immediately freed. They have been with him for years and would do anything for him.”

“There are still slaves in Anahuac?”

“No, he found them in the Khanate of the Clouds when he was on campaign there a very long time ago. They belonged to the Muisca.”

“He would never speak of his campaign experiences when I was a boy. I understand now why.”

“You know I also went on campaign.”

“Really! When?”

“With your uncle Theodore in the early days of the Khanate of the Clouds. Like you, one tour was enough for me. Unlike you, I was never promoted.”

“I thought you told me the Otomi were not warriors.”

“No one can live in Anahuac and not be a warrior. The Otomi have had to be warriors, but were rarely successful ones.”

“How did you come to work for us?”

“I met your grandfather when I returned from campaign. He took a look into my eyes and asked if I needed work. I was amazed that he even spoke to me, but managed to mumble that I did. He told me that he was building a home in Cuahnahuac and would need staff to keep it up. He invited me to join the staff and even said I could bring my family if I had one. Of course, I didn’t have a family, but I was very touched by his kindness in a time when I was casting about aimlessly. It was an honor to serve him and the rest of your family.”

“I have often regretted not knowing my grandfather better.”

“He was a great man.”

“I have heard bad things about Khan George’s wife, Chabi. How is she perceived?”

“She is an indecent woman. The Khakhan brings shame on the Khanate by leaving her here.”

“Indecent? He was rather vague about her.”

“She takes up with a young man for a time; then he disappears and she takes up with another one.”

“Disappears?”

“The rumor is that she has them killed to prevent them discussing her perversions.”

“Perversions?”

“I only know rumors, and it is not proper to repeat rumors.”

“Well, her father warned me to avoid her at all costs. He must have thought she would find me attractive. I’m not really that young anymore, so I may be safe.”

“The Khakhan himself warned you about her? He knows and does nothing?”

“I’m afraid so. I didn’t think it would be wise to question him about it, but he promises to remove her when the boy is fifteen.”

“He is only six. He can’t mean to subject our people to her depredations for nine more years.”

“I don’t know. But he knows more about what happens in the Khanate than anyone here, so he must be aware. Perhaps she has only toyed with young men considered to be of no importance.”

“Some of her victims have been well-born, but none have belonged to any of the families related to the Khan.”

“I suppose once she crosses that line she will be stopped. Why have the people not revolted and done away with her?”

“Perhaps you forget what happened to the last revolt.”

“But I would think this sort of thing would be intolerable to the people of Anahuac and even the palace guards would join.”

“There was a time, perhaps. But the feeling in the Khanate is that there is a spy under every rock. No one dares utter a word against the Khan or his mother. More than a few who spoke out of turn have turned up dead.”

“Really?”

“Yes. It began under Khan George, your uncle. It was suspended during the reign of Khan Henry, but reappeared under the late Khan George. The revolt of the Tenocha and the murder of Khan Henry was all the reason he needed. I am glad I rarely speak my mind among friends and never among strangers.”

“I had no idea. But surely Nezahualcoyotl does not countenance this oppression?”

“I’m afraid he does. But it is a little less arbitrary under him. I think the Khakhan insists on it.”

“I’m very sorry to hear about this. I know this was not what Kaidu or my grandfather intended.”

“I don’t suppose it was, but even the best dynasties eventually spawn despots. Moral authority is hard to maintain. One must constantly prove his worthiness to rule. A despot rules by force and only needs to prove that he is strong enough to remove any opposition. It is much less trouble, especially for such as George and Chabi and the like.”

“I suppose I had best stick to my resolve not to even think about such things.”

“Meanwhile, you should heed the Khakhan’s warning. I should remind you that Chabi comes here to Cuauhnahuac in the summer.”

“The Khans stopped visiting here when Grandfather died.”

“True, but Khan John the First built his own summer palace in Cuauhnahuac before your grandfather died because he found this house too small for his retinue. The summer palace is fairly close by. It would be wise of you to travel somewhere this summer.”

“I rather hoped we could stay here. But I guess we had better plan a trip this summer. Will my father return by then?”

“He should be here any day now.”

27

Cuauhnahuac, 105 K

(Cuernavaca, 1473)

My father arrived about a day later. It was a beautiful day and Carlotta and I had been riding in the hills. The air was fresh and there were flowers everywhere. Cuauhtzin enjoyed riding and was firmly attached to my shoulder. We returned in the late afternoon and the boys took the horses. We didn’t enter the house but repaired to the sweat lodge to clean up (Cuauhtzin sat on top of the lodge and lectured us in Otomi). When we emerged from the lodge, we plunged into the stream and, fully refreshed, went into the house to change. When we reached the courtyard, there was an old man dozing in one of the chairs. I looked closely at the sleeping figure and realized it was indeed my father. It was shocking how much he looked like my grandfather and how little he resembled the father I last saw. We went to our room to change and return. Amazingly, Cuauhtzin remained quiet while my father dozed. When we returned, we went outside again so we wouldn’t disturb him, and walked around the grounds until dinner. Tetl called us for dinner and we returned to the house. My father was no longer in the courtyard but was waiting for us in the dining room. He rose when we entered.

“Karl! It is good to see you. And this must be Carlotta. Welcome to the family, my dear.”

“It is good to see you too, Father.” I was rather bewildered by the warmth of his greeting. “I hope we didn’t disturb your nap in the courtyard.”

“No, not at all. The only thing that disturbs my sleep in this house is that creature of yours. I never could figure out why Nezahualcoyotl foisted it on us.”

“Cuauhtzin is usually quiet at night.”

“True enough, but as I get older I find myself also sleeping during the day. Theodore already told me all about your exile. So how was your trip here?”

“Fine. We stopped and visited with Mathilde and Ignace along the way.”

“How is Simahi holding up?”

“Not well, I’m afraid.”

“Taiwit destroyed his health and very likely his wife with the strong drink. I’m grateful he is the only one in the family with that problem.”

“So that’s what it was. Theodore just told me he was ill.”

“I suppose it is a sort of illness. How did you find Ignace?”

“Strange. He seems much older than his years as does Goa.”

“I’m glad they were able to buy that inn. It gives them something to live for.”

“But the inn is poorly situated, hard to find. They can’t have much business and anyway their servants did everything. They appeared to be in their own world.”

“I suppose they are. Of course, Cholula is a busy town and I’m sure they get enough business to keep out of debt. Besides, they have always been frugal.”

“What do they have against the Maya?”

“The man who denounced Ignace to George was a Maya. Ignace’s judgment has been clouded since the incident. I think George took out all his hostility against you and Theodore on Ignace. It was most cruel and beastly of George. I’m ashamed to admit that I was glad I was too far away to come to his aid when he was poisoned.”

“What did he have against Theodore?”

“Theodore saved his life when he was young. He hated to be in anyone’s debt. He wanted to get back at him through you, but you thwarted that effort, and he hated you both. Chabi is worse in many ways, but at least she doesn’t seem to know any of us well enough to hate us.”

“The Khakhan has warned me to stay away from her. So I’ll have to leave before she comes here for the summer.”

“You’re a little old for her tastes, but she might think you a novelty because you look different. She has already sampled most of the tribes of Anahuac.”

“Sampled?”

“That is the politest way to put it.”

“Is it true she murders them when she’s finished?”

“Well, she has them murdered. I doubt if she’s ever done anything in her life that required that much exertion.”

“Why does Nezahualcoyotl allow it?”

“Don’t be too hard on him. He is doing all he can in a difficult situation. I would not want his job.”

“Why have the people not risen up against her?”

“Don’t let me hear you talk about rebellion again.”

“No. I will not involve myself in any revolt. I just don’t see why such behavior is tolerated in prudish Anahuac.”

“Moral outrage can be expensive. So far those who can afford it have not been offended.”

“Do the lives of her victims count for nothing?”

“If you are walking in the woods armed only with a knife or a bow and come upon one of the great bears, do you rush upon it wielding your knife or do you conceal yourself and keep away from it?”

“I would never attack an animal unless I had to do so.”

“How could I forget the reluctant hunter? Perhaps that was a poor analogy. However, should you come upon the bear while he is mauling another man, do you, so poorly armed, attack the bear to help the man or slip away, glad it is he and not you being mauled?”

“I get your point. People are only concerned for themselves. Still, that is shortsighted. If you stand by while others are abused, who will come to your aid when it is your turn?”

“I’m glad to hear you feel that way. Your Ani’ Yun’-wiya years were not wasted. Don’t worry about Chabi; she won’t last much longer. But you should stay out of her sight, just in case. So you spoke to the Khakhan? Did he waylay you again?”

“No. I decided I had nothing to hide and went to Khanbalikh. While there, he called me to visit him. It seems he is favorably disposed toward me now. He invited me to go on campaign in the Green Mist.”

“You have been full of surprises, Karl. I was quite worried about you when you were on campaign, but you turned out to be fine soldier and a natural leader. I never doubted your bravery, but I didn’t really think you’d be good at soldiering. I am very proud of you.”

“You are?”

“Yes. Not just because you did so well on campaign, although that was impressive. I’m proud of the way you behaved afterward. You delayed your quest for your bride to help your sister have enough food for the winter. You went out of your way to save a young man lost in a blizzard. You helped an old merchant you came upon on the road. You steadfastly followed your vague boyhood memory of a special girl and found her. You accepted, without complaint, the cruel fate of exile not long after meeting the love of your life. You bravely faced a difficult journey into a hard country and survived alone for a time. I am very proud to name you son.”

“I don’t know what to say.”

“No need to say anything.”

“I have always been proud of you, Father, except for when I churlishly resented the way people would help me on your account.”

“I understand that. You must remember my father was a legend.”

“You’re one also.”

“It is kind of you to say so, but compared to the Raven I am a mere shadow.”

I wondered how he found out all the things that I had done in the Blue Sky, but I suspected Theodore (who seemed to know everything) told him. It was so strange discovering that my father was personable and pleasant company. He did need to rest quite a bit, but when awake he seemed vibrant and energetic belying his years. He would go on walks and rides with us. He went fishing with us and he just sat and talked to us. He would occasionally have to run off to see someone who was ill, but once he returned and rested awhile, he would seek us out and talk to us. He told us all sorts of things. He told us about his work, his youth, his travels, his parents, brothers and sisters, his wives and children. Carlotta was enchanted by it all. She had so few relatives she even vaguely remembered that she was excited about being part of such a large family. My father knew them all and had an opinion on all of them and didn’t hesitate to express it. Still, it was quite obvious he loved them all no matter what their failings. He spoke lovingly of special memories he had of each of them.

When he spoke of his first wife, his face shone with wonder as if she was the most incredible person he ever met. If she had any flaws, he was blissfully unaware of them. I understood as I listened, for it could have been me talking about my Carlotta. He, too, knew it for he looked at us wistfully as if it helped him relive his first love. He also spoke sweetly of my mother, confirming the image her nieces and nephews had given me last year. He even spoke of Skolaskin, her first husband and his dear friend. He had been so happy for them when they first met and fell in love, because he recognized what they had. He also spoke of his parents and the very special bond they had. His mother often told him about the wonderful time in her life when he had been born while they were all together in exile (except George, of course, who was with Juchi). He was too young to

remember the time, but her vivid descriptions helped him see it. He greatly admired his parents' strength in dealing with their crushing losses of half their children. It was wonderful hearing these things.

One day my father was called away and we had decided to take a long walk around the mountain behind our house along a small trail Tetl had told me about. We brought some food with us, for lunch along the way. There wasn't too much underbrush along the path and the trees kept it quite comfortably cool. We were going slowly so we wouldn't miss any of the many colorful birds in the forest. Unfortunately Cuauhtzin would shriek whenever he caught sight of another bird. Carlotta had almost gotten used to his remarkable voice, but was convinced it was because he had made her a bit deaf. Just as we were getting ready to stop by a small stream to eat, we saw a very thin young man sitting by the stream and shivering. It really wasn't that cold, but I took off my tunic and wrapped it around him. He did not speak but tried to thank me with his eyes. I offered him some of our food and he greedily ate all we offered. With Carlotta's assent, I gave him all of our food and he ate everything. I then asked him to follow us back to our house and we could get in touch with his relatives.

"No, please, sir," he begged in heavily accented Nahuatl, "please leave me here and tell no one you saw me."

"But you are starving here. At least come to our house so we can give you a decent meal."

"No, I beg you don't worry about me; you have done enough."

"What are you afraid of? Perhaps I can help you."

"No one can help me. Thank you for your kindness, but please forget about ever seeing me."

"As you wish, but if you change your mind, just follow this path in that direction and you will find our house. There you will find shelter and food."

"Thank you, sir."

We left the man and went on back home instead of continuing around the mountain to encourage him to follow us. I tried to place his accent but couldn't. He looked much like the people of the Anahuac Valley only a little taller. I decided he must be from the north, one of the so-called Chichimeca tribes. I couldn't imagine what he was running from that terrified him so much. When we returned, it was just dusk. We cleaned up and had dinner. My father was not back yet. I decided to bring extra food and try to find the young man the next day.

Carlotta insisted on coming along again and I felt that would reassure the young man of our intentions. This time we walked quickly to the spot and reached it well before midday. I could see that he had spent the night there and then had taken the path in the opposite direction. We followed along quickly hoping to overtake him. Around midafternoon I could see that he had struck off the trail toward the west on a very faint trail. I could see that we were close behind him, so I reluctantly decided to continue after him. Not much later we came upon him. He had collapsed in exhaustion right in the trail, not even finding a place to sleep. I picked him up and carried him to a sheltered spot near a trickle of water. I laid him down on a bed of moss and tried to give him some water. He awakened suddenly and looked at me first in wild panic and then in resignation. But I just handed him the bag of food and told him not to worry, I had told no one about him, but I could see he needed more food so I brought it. He ate sparingly and began to cry. It was a disturbing sight, but I tried to comfort him. He was muttering something in a strange language that sounded like a prayer.

"I think you are from the north," I told him once he had calmed down. "You can get back there along these mountains. Bear a little toward the northwest for a day or so, then turn more toward the north along the chain of mountains. You can cross the roads in the passes at night. I have brought you enough dried meat and berries for ten days or so in addition to the fresher food that you must eat right away. You will have no trouble finding water in the mountains. That should be enough to get you beyond the Valley to the north."

"You are so kind. It will be enough to get me home. I will make it last. My people live farther north than ten days' journey. I am Ralamari. Once I get home I can disappear from my enemies. But if I do get there, all my people will hear about your kindness. What is your name?"

"I am called Cacalotl."

"My name is Tes Disora and I am your friend for life."

“Make it safely home and consider your debt paid.”

“It will never be paid, but I will do all I can to keep your help from being in vain.”

“Trust no one until you reach home. Take this knife and bow and arrows so you can defend yourself and hunt along the way.”

“You have given me all I need. I will make it. My life is yours.”

“Just live a good long life and name one of your sons for me.”

“It is done.”

“Farewell.”

“May Tatevari shine on all your ways.”

“And on yours.”

I found out later that Tatevari was their sun god. I wondered what a Ralamari was doing this far south and what he was running from, but did not want to ask him to review what had obviously been a nightmare. We turned and went back up the side path to the trail around the mountain and followed it the rest of the way moving as quickly as possible. There was very little light left in the sky when we reached home. We quickly cleaned up and went in the house. My father was waiting for us in the courtyard.

“It seems Chabi’s private guard is looking for a runaway ‘servant’ who is a Ralamari. I don’t suppose you’ve seen anyone like that anywhere, and if you did I’m sure you couldn’t possibly remember anything about it?”

“Precisely.”

“Excellent. I’ll convey our regrets tomorrow. Shall we eat?”

“By all means, we’re both starving.”

“Marvelous appetites you young people have, eating a whole sack of food for lunch.”

“Well it was a long walk.”

“Indeed.”

“There is a rather rude question I must ask you before you go,” he began after dinner.

“A rude question?”

“Yes, but it is important, I think. Is your lack of children by accident or by design?”

“I didn’t know one could design that.”

“No, I don’t suppose you would. But there are things women can take to avoid having children.”

“Your father is quite right, Karl,” Carlotta said. “No, sir, our lack of children seems to be an accident or the will of God.”

“I don’t think God wills such things. However, if you wish to have children I may be able to help you. If you do not, I will speak no more of it.”

“I don’t know,” I hesitated. “I thought this was just the way it was and I didn’t mind at all.”

“I see. Well, give it some thought and talk it over. If you want my help, I will be delighted to give it; if you wish to keep it the way it is, I understand completely.”

“What would you do?” Carlotta asked him.

“A very fair question,” he replied. “It is always a risk for a woman to have a child. The Mexica consider a woman who dies in childbirth the equivalent of a man who dies in battle. On the other hand, children can bring you much joy and pride or heartache and disappointment. You must love them and share their joys and sorrows. They help you go on, give you a reason to live when you lose your spouse. They don’t take away from your

love for your spouse; your heart expands to encompass them also. As for me, I do not regret having any of my children.”

“I had come to think there was something wrong with me and was so afraid that Karl would think ill of me because I could give him no children. I was so grateful that he didn’t mind at all. Is it really possible that I could have children?”

“I don’t know. I would have to ask you many questions and try a few things, but you are still young and unless you are one of the very few truly infertile, it should be possible.”

“Oh sir, would it change our closeness?”

“No. If two people truly love each other, children only make them closer. I can see that you two have a special closeness like Metztlaconac and I had. I’m sure that you, like us, will never regret having children.”

“Are you so sure?” I was still not convinced.

“Yes, but this is a decision you two must make together. My opinion is just an opinion. You need to look into your hearts for your answer.”

We returned to our room and Carlotta became more and more excited about the prospect. I began to see that she really wanted to have children and felt that I had to set my misgivings aside and support her wishes. It was just possible that it would not work, but I was afraid that would plunge her into sadness again. On some level I was annoyed with my father for bringing it up and on another level I was grateful to him since she was so excited about it. That night neither of us slept well. She was too excited and I was too apprehensive. The next morning we went to my father and asked his help. He told me to go amuse myself while he talked to Carlotta. I thought she would be more comfortable with me there, but she was completely at ease with my father and urged me to go fishing. Tetl was kind enough to join me.

“Why did you never marry, Tetl?” I asked him.

“Once you have seen true love, it is very hard to settle for less.”

“You never fell in love?”

“No. I have met women I liked and with whom I perhaps could have made a life, but it would have left me empty, so I chose not to.”

“Wasn’t it lonely?”

“Yes, of course. But it would be more lonely to share your life with someone you did not love.”

“I’m sorry you never found someone special.”

“I did, but I didn’t realize it until she was gone.”

“Oh.”

“She heard I had died on campaign and married a friend who was kind to her even though she did not love him. She died in childbirth while I was still away. When I returned, her sister told me how much she loved me and I realized what I had lost. I had only thought of her as a friend and had missed how truly special she was.”

“Did you ever have any children?”

“I see you have no illusions about my virtue. Very well, to be honest, I don’t know of any children. But if they couldn’t be with her, I wouldn’t want to know of any.”

“Do you think they would add to closeness between a couple?”

“Yes, I do. You are not so sure?”

“We have been so happy these nine years, that I don’t want anything to change.”

“But you went along with the idea?”

“Carlotta was so excited about it. I think it is just because it is expected of women to have children and if they can’t they are made to feel like they have failed their husbands somehow.”

“It has always been that way. A barren woman is considered cursed.”

“It doesn’t seem fair.”

“It isn’t. After all, sometimes it is the man who is ‘barren’ and that is even more humiliating.”

“Well if it is what she wants, I hope father can help her.”

“If anyone can, it is he.”

We caught a few fish and cleaned them before returning to the house. They were cooked for lunch. I sat in the courtyard with Cuauhtzin giving him a good preening while lunch was being fixed. Soon Carlotta came into the courtyard and ran up to me excitedly. It seemed that my father was certain he could help her and was even now fixing the herbs she would have to take. I could see that she was glowing, although she kept looking to me for reassurance. I tried to give her all my support, but I still had some misgivings. If anything happened to her during childbirth, I would be devastated. I was also not too sure it was a good idea to get pregnant right before we went on another trip. But I loved her and wanted her to be happy and it was obvious having children would make her happy.

Around midafternoon my father joined us and gave Carlotta her mixture of herbs and instructions on how to take them. She listened very attentively and wrote down a few things to make sure she had it all right. They went over everything again and she set off for the kitchen to prepare the first dose. My father leaned back in his chair and was soon asleep. I was left alone. I decided to consult my spirit guide. I poked my head into the kitchen and told Carlotta I would be gone for a little while. She smiled, told me not to be too late for supper, and happily went back to boiling the herbs. I left the house and started up the mountain behind the house. It was not particularly high, but the going was a little rough. Once I reached what seemed to be the top (it was hard to tell because it was forested), I sat under a tree, made a small fire, and burned a little nawak’osis. Soon I found myself before my guide and I explained my concern. The guide assured me that a child would be a good thing and I would not regret having one. I had the feeling he was holding something back, but I could get no more from him. I worked my way back down the mountain more resigned than reassured.

After dinner my father told us that Chabi was expected in Cuauhnahuac in a few days, so we should decide where we would go for the summer. Once she was gone he would send word to us, so we could return. He suggested we go either east or west into the mountains for a few days, and then go on north into the Anahuac Valley once she was gone. That way Carlotta could get to see the capital and I could visit my old friends. I told him I thought we could go to Tlayacapan. We could make it to Yauhtepec in a day’s ride, then get to Tlayacapan in another day. This route would miss the larger towns of Tepoztlan and Huaxtepec as well as the more heavily traveled route to the north from Cuautla. After a few days, we could turn north over the mountains and down into the valley. He knew that route and thought it was probably a good one, but warned me that the mountain passes from Tlayacapan to the valley were very rough and there were no yams along that route. We would have to camp out in the open for a few days. Of course it would not be cold in the summer, but we could get rain and flash floods so it would not be without some danger. He had to admit, however, that it would surely keep us well out of sight of Chabi.

We reluctantly decided to leave after one more day. I don’t recommend leaving Cuauhnahuac in the early summer. It is much too beautiful. We found ourselves walking all around and drinking in all the sights and smells. With great difficulty we spent the late afternoon getting everything ready for our trip. When all was ready, we joined my father for our last meal together until fall. We were all quiet during the meal, lost in our thoughts. From the smile on Carlotta’s face, I was sure she was thinking about having a child. My father was concerned about us from his look. I was awash in a flood of memories of this wonderful house, made even more special by my rediscovery of my father. In the end, he broke the silence.

“I’m going to miss you two. It has been wonderful having you here.”

“We’ll miss you also, Father, and this beautiful house.”

“Yes, I’ve always liked it here. My father chose a fine spot and built a handsome house.”

“You know, you remind me of him now.”

“I suppose I do look like you remember him, although he was some twenty years older. What an ancient he was when he died! And tireless—he spent his ‘retirement’ writing volumes. If I live that long, I hope I will have his stamina. However, I already sleep more than he did. I hope I am still here when you return; there is much more I would like to tell you. It is odd, but the older I get the more I remember about my youth.”

“This may seem like an odd question, but did Grandfather ever teach you about our God?”

“You mean the ancestral God, with no name? Or Tengri?”

“The one called Deus and Dominus in the old language.”

“Those aren’t names; they are the words for ‘god’ and ‘lord.’ I actually asked him about it one time and he told me what he knew. You may recall that his mother’s father, Peter, was a priest of a related religion that shared the same God. Peter had attempted to teach him the religion, but he was not particularly interested and could only remember a few things. The original religion was called Christian after its founder who was called Christ. I think that was a title. All I know is that there is only a single god; all others are false. When we die we are sent to either a pleasant or unpleasant place depending on our actions during our lives. I think the one called Christ was in on deciding where we go.”

“Is he some sort of demigod?”

“I don’t know. There was something about him rising from the dead after suffering some horrible tortuous death. I suppose that made him special.”

“Some sort of elite in the afterlife?”

“I suppose so, but I really don’t know.”

“What do you think?”

“About the nameless God?”

“Yes. Do you venerate him?”

“In a way. My father always said that the way his people venerated God was by doing the best they could in whatever skill they had. He always tried to do so, and so have I.”

“What do think about Tengri?”

“Tengri is a similar sort of god, so if one needs a name for God that would do. I’ve never been too concerned about it, but I have asked God to help me with my work each day and thanked him at the end of the day. I just call him Deus when I pray to him.”

“Cousin Theodore and I talked a little about this subject and he said his father knew much about the old beliefs. Did the information die with him?”

“Khan Henry was a good man and he was rather spiritually inclined, but I doubt if he knew any more about the old religion than I do. He spent a lot of time thinking about God and may have reached his own conclusions. I would guess he wrote about it and you may find such a book in the palace library. When you see your cousin again, ask him if such a book exists.”

“I will.”

“Why this sudden interest in such matters, Karl? I don’t ever remember you asking about them as a boy.”

“Perhaps I think too much and need to be more busy.”

“You can rarely think too much, but you’ll be busy enough on your trip. I hope the God we have just talked about watches over you and brings you both safely back in the fall.”

“And I hope he sees to it that you are still here when we return.”

We turned in early and rose before dawn. We ate a light meal while our horses were prepared. Father rose up to see us off, and Tetl was holding our horses as we left the house. I had decided to bring Cuauhtzin along on this trip (Tetl told me he would serve as an excellent lookout while we camped) and he was chattering away in Otomi as we mounted up. We made our good-byes and started down the road away from the house just as sky began to lighten in front of us. We soon reached the main road and turned south toward the main part of Cuauhnahuac. We cleared the town before there was much activity and turned southeast on the road to Yauhtepec. The weather remained pleasant, although we were treated to a little sun shower along the way.

We reached Yauhtepec just before dusk and found a small inn just as we entered the town. The inn had room although the keeper was not pleased about accommodating the bird. Understandably, he felt they were very messy. He was somewhat mollified when I showed him the perch on the wheeled stand where Cuauhtzin would spend the night. In fact, he made a copy of it so that he could minimize the mess of any other pet birds that might visit. There were few other guests at the inn and all appeared to be merchants. I noticed they all seemed rather subdued but did not think to inquire about it.

We left the next morning and took the northeast road to Tlayacapan. The road actually turned southeast for a while before returning northeast and ending at the road between Tlayacapan to the north and Huaxtepec to the south. We turned north and arrived at Tlayacapan in the midafternoon after a very pleasant ride. It was a little smaller than Yauhtepec, but we had the choice of two inns. I decided on the one at the northern edge of town. It was a little smaller than the other and just looked more pleasant. The keeper was not at all bothered about Cuauhtzin and commented on how beautiful he was. He then showed us his birds. He had two of the red parrots that quickly shrieked challenges to Cuauhtzin. He replied in kind and I decided to beat a dignified retreat before things got out of hand. The other guests were again all merchants, and they, too, appeared subdued and seemed to be muttering quietly to each other. I asked the keeper if anything was amiss, but he was unaware of any problem and assured me that he never questioned his guests. I could detect no encouragement from the guests, so I decided not to bother them either.

The next morning, the merchants all left early, and most of them headed south toward either Huaxtepec or Yauhtepec, although a few took the road east to Yecapixtla. We planned to stay a few days, so we decided to wander around the town after breakfast. It wasn't market day, so there was not much activity around the town. We came upon some children playing and Carlotta gave my hand a squeeze. Finally toward the eastern end of town, we encountered an old man sitting in front of his house watching the dearth of activity. He was smiling, so we approached him.

"Pleasant day, today, isn't it?" I offered the usual banality.

"Usually is this time of year," he replied.

"Not much activity in the town today."

"No, but it will pick up on market day, the day after tomorrow, should you still be here."

"We should."

"Really? Not many visitors stay more than the night. Are you waiting for someone?"

"No, we're just resting up for a few days before continuing on our trip."

"Are you going off the road?"

"Yes. Are you familiar with the way?"

"You'll find a path just northwest of town. It is a well-worn path, but not wide. It may have been damaged over the winter, I haven't heard."

"How did you know we were heading off the road?"

"The only people who rest up a few days here are heading into the mountains. Usually they are avoiding other people."

"I see. Do you know why the merchants seem to be upset?"

“I understand that their taxes have been raised significantly.”

“Why?”

“I wouldn’t know. I suppose because that’s where most of the wealth is these days, among the merchants.”

“Thank you for your help.”

“Be careful in the mountains; watch for flash floods.”

“We will.”

We returned to the inn. I was surprised that the merchants were being taxed heavily. They were the group that most supported the Khanate. It seemed suicidal to alienate them. I was beginning to fear that there could be some very rough days ahead in Anahuac and wasn’t at all sure we should be going to the capital. I discussed my misgivings with Carlotta, but she wanted to see the capital. We took in the market two days later. We bought some fresh fruit but nothing else. It was really not much of a market especially compared to that in Tlatelolco. The next day we set out at sunrise, found the path, and headed north.

28

North to Tlatelolco, 105 K

(Mexico City, 1473)

We found the path leading off the north road almost a li north of Tlayacapan. It lead us a little north of west into the mountains. It was not a wide path, but it was worn enough to indicate its regular use by at least some foot and horse traffic. We followed the trail all day until it became too dark, then camped in a vague clearing we found just off the trail. The next morning we continued along the path, which began to climb the western slope of the mountain called Tepozteco. The sky had been clear as we started out that morning but soon had become overcast, then quite dark. Lightning began to flash over the mountain; then the rain began. We still had our rain cloaks and hats from our exile and thought this a good time to get them out. I put Cuauhtzin under my cloak. The rain got heavier and before long the trail had become a stream. We pulled off the trail into the trees to wait out the storm. It did not pass. We tried to move parallel to the road, but there was too much underbrush. Finally I noticed a smaller stream indicating a smaller path heading up the slope to the north. We had to dismount and lead the horses, but eventually we came to a clearing with a small house. No one seemed to be there, but the house was in good condition and we settled in for the evening. There was even a small shed for the horses and I was able to bring them in from the storm. Fortunately, I had brought along some grain for them.

The storm continued all night and most of the next day, finally ending just before dusk. We went out once it was over and found the air heavy with all the moisture, but the night was clear and the number of stars visible was astonishing. The following morning we rose early and got the horses ready. It was necessary to walk them down the path because it was still so slippery. Cuauhtzin favored us with a steady stream of directions in Otomi from his perch on my horse’s saddle. We regained the trail and found it deeply eroded and quite slippery also. We decided to continue on foot and got quite muddy along the way.

Finally we came to a more level area on the northern slopes of the mountain and again had to camp under the stars or rather the trees along the path. We started out early the next morning and picked up the pace as we skirted the lava bed stretching northeast from the volcano named after the rain god, Tlaloc. Bleak would be the only way to describe the black, almost lifeless terrain, and at the end of the day we were approaching the little town of Tlacotenco. There was a cleared area around the town for their fields. The town had no inn and no yam. It was little more than a concentration of houses for the people who worked the surrounding high fields. The fields did not look very productive and the houses were quite mean. We rode through quickly while Cuauhtzin hurled invectives. Few noticed, since most of the adults were still in the fields, and the children were on the periphery under the watchful eyes of their grandmothers. The few ancients who were seated in front of their houses, either couldn’t see or hear us or weren’t interested, because they didn’t even look up. At the edge of the town, we found a man returning from the fields who graciously directed us to a place where travelers could spend the night. It was a small but well-maintained thatched hut with a small corral in back. We cleaned off the

mud and settled in for the evening eating some of our dried food for dinner. Just before dark, one of the men from the town dropped by to see if we needed anything, but we assured him we were just fine. It didn't look like the hut had been used in quite a while.

We left in the morning and soon came to the road that turns northeast to Mixquic and Chalco. I wanted to visit Sarah and Tepeyolotl in Chalco since they were expected back by then, so we turned northeast. We passed through Mixquic late in the morning and continued on, arriving at Chalco well before dusk. I went directly to Sarah's house, just north of the center of the city. I had only been a boy the last time I had been to the house, but I knew exactly where it was. A servant standing by the door opened it for us and took the horses. We went into the courtyard where all the family was gathered. They all stopped talking to look at the intruders and their jaws dropped.

"Cacalotl," several of them said at once.

"You're home," Sarah said, rising heavily and deliberately moving to meet me and give me a big hug. "It is so good to see you again after all these years. This must be my new sister Carlotta. Welcome to the family. Do you remember all your nieces and nephews, Karl?"

"Let's see." I looked them over, then indicated each as I named them. "That's Teypachtli, that is Chipilotl, that would be Icpitl, and here we have Iztacyochitl and John."

"You remember them all," Tepeyolotl said as he slowly rose to greet us. "Theodore's reports did not do Carlotta justice; she is stunning."

It was wonderful seeing them all again, but I was concerned by the slowness of Sarah and Tepeyolotl. Their children all seemed to be in fine shape except for Teypachtli who was visibly limping. Since he had been on campaign, I had to assume he had been injured. I was surprised to see the two girls at home since I assumed they were married at their age. It looked like the younger boys were not going on campaign like their brother had. I didn't blame them. We cleaned up, then went in to dinner, and they wanted to know all about us, how we met, our exile, and our trip, everything—at length. It was well after dinner before I could find out about them.

It seemed that the trip to the Khanate of the Clouds had been both profitable and disastrous. They had made the long trek overland and had traded successfully along the way. They reached Tamalameque and did quite well there also. They had been convinced to make the journey up to the high plain of the Muisca to get the best prices on the quetzalitzli stones. It had been a very hard climb since they were no longer young (he was fifty-two and she was forty-nine). They made it up to the plain well enough, and indeed, the prices had been very good, but the return down to the low country had been their undoing. Not long after they started down, rain set in and the trail became treacherous. Both of them fell and were badly injured. Tepeyolotl broke both legs and one of his arms and Sarah broke one leg and her hip. Two of their party were killed. Fortunately they had not lost any of the quetzalitzli, but they did lose some of the other goods they had, including some gold, and several of their horses. When they got back to Tamalameque, their broken bones had to be reset and it left them both barely able to walk. They sold their wagon and most of their heavier goods and came back by sea. Teypachtli joined them just before they left. He had also been injured in a fall and one of his legs was badly broken. Ironically it happened on his way back from campaign, during which he had not suffered so much as a scratch. To top off everything, they had been hit by a storm during their return and almost shipwrecked.

When they finally reached Xicalanco, they discovered the new tax that had been imposed on merchants. Almost half of their quetzalitzli was confiscated rendering the whole trip unprofitable. They were now selling off what they could and moving to the Blue Sky where there was no such tax. Much as they loved Anahuac, they could not survive here under such conditions. They really couldn't imagine any merchant remaining here, unless he could smuggle and they were too old for such risks.

"Whose idea was the merchant tax?" I asked.

"From what we have heard, Chabi insisted on it since she wasn't able to get everything she wanted with her income. Nezahualcoyotl had refused at first, but she appealed to her brother, and he overruled Nezahualcoyotl.

He, in turn, resigned in protest, but the Khakhan refused his resignation. Until this happened I thought him to be one of the better Khakhans.”

“I wonder what he’s up to.”

“The merchants of Anahuac are grumbling ominously.”

“Do you think they’ll revolt?”

“To be honest, it is not their usual way. They are more comfortable subverting. The younger ones will smuggle, the older ones will bribe officials to miss the most valuable parts of their goods. Eventually the tax revenues will evaporate. Unfortunately, we are too old to smuggle and too poor to bribe, so we’ll have to move.”

“Do you think a lot of merchants will move?”

“If we are prepared to move, you can assume we won’t be alone.”

“Do you think the Blue Sky can support all the merchants of Anahuac?”

“No. But we hope to establish ourselves near the border and act as conduits for goods flowing back and forth between the Khanates. We hope to facilitate the smuggling, even if we don’t actually take part in it directly.”

“Will you all go?”

“Yes. Chipilotl and Icpitl will stay with us until their husbands get back from campaign. The boys all wish to stay in the family business, and we’ll need their help since we have become cripples.”

“Is there anything we can do?”

“Yes. Stay well and happy.”

We spent a few days with them and I talked to my nieces and nephews individually. They were all quite ready to go north with their parents and were excited about the adventure. I suggested that they would not enjoy living at the mouth of the Thanuge River since it was rather hot, but they were not concerned since all had lived among the Putun Maya in Acalan for a time and it was not so hot nor so humid as that. They were right, but it was rather dry once you got away from the river, and I didn’t think they would like that much. The girls were married to young men from Chalco. Chipilotl’s husband, Cipactli, was almost finished with his tour and should be back the next year. Icpitl’s husband, Huexotl, had only gone last year and she had a long wait. Teypachtli had served with Cipactli and he was unscathed when last he saw him. Huexotl was probably just getting to the action. Both girls were worried about their husbands.

It was hard getting used to the subdued atmosphere in a house that had always been a font of laughter and fun. Sarah always smiled when she saw me, but the smile was wan. Tepeyotl seemed distracted and withdrawn. Teypachtli also was quiet and withdrawn. The girls were nervous and wistful. Only the younger boys seemed to remember what a good laugh was, but they were self-conscious around the others. I took them for a ride with Carlotta and we really had a good time. I couldn’t interest the others in any distractions. When we left, we gave them some of our smoked salmon and wished them all the best on their trip, and I urged them to stop in on Ignace en route and cheer him up. (I had rather hoped one of them would catch the irony, but it was missed, and Sarah merely sighed and said she would do her best).

I tried to explain the way they used to be to Carlotta as we rode west, but she couldn’t imagine how I could be talking about the same people. In some ways the change in them was harder to take than that in Ignace. At least, I was confident that Theodore would not change. We crossed the southern lake (Xochimilco) on the causeway to Tlahuac and spent the night at a nice inn on the north end of town. The next morning we rose early and went directly to Ixtapalapa arriving there near midday. There Carlotta got her first view of Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco beyond. I made it a point to watch her. Her face betrayed every emotion from shock to wonder to admiration.

If possible, the cities were even more beautiful than usual. They seemed to have gotten larger, with chinampas becoming housing and more chinampas replacing the converted ones. Most of the houses were now made of the dull red rock called tezontli, but there were still some simpler reed and thatch houses on the periphery. The

multicolored feather banners floated on the slightest breeze like impossibly hued birds hovering in the air. The causeways shone brightly in the midday sun. Yet, something was different. The lake, usually crowded with boats, had only a few. The causeways, usually thronged, showed only a trickle of traffic. The din of the city that could sometimes be heard across the causeway was not perceptible.

We bypassed Ixtapalapa and went straight to the causeway. At the entrance there was now a guard tower, and a whole jagun of soldiers were stationed there. Everyone was stopped and searched for goods. The jagun commander was none other than Chiquatli, my old fellow instructor from the Tlatelolco barracks. He recognized me at once and saluted enthusiastically. He insisted I join him for midday meal and I introduced Carlotta.

“Where did you find such a gem?” he asked.

“I had to chase her all over the Blue Sky,” I laughed.

“She was right to run from a rascal like you,” he mugged.

We sat down to a simple meal and I asked why a whole jagun was guarding the causeway. It seemed that they were there to make sure everyone was searched and all trade goods were taxed. I shook my head in disbelief. He shrugged and agreed that the men were not happy about becoming tax collectors, but those were his orders. I mentioned that I had some smoked salmon I had brought along to give to my cousin Theodore and he said that if he didn't happen to know me and trust me completely, he would have to assume it was for trade and confiscate some for tax. I must have looked as shocked as I felt, but he shrugged and repeated that those were his orders. He added that the whole tumen was clamoring to be sent on campaign rather than remain and collect taxes. I dropped the subject and we had a wonderful time reminiscing about old times and bringing each other up to date on our activities. It seemed he went on campaign right after I returned, and just got back two years ago. He had returned home to Tlacopan for a year, but decided to return to the army. He now regretted returning from campaign.

“One could be a man on campaign, instead of a vile tax collector. I was sorry I was too late for the Inca campaign. I understand that was quite a fight.”

“They were good fighters, and so were the Chimu. But didn't you have to contend with the bandits in the hills?”

“No, my tumen went on to fight the Aymara tribes. They live around a large and very deep lake southeast of Cuzco. They were good fighters, but not as organized. Each tribe stood by while we conquered them in turn. The worst part of that campaign was the terrain. It was so hard to breathe that we had to move slowly and we were tired all the time. Also, there wasn't any decent fodder for the horses; we had to bring it in on wagons, slowing us down even more. I don't think the Khan of the Clouds was very happy with us.”

“It was like that in Inca country as well, but not as bad. Along the coast, however, there was no such problem.”

“I never got to the coast. We spent the whole time up in the mountains. I never really got used to it even though it is fairly high right here in Anahuac.”

“It is much higher there.”

After our visit, I gave him some of the smoked salmon and he gave us a seal that would make sure we could pass through all the guards unmolested. I wondered if it would also work when I left the capital. We rode across the causeway with no further challenges although there were guards posted at all the drawbridges. As we got to Tenochtitlan, we were looked over, but not stopped once I flashed the seal. I took Carlotta right to the ceremonial center so she could see all the great temples. She was awestruck by them. Their polished stone surfaces shone brightly in the sunlight. The sky blue Tengri temple took her breath away, and she was impressed with the shape of Quetzalcoatl's temple and the size of the twin temples for Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc. I let her drink it all in and we wandered all over the center. Finally, we left and she wondered aloud why such things had been built. Explaining the human need for excess was beyond me at that moment, I did not respond. We had just left the center when a very dark, raggedly dressed old man approached us.

“Might you consider helping an old man?” he asked wearily.

“Of course, sir.” I was not pleased, but tried to hide it. “What can I do for you?”

“I have not eaten for two days. Have you any food?”

“Yes.” I reluctantly reached into my sack and gave him a piece of salmon and a handful of dried berries. “This sustained me rather well for a few years, and should give you some strength.”

“Such fancy food. It is fit for a khan and you give it to a beggar?”

“I have enough for the Khan. I don’t think he will begrudge his subject a little nourishment.”

“His mother begrudges the merchants their livelihood.”

“You should not speak ill of rulers; you could come to harm should the wrong person overhear you.”

“Will you turn me in to the guard?”

“No, of course not. Now take your food and eat slowly. I will go to the market in Tlatelolco tomorrow. Should you find me I will be able to give you less fancy food.”

“I will look for you there, young master. You have been most kind.”

I was surprised that a beggar was allowed in Tenochtitlan. They used to be forbidden in the city. Perhaps things had gotten worse than I thought. We crossed over to Tlatelolco and I showed Carlotta the barracks where I had trained for the army. Then we went to the palace. The guards at the street level ignored us so we tied our horses to the rail, walked up the stairs, and stood before the guards at the door. I explained that I wished to see Theodore if he was here and identified myself as his cousin. The guards eyed me suspiciously and one went into the palace. To my complete amazement he returned with none other than Tlauquechol. He was still head of the palace guard after all these years. He was delighted to see me and invited us to follow him into the palace. I noticed he was moving more slowly these days, but he started to give us the same tour he had given Sarah, Teypachtli, and me so many years before. He asked after Teypachtli and I told him the truth. He looked grim and shook his head.

“It is an evil business with this woman,” he muttered barely audibly and well out of anyone’s earshot but mine.

“She is gone to Cuauhnahuac, isn’t she?” I whispered.

“Yes, but palaces have keen ears.”

I mentioned our horses and he sent a servant to take them into the stables. I asked the servant to bring Cuauhtzin’s cart to us as quickly as possible. He made it just in time. Carlotta loved the tour and wanted me to identify all the statues of the Khans. I noticed that George had been added and was impressed that the artist had been able to capture his annoying smirk perfectly. The image of the Khakhan was quite good also, doing justice to his intense look. Carlotta was made uncomfortable by it. I was pleased to notice that Chabi had not managed to add herself to this group. The boy-khan, John, was also not yet committed to stone. Cuauhtzin was not very impressed, but was happy to be with me so he only muttered occasionally. We moved on to the map room I had so enjoyed on my first visit. Carlotta looked at the other things, but was not interested in the map. I noticed how the southern portion had been filled out since last I looked at it. I looked over the additions my campaign had made and Tlauquechol pointed out where his campaigns had been. He had gone before me and again after me. He, too, had the rank of minghan commander. Sensing Carlotta’s boredom, I pried us both away from the map and Tlauquechol led us into the armor room, where all of Grandfather’s finery was displayed. Carlotta very much enjoyed this room.

When we had seen enough, Tlauquechol led us into the garden to wait while he looked for Theodore. The garden was as beautiful as I remembered it and we walked all around it. No one was in it other than us. Finally Tlauquechol returned with Theodore and a small boy. Theodore had aged considerably. He smiled wanly when he saw me. The boy proved to be John, the Khan of Anahuac. He was a little shy and partially hid behind Theodore while the latter greeted us.

“Cousin Cacalotl, it is so good to see you again. Who is this lovely woman with you?”

“This is my wife, Carlotta. Carlotta, this is my cousin, Theodore.”

“She is almost as pale as you, Cacalotl. Is she from the old land?”

“No, two of her grandparents were shipwrecked off the northeast coast of the Blue Sky. They were from the land of our oldest ancestors.”

“Weren’t they from the far west? How did they get east of us?”

“The earth is round, the far west is the near east.”

He looked genuinely puzzled by that revelation and was silent a while pondering its meaning. At last he brightened and either understood or put it out of his mind. It seemed he had never given that idea much thought, and didn’t plan to start now. I’m sure he must have been told all about it during his education, but he was never exactly sharp. He remembered the boy suddenly and made the introductions. The boy seemed to be anchored to Theodore, like he dared not let him out of sight. He looked up at me apprehensively in spite of my smile, but he seemed somewhat reassured by Carlotta’s smile and was intrigued by Cuauhtzin. Theodore invited us to stay in the palace during our visit and suggested we clean up for dinner since it was rather late in the afternoon. I remembered the way to the bathroom and led Carlotta there while Theodore made arrangements for us to stay.

Carlotta could not believe the size of the bathroom. It had been partitioned for privacy (I suppose), since I was last there, but each part was still large. We cleaned up, put on fresh clothes, and went back out to the garden to wait for dinner. Theodore did not join us in the garden, but a servant came to get us and lead us to the dining room. I was surprised to find only Theodore and the boy there. I asked how his mother was and he told me she had died the year before. He didn’t think she had ever recovered from his father’s death. He told me about his sister’s marriage and the shock of his brother’s death (a real tragedy I agreed with a straight face). I noticed he did not mention Chabi, so I asked about Nezahualcoyotl.

“Oh, since Chabi is in Cuauhnahuac he has gone to Texcoco for a while. He very much enjoys walking around the gardens he planted. Do you remember them?”

“Oh yes. I was sent to Texcoco to learn Nahuatl poetry and Nezahualcoyotl took pity on me and let me spend a lot of time in his garden. It was he who gave me Cuauhtzin.”

“Really? Why does the bird speak Otomi?”

“He apparently belonged to an Otomi before Nezahualcoyotl. He has learned some Nahuatl, but prefers Otomi.”

“Do you understand Otomi?”

“No, do you?”

“Yes. He says some really dreadful things.”

“Perhaps I should confine him to the garden.”

“Oh don’t worry about it. I’m the only one in the palace who understands Otomi, since George died. He knew all the languages and dialects of Anahuac. I just know Nahuatl, Otomi, and Maya.”

“An interesting combination. The language of the ruling class, the language of the farmers, and the language of the ungovernable.”

“I suppose you are right about that. My father always respected the Maya, but he did allow them to be ill used on campaign. His military advisors insisted on it, you know.”

“It really isn’t fair, but they seem to like it that way. More than once they insisted on closing with the enemy when we could have easily wiped them out with arrows.”

“They are a strange, brave people.”

“Indeed. Speaking of your father, I remember you once told me he was given to much interest about God. Did he ever write a book on his thoughts?”

“You know, it is odd you should ask that. I came across just such a book not long ago. I was in a mood to do some reading for a change and looked around in the library. I came upon a book entitled Deus. I opened it and it proved to be some of his ruminations. I think I could find it again. Would you like to read it?”

“Yes, very much.”

“I’ll go see if I can find it after we put John to bed.”

While we were chatting, Carlotta tried to befriend the young Khan. He responded positively, and soon they were talking quietly. Theodore and I reminisced about old times. He kept looking over at the boy as if he expected trouble, but this lessened, and soon he forgot about him. I think he was genuinely enjoying our conversation for he seemed to relax and looked much more like the young man I remembered. Finally Carlotta got our attention and pointed out the dozing boy. Theodore smiled indulgently and picked him up. He told us to wait a while and he would return. We withdrew to the benches away from the table with our chocolate. I asked her what she and the boy were talking about.

“He is a very sweet boy,” she replied. “I think he misses his mother.”

“I doubt his mother misses him,” I shrugged.

“I can’t imagine any mother not loving such a child.”

“I don’t think Chabi is much of a mother. Did the boy mention her?”

“No. But he responds to mothering.”

“He probably gets it from servants and Theodore, not Chabi.”

“How could two dreadful people have such a sweet child?”

“I don’t know. Perhaps he picked up something from Theodore. Or, perhaps as the Khakhan suggested, he had a father other than George.”

“Everything we have heard about her is unflattering, but we don’t actually know anything about her ourselves, do we?”

“Carlotta, I hope you are always so kind and generous, but I think when her father, my father, and my brother agree on her perfidy, you can be sure of it.”

“I suppose so, but it doesn’t seem fair not to give her a chance.”

“You should no more judge a child by its mother than a parent by his child.”

“Now that sounds like something Hiacoomes might say.”

“I am flattered.”

Theodore returned after a little while and had his father’s book with him. He handed it to me. It was not large and not long. It was written in Mongol on the local paper and folded in the style of the people of Anahuac, rather than bound in the Hanjen style. The cover had the word Deus in the old language, but the rest was in the Uighur script. I thanked him for it and set it aside so we could chat a bit more before retiring for the night. We talked about various relatives for a while, and then Theodore stood up.

“I usually take John for a ride in the morning before breakfast. Would you like to join us?”

“Do you think he’d mind?” I asked.

“No, not at all. He is quite taken with Carlotta and that silly bird of yours. I’m sure he likes you, too.”

“Then we’d love to join you.”

“I’ll tell the servants to wake you in time. Goodnight.”

“Goodnight,” we both echoed.

“Do you think the boy really won’t mind us joining him?” I asked Carlotta as we followed the servant to our room.

“He already invited me to join him,” she said with a wry smile.

We got ready for bed and I set the book next to my side of the bed. The bed was just as comfortable as I remembered it. I kept a candle on my side so I could read some of Khan Henry’s ruminations. Carlotta and I talked a few minutes; then she fell asleep. I started reading. Khan Henry was not a good writer; his ideas were a bit scattered and cursorily presented. His point was that Deus was a god of love and the more we loved, the more we were like him. Unless we became like him, we could not join him, but must remain on earth until we changed. Deus did not punish, but could not allow us to join him unless we were loving, like he was. Therefore, we could not hate anyone or hold anyone in contempt or we could not join Deus.

It wasn’t clear what he meant by “remaining on earth.” Perhaps he was thinking in terms of the underworld of the locals. The idea of becoming “like god” was rather unusual also. I didn’t recall ever hearing that one before. I also wondered if he meant the heaven of the old religion when he mentioned “joining” god. Of course, the idea of a god of love who did not punish was rather new. I recalled Grandfather writing about Deus rewarding and punishing (according to his grandfather, Peter)—as my father had just reminded me. I wondered what my father would think of this book. I dozed off still pondering.

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Chabi, 105 K

(Mexico City, 1473)

The next morning we were up and ready to go when the servant came for us. We followed him down to the stables and waited for the others. Theodore and John eventually joined us and we mounted up. John was excited that Cuauhtzin was going with us and kept looking back to see him as we rode. We rode out of the stable and turned west. We crossed the causeway to Tlacopan getting salutes along the way instead of challenges. We rode around Tlacopan on the north side and into the countryside beyond. We reached the foothills of the mountains and turned back. We kept up a pretty good pace for this ride and could not say much to each other. As we reached the causeway on the return, I looked at the people waiting to be searched. I was surprised to notice no resentful or hostile looks at Theodore or John, only respectful bows. The soldiers saluted snappily and were also free of any resentful looks. I wondered how they all had managed to separate the odious policy from the young Khan and his protector. We returned to the stables and went up to wash before breakfast. Carlotta was amazed that I could find my way around the palace, but I always had a good sense of direction. We were all rather hungry by the time we sat down to eat. John was still excited about Cuauhtzin enjoying the ride and kept chattering about the “bird that rides a horse,” to Carlotta and even smiled shyly at me.

“I’m glad you could join us. You’ve really cheered John up,” Theodore said. “He usually gets depressed when his mother goes.”

“Why doesn’t he join her?” I asked, innocently.

“Well, she doesn’t want to interfere with his education.”

“Couldn’t you go along also?”

“Well, ah no. We think it’s best if one of the family remains in the capital at all times.”

“Didn’t you all used to go to Cuauhnahuac in the summer when you were a boy?”

“Yes, we did, but those were quieter times and the court wasn’t so large and...”

“Of course.” I decided to let him off the hook. “I was just thinking of the boy. I’m glad he has you with him.”

“Oh, well, it’s my pleasure. He is a fine boy and so intelligent. He’s got my brother’s brains. He can already speak most of the dialects of Anahuac as well as Mongol and Maya.”

“But not Otomi?”

“No, I’m not much of a teacher. I’ll have to find someone to teach him Otomi. I think he should learn it, don’t you?”

“Indeed. I have long felt that the Otomi are the backbone of Anahuac.”

“The backbone of Anahuac! I like that. Can I use that expression?”

“Of course.” I was beginning to wonder if he was simple. “What do you teach the boy?”

“Oh, why everything I know. I teach him riding and hunting and how to use weapons. You know he already is almost as good an archer as you are.”

“And probably a better swordsman. What else is he learning?”

“Oh, Nezahualcoyotl has teachers come in to teach him the languages, but thinks it is too soon to teach anything else.”

“Can he read yet?”

“He is learning. Christina started teaching him when she visited with us this winter and he is practicing faithfully. She promised to work with him again when she visits in the fall.”

“Sounds like you all are doing your best to educate him.”

“Thank you, Cacalotl. I wish you could teach him some of the things you know. Remember all the talks we had about the campaigns in the south? You knew so much more than I did.”

“Well, I had a lot of anecdotal information from the participants, but you had a better map.”

“I can take no credit for that. You know John likes maps, too.”

“Already we have something in common.”

“I can help John learn to read,” Carlotta interjected.

“Oh, would you?” Theodore asked.

“I’d love to. And you men can go play with your maps.”

“Wonderful. None of the teachers is due to come today, so he’s all yours. Would you like that, John?”

John nodded enthusiastically and Carlotta took his hand and headed for the library. Theodore and I showed her where it was; then, remembering my promise to the beggar, I suggested we first go to the market. Theodore agreed and we left the palace and walked together down the road to the market. I was surprised to see it was much smaller than I remembered and the goods were much poorer. There was still plenty of fresh food and I bought some already-prepared food as well as some fresh fruit. Theodore was puzzled that I was still hungry after all we had eaten for breakfast. Finally I found the beggar waiting near the far end of the market. I went up to him and gave him all the food I had bought. He thanked me profusely and even tried to kiss my hand before he slinked away. Theodore was bewildered and asked me if I knew that man. I replied that I had met him the day before. He remarked that the man reminded him of someone, but he couldn’t place him. We returned to the palace.

We repaired to the map room where we spent the rest of the morning examining terrain, commenting on campaigns, and speculating about the blank areas. We all got together for lunch, then returned to our respective activities again. By midafternoon we were mapped out and moved to the courtyard. I asked Theodore if he had read his father’s book. He admitted he had tried, but couldn’t make any sense of it. I asked if his father had written any more books, since it seemed to me he should have elaborated a bit more. He didn’t recall seeing any others, but invited me to look through the library as much as I wanted. I thanked him, and said I would.

“What do you think of Chabi?” I finally asked him.

“Well, she is nothing like my mother,” he offered.

“Her father seems to think she is rather...loose.”

“He said that?”

“His exact word was ‘degenerate.’ ”

“You mean he knows?”

“He will probably know we went riding together and spent most of the rest of the day looking at the map of the Khakhanate in about eight days.”

“You think he spies on us?”

“Of course, he does. He knows everything that happens in Anahuac and I suspect in the Clouds and the Green Mist as well.”

“He told you that he had spies in Anahuac?”

“Yes.”

“I had no idea. I wonder if George knew.”

“George had spies also, even in the Blue Sky.”

“But, I don’t understand. Why would George and Kujujuk spy on each other?”

“Because they didn’t trust each other.” I found his naiveté incredible.

“And Kujujuk doesn’t trust little John either?”

“He trusts John as much as anyone trusts a small child. But he doesn’t trust his daughter or Nezahualcoyotl or you. Although I assured him he could trust you and Nezahualcoyotl.”

“I am shocked. I’ve always trusted him.”

“Once he satisfies himself that you are trustworthy, he will trust you as much as he trusts anyone.”

“Does he trust you?”

“I doubt it.”

“Do you trust him?”

“Well, I sometimes think I understand him, but then he does things like approving the merchant tax.”

“Oh, the merchant taxes. You know Nezahualcoyotl tried to resign over that, but Kujujuk wouldn’t let him.”

“Yes, I heard. Do you have any idea why he approved it?”

“No, but I’m sure he had his reasons. You know, the tax really hasn’t brought in much money and the army is unhappy about enforcing it.”

“I heard about the army and my sister told me the tax would fail.”

“Do you think I should say something to Chabi?”

“No, I don’t. You just continue as you have. Take good care of the boy and see that he is well educated. Do not get involved in anything else if you can possibly avoid it.”

“Well, Nezahualcoyotl doesn’t come to me for advice and Chabi barely talks to me at all.”

“Does she talk to the boy at all?”

“Not often. He loves her, but she ignores him most of the time.”

“Kujujuk told me to avoid her at all costs. So if you hear she is returning, let me know so I can leave before she get here.”

“I will. You know Nezahualcoyotl will be here tomorrow.”

“It will be good to see him again.”

Late in the afternoon Carlotta and John joined us. John opened a book and read to us to show off what he had learned. We both praised him profusely and he beamed with pride. We went on to dinner and again Carlotta chatted with the boy while Theodore and I talked about banalities. The boy fell asleep at the table again and we all decided to turn in early and meet earlier the next morning for a longer ride. Once we were alone, I asked Carlotta if she minded spending all her time with the boy. She assured me she very much enjoyed teaching him and was very fond of him. I remember thinking she would be a wonderful mother if father's concoction should happen to work.

The next morning we rode across the causeway to Tepeyac and past the city into the wooded hills beyond. This trip did take a little longer than that of the day before. Again I looked for any hostility from either the people or the soldiers and found none. We cleaned up after the ride and rejoined for breakfast. After breakfast, Carlotta again took John to the library and Theodore and I went along to look for any other books by Khan Henry. We couldn't find any, but I did find some interesting books by my grandfather that I didn't recall seeing at home. One was about governing the Khanate and the other was about the various people in the Khanate. I took both of them up to my room to read in the evening, and then I rejoined Theodore in the courtyard where we sat and chatted. A little after the midday meal, Nezahualcoyotl joined us in the courtyard.

"Where is John?" he asked immediately.

"He is learning to read," Theodore answered.

"Wonderful. Who is teaching him?"

"Do you remember my cousin Cacalotl? His wife, Carlotta is teaching him."

"Cacalotl, it is good to see you again. So you have married! Congratulations. Any children?"

"No, not yet. And you? How have you been?"

"I am getting very old and feeling it more. But, tell me all about yourself. What has happened to you since you and my son parted company in Tamalameque?"

At the risk of boring Theodore, I briefly outlined what had been going on in my life the past nine years. He listened intently, nodding occasionally. When I finished, he asked me a few questions about some details of life in the frozen north. Then glancing at Cuauhtzin, he asked if that was the same bird he had given me when I was a child. As if to answer, Cuauhtzin burst out in a stream of Otomi curses. He laughed heartily and for a moment he looked like a much younger man. Then he grew serious again.

"You are still young men and most of your days are before you. I will soon die and, frankly, I am ready to go. I wanted to tell you, Theodore, that I have decided that my youngest should succeed me."

"But he is just a little older than John," Theodore protested. "What about your other sons?"

"They are all fine boys, but this one is special. I knew it when he was born. He is the one I want to succeed me."

"Did you tell the Khakhan of your wishes?"

"Yes. He agreed to honor my wishes as long as I remained regent. It is my fate to die unhappy with that woman ruining the Khanate of Anahuac."

"You are speaking most frankly," Theodore admonished.

"You are an uncomplicated man, Theodore." He smiled indulgently at him. "I hope you remain so, in spite of everything. You, on the other hand, Cacalotl, are almost as interesting as your brother."

"If you are referring to my brother, Theodore, he is far more interesting than I am."

"Not to me. I am naming Acapipioiltzin regent for my son, Nezahualpili. I would ask you both to watch out for the boy's welfare. You, Theodore, watch out for him physically. You, Cacalotl, watch out for him morally."

"But what about John?" Theodore was clearly upset.

“Don’t worry, Theodore. I just want you to think of him once in a while and make sure he is safe and learning his manly skills. I don’t expect you to abandon your nephew.”

“I didn’t mean that, Uncle. What will become of John if you die?”

“We all die, Theodore. At my age it is rather overdue. The Khakhan already has a regent in mind in the event of my death. He is on his way here now. It is his second son, Toragana. He will rule with an iron fist, I’m afraid, but he will get rid of Chabi.”

“Well, that’s a relief, Uncle. Of course, I will be proud to keep an eye on your boy, Nezahualpili. I better go make arrangements for Toragana’s stay, if you will excuse me.”

“Of course, my boy. Anyway Cacalotl and I have much to discuss.”

“Isn’t Toragana a little young to be a regent?”

“Yes, but he’s not too young to be a puppet.”

“I see. Do you think he will step aside when John is old enough?”

“I think so. After all, John is also related to the Khakhan.”

“Among some of the tribes in the north, he would be the Khakhan’s successor, rather than Juchi.”

“Yes, I know. I always found it interesting that they had so little faith in their wives. It speaks eloquently of their full appreciation of how much we are at the mercy of women ultimately.”

“I trust my wife completely and without reservation.”

“I also trusted my wife, so. But at the same time she figured in the thing I have most regretted in my life. Knowing how things work in the world, I suspect you never heard of the incident. Have you ever heard of the poet, Cuacuauhtzin of Tepexpan?”

“No, but you may recall, I was not much for Nahuatl poetry.” I was bewildered that he was telling me something so personal and hoped I could dissuade him by changing the subject.

“That’s true. You preferred to live poetry than to read or write it.”

“Live poetry?”

“Yes, what is poetry but our pathetic attempts to rival nature’s beautiful flowers, streams, mountains, birds, and animals by expressing our thoughts and feelings in words. But you deflect me from my tale. It was not long before the death of your illustrious grandfather that I found myself walking along the shores of Lake Texcoco considering my lack of a wife. I had wandered near the city of Tepexpan when its ruler, Cuacuauhtzin, caught sight of me and hurried out to invite me to visit him. Since he was one of my subjects, I felt it would be rude not to do so. While we sat down to dinner, the most beautiful young girl came out and began to serve us our meal. She proved to be Azcalxochitzin, daughter of Temictzin (a noble Mexica), who was betrothed to Cuacuauhtzin. She was still rather young, so he had not yet taken her to wife. I was thoroughly besotted with her and to my everlasting shame made arrangements to get rid of Cuacuauhtzin. I sent him on campaign and made sure he would be in charge of the Maya tumen. He did not suspect anything until he was placed in charge of the Maya; then he knew and sent back a poem lamenting his fate and my betrayal of his friendship. I can still recite the poem from memory and every word cuts into my heart like a sword.”

He then recited the long poem in Nahuatl. It was something of a lament over the loss of the things the poet most loved about life, and the betrayal of his friend who hated him and marked him for death, but whom he hoped would regret his actions and mourn him. It ends with the hope his friends would be happy and his expectation that he would take the beautiful flowers and songs with him. Not surprisingly, Nezahualcoyotl’s voice broke a few times as he recited the poem. It was a very uncomfortable moment.

“Do you have any such regrets, Cacalotl?” he asked after he had composed himself again.

“I have regrets, sir, but none like that.”

“Good, I would not wish them on anyone. I sincerely hope I have been just enough in all my other dealings to mitigate my guilt in this matter somewhat.”

“Why do you tell me this, sir? It is none of my business.”

“No, I don’t suppose it is any of your business. Still, I have asked you to look out for the moral welfare of my son, so I feel you should know my worst deed, so that one day, when he is old enough you can tell him, so he learns from my mistake.”

“Why do you choose me to watch out for your son’s moral welfare? To most people I would seem a very strange choice.”

“I have told Acapipioztzin that you are to have access to the boy whenever you wish. He also expressed surprise. I wasn’t sure about you myself until yesterday when you met a nameless beggar in the market as you had promised and gave him food.”

“How would you know about that?”

“Have you never heard how I go about in disguise from time to time?”

“The Khakhan mentioned it to me. You were that beggar?”

“Yes. I have kept an eye on you since you first came to Texcoco as a boy. I saw something in you then, although no one else did. You are a genuinely good man and I want my boy to be good, as well as wise and a fine warrior. Can I count on you?”

“I will talk to the boy whenever I can as you wish.”

“He is a fine intelligent boy. You will find him a joy to talk to.”

“You always had a philosophical bent, sir. Are you familiar with Khan Henry’s little book about Deus?”

“Yes. He and I had many discussions about gods. I read his little book, but felt he needed to elaborate considerably. He was working on just such an elaboration when he was killed. There is an ancient Toltec god called Tloque Nahuque who is described as invisible as the night and intangible as the wind. He is the creator who invents all life. I have contemplated him and written poems about him for years. I think he is like your Deus. “

“Henry seemed to think Deus was a god of love and we could ‘join’ him if we were also loving. Do you know what he meant?”

“We talked about it. He felt that if one was loving he became like god and thus, when he died, would be with him. He wasn’t clear as to in what capacity such a one would be with him. He seemed to feel your god took personal interest in you, unlike ours.”

“But you only revere this Tloque Nahuque?”

“He is more logical than a god that needs to be fed blood or hearts or flayed skins or even children. A real god should have no needs and can in no way depend on us for anything.”

“My understanding of Deus is that he rewards the good and punishes the evil; he doesn’t actually need anything from us. We are supposed to worship him, but the most important thing is that we are good, not whether we have worshipped him according to some ritual or other.”

“Do you worship him?”

“In a way. Grandfather wrote that our ancestors worshipped by doing the best they could in their jobs and offering that as veneration. I have tried to do the same.”

“Your people don’t have much use for priests, do you?”

“We have always found them to be more about power and control than about god.”

“That is so true. Speak about these things to my son. Don’t give him answers, encourage him to find his own.”

“I will do my best.”

“Good, then I can die in peace.”

“If you live as long as my grandfather, you have another twenty years to live.”

“Your grandfather was a very special man. Neither of us will live as long as he did. I doubt if even your father will live that long, although he will easily outlive me. He is a very vigorous man.”

Theodore rejoined us and assured Nezahualcoyotl that Toragana would have the second-best room in the palace. Chabi, of course, had the best. But he didn't feel he could move her out at this point. Nezahualcoyotl asked if that wasn't John's room. He admitted that it was, but was sure the boy wouldn't mind since he would move him into his old room and he would take one of the guest rooms for himself. Nezahualcoyotl shook his head.

“I don't know how you were ever born into this family.”

“What do you mean, Uncle?”

“Never mind, dear boy, just don't change.”

We repaired to dinner and Carlotta and John soon joined us. Carlotta was introduced to Nezahualcoyotl and instantly recognized him as the beggar. She told him that his bearing was too grand to be a beggar. He chuckled. John was very respectful and a little shy around his great-uncle, but was pressed to show off his reading. He looked up hesitantly when he finished the passage, a bit of Nahuatl poetry. Nezahualcoyotl smiled at him.

“Excellent, young man. Every word perfectly pronounced. Soon you will learn to read poetry with feeling. Like this.”

He then proceeded to recite the very same poem in its entirety from memory. It is hard to describe what he did. Suddenly he was a young man, full of vigor again. His eyes danced, his arms and hands moved lightly, easily, and gracefully. The words took on a life of their own. They seemed to explode into images in the mind and the images were moving like music, colorful like an explosion of feathers, fragrant like field of flowers. I could not imagine how he did that or how anyone else ever could. We were all spellbound during the recitation. When he was done, John piped up.

“Can I really do that soon?”

“Yes, you can. Let the words take over your soul. Become the words. Then, you can read poetry.”

We all drifted off to bed in silence. Carlotta asked me why I never had liked Nahuatl poetry. I suggested that she had married a man without a soul. She laughed and observed that she was certain very few people could recite it as did Nezahualcoyotl. She was right. I read one of Grandfather's books for a short while, but soon had to turn in.

I don't know what woke me up in the middle of the night, but something didn't feel right. I got up and looked around, but found nothing. Puzzled, I returned to bed. We woke up early as usual and went down to the stables to join Theodore and John on their morning ride. When we got down there, we were surprised to see that there were no servants there yet. The sun was almost up, so it seemed rather odd, but I didn't think anything of it. Suddenly a strange guard came up and asked us to follow him. I asked if anything was wrong with John or Theodore. He said he didn't know, but had been ordered to get us. We followed him down into the basement area where the execrable George had put together the fire-throwing machine. We passed by the machine and went into a long corridor eventually coming to a bare room.

“You will wait here,” the guard said, closing the door, locking it from the outside and leaving us in the dark.

“What do you think this is all about?” Carlotta asked.

“I have no idea,” I had to admit. I couldn't remember offending anyone recently.

We felt our way around the walls of the room, but found no opening of any kind. The room seemed to be quite clean, there was no smell, and there was nothing on the floor, which seemed to be of stone like the walls. The door admitted very little light, but occasionally we would see a little bit of light flash by, likely from a person

passing with a torch. Eventually we sat down on the cold floor to wait. Cuauhtzin did not understand the untimely dark and kept muttering in Otomi. I had noticed that the guard was not dressed as a palace guard, but seemed to have a fancier uniform. I wondered what unit he belonged to. Finally a light approached close to the door and it was thrown open. We were blinded at first and Cuauhtzin let out a memorable shriek.

“You will follow me,” a guard with a drawn sword indicated to me.

“What about my wife?” I demanded.

“She will stay here, with the bird,” he said coldly. “No harm will come to them.”

Carlotta urged me to go and perhaps find out what this was all about. Cuauhtzin very reluctantly let go of my arm and attached himself to her. I kissed her forehead and promised to be back as soon as possible. I followed the guard out of the room. There were two more guards in the corridor. One of them resecured the door and they positioned themselves, one in front and two behind me. They were all three dressed in the fancy livery. I decided not to engage them in conversation, but I was weighing the possibility of disarming one of them and fighting the other two if it proved necessary. We did not go up any stairs but remained in the basement wandering along the corridor and passing many other closed doors. Eventually we came to a door, which showed light inside. It was opened and I was led inside.

I looked around. It was a large room and had thick rugs on the floor and ornate hangings on the walls. There was a chair on a platform at the end opposite the door, but it was not occupied. There was a closed door on the right and a large bed on the left, also empty. I could not imagine what sort of a room this was. The guard in front of me moved around behind me with the other two and we all stood there waiting. Finally the door on the right opened and a slim woman who was perhaps a little beyond my age, but was so dissipated that she looked rather like a tart well past her prime, entered the room. A sword poked me in the back.

“Kneel before the Khan’s mother,” one of the guards ordered.

I knelt down. This was Chabi! How did she sneak back into the city without anyone knowing about it? What did the vile creature want with me? My disgust was such that it was palpable to me and, most unfortunately, obvious to her. Her appraising glance narrowed to one of anger, then twisted to one of fury.

“You dare to find me repulsive?” she screamed in my face.

“Perhaps you misread my expression, I am merely puzzled by your bringing me here this way.”

“I am not stupid, wretch. I know disgust when I see it.”

“How could I possibly be disgusted by such beauty, highness?” I lamely tried to protest and bowed humbly.

“Well,” she mused. “You are a strange-looking one. Perhaps I misread your expression. I saw your father once, but he is a repulsive old twig. You are interesting, however. Are you pale all over? You remind me of the tlacaztali, except that you are not quite that pale and you have darker hair. Still your hair is not decently black, it is brown, and your eyes are blue like the tlacaztali. Is your eyesight poor also?”

“No, highness, it is not.”

“Well, let’s see the rest of you.”

“Excuse me?”

“Don’t play the fool. Take off your clothes. Do you need the guards to help you?”

“But that would be indecent.”

“Do as you are told.”

I began to undress reluctantly. I shot a glance at the guards, but their eyes were straight ahead. I felt completely humiliated, but stopped when modesty demanded it. She laughed and demanded that I finish the job. From the icy look in her eye she could not be dissuaded. I removed the undergarment and stood before her with my hands

strategically placed. Her expression was growing more impatient as she waved my hands away. I was burning with embarrassment, but I was also furious at being treated in this way.

“Well, perhaps we could get that little thing to salute me properly.”

“Really, madam. You are treating your husband’s cousin like little more than a slave.”

“You fool. You dare invoke my late husband’s memory. The last thing he told me was that he wanted you dead. If you don’t please me sufficiently, I’ll grant his last wish.”

“That is disgusting; we are related!”

“Disgusting? What are you, a prudish Mexica? How dare you judge me? From the look of you I won’t find any pleasure with you anyway. Your poor wife must be very frustrated. But don’t worry, when my guards are finished with her, she’ll know what it’s like to have a real man.”

I’m not exactly sure what happened next. I do remember an explosion of fury in my head. Then I dropped to the floor, grabbed some of my clothes, rolled to the left, jumped up and pushed the startled guard at that end into the other two, knocking them into the bed. Then I raced through the door locking it behind me. I could hear her screaming at the guards to get me immediately, but quickly ran in the darkness back to the room where Carlotta was. My unerring sense of direction served me well and I got to the room first. I forced the door open and urged Carlotta to follow me quickly. We ran back to the stable where we found one of the regular servants. He was startled by my lack of dress, but I urged him to get me to Nezahualcoyotl’s room by as secret a route as he could. He led us quickly through a door and up some stairs to a corridor. We then ran down the corridor to a room. He opened the door and led us in.

“Cacalotl?” Nezahualcoyotl looked up from his chair in surprise.

“Forgive the intrusion, sir,” I panted. “Chabi is in the palace and means us great harm.”

“Colotl is a special friend of mine. I’m glad you happened on him. He will slip you out of the palace and over the lake to Texcoco tonight. You will have to leave the bird with me, however, for he will compromise you. I’ll bring him to you as soon as I can get away. Meanwhile, you can trust Colotl completely. Do exactly what he tells you to do. You know where to take them, Colotl.”

“Thank you, sir, and thank you, Colotl. Somehow I will repay you,” I said, scrambling to dress myself properly.

“To do the bidding of Nezahualcoyotl is payment enough for me,” Colotl smiled. “Follow me.”

I gave Cuauhtzin to Nezahualcoyotl and he protested piteously, but did not shriek. Colotl took a candle and led us behind a piece of furniture and into a hidden passage in the wall. We went along a narrow, descending passage to a tiny room. He told us he would return for us in the night and urged us to speak only in whispers. Then he disappeared back up the passage, leaving us in a sort of twilight. I couldn’t tell where the light was coming from at first, but eventually noticed that there were small cracks in the wall. I could not see out them but was sure the wall was an outside one. I told Carlotta what had happened, except for the specifics of the threat to her. She shuddered that we had come so close to being killed.

After a while, Colotl returned with some food for us and again promised to be back that night. I asked if Chabi’s guards were looking for me. He replied that they had been looking around, but did not explain what they were looking for. Most of them had left the palace and were scattered about the city. Chabi did not explain her sudden return, but had apparently arrived in the night. Theodore and John had waited for us before going riding, but no one had seen us this morning. When they returned and Theodore saw Chabi was back, he had himself gone to our room to warn us, but saw that we had left our things and disappeared except for the bird whose noise led him to Nezahualcoyotl’s room. He asked about us, but the latter only told him that we were safe. The boy, John, had tried to tell his mother about Cuauhtzin and us, but she ignored him and told him to go learn something. She was clearly furious, but would not say anything about us openly.

That night Colotl returned with some more food. Once we had eaten, he led us down another corridor to another room. At the back of that room was a secret door cut into the wall. He opened it and led us into a low narrow tunnel, which took us for some distance to the south if I still had my sense of direction. The tunnel ended

suddenly, and Colotl knocked on what appeared to be a wooden door above. There was the sound of furniture being moved on a wooden floor; then the door was opened and a small ladder was lowered. We climbed into a small house with a thatched roof. A young couple welcomed us into their home graciously. Colotl told us that they could be trusted and we should do as they told us.

The couple proved to be Cuauhopoca and Teuxoch, both from Texcoco. They were dressed like peasant fisher folk, but were clearly too genteel for the role. He admitted that they had only learned how to fish recently, but could act the peasant quite convincingly when necessary. They would take us over the lake to Texcoco early in the morning. Meanwhile we should rest. We were awakened well before dawn and given some rude clothes reeking of fish to wear. Then all exposed skin and hair was stained dark. We then walked humbly out of the hut carrying our nets and climbed into the acali (the simple boat all the fishermen use). We began paddling down the canal to the lake. Before long, we were challenged by some of Chabi's guards. We stopped immediately and all bowed humbly. They raised their lantern to peer at us, but the stale fish smell discouraged them from pressing the examination and they waved us on. Finally, we reached the lake and started paddling unobtrusively for the far shore.

About halfway across the lake, we were met by another acali, also occupied by two couples, which quietly pulled up next to us and quickly gave us over half of the fish they had caught. We then continued on to the far shore and they went back to fishing. Soon the sun began to assert itself, but it also revealed a mist hanging a few feet above the surface of the lake. We were able to see and avoid the larger patrol boats, which could not see us. We reached the far shore before the mist lifted. We put in at a small village well north of Texcoco. Cuauhopoca steered us to a small hut at the southern end of the village. We put in on the beach and began to unload our fish and hang our nets out to dry (we had dunked them briefly before putting in). Carlotta and I went into the hut while the others took the fish to sell.

Before long they returned and, removing the table and rug, revealed another trapdoor to a tunnel. Cuauhopoca told us to follow the tunnel to its end. There a woman named Cuiauhxochitl would meet us and get us to Texcoco. We changed into our own clothes, but the fish smell clung to us anyway. We followed the tunnel guided by a small torch. It seemed to lead us east, away from the lake, for a while, and then it turned south. Finally we came to hidden entrance among rocks and trees. There waiting for us was a lovely young lady. She smiled when we emerged and introduced herself as Cuiauhxochitl. She led us to through the woods to the south on a path seen only by her to another such hidden tunnel entrance. We entered the tunnel and followed it to the west and south until we came to a door, which led into a tiny room. At the back of this room was a hidden door in the wall, which opened to a narrow corridor. This led us to another room, but we continued on to emerge behind a large piece of furniture in a large spacious room.

"Welcome to Texcoco," Cuiauhxochitl announced. "You will be safe here. My cousin, Lord Nezahualcoyotl, will come to see you as soon as he can."

"May I ask you if my brother, Theodore, has anything to do with this escape route?"

"It is best not to ask any questions and repay us by forgetting the route immediately."

"As you wish, my lady. Thank you and all the others for helping us."

"It is an honor to help."

She thoughtfully led us to the washroom and brought us fresh clothes. It took awhile, but we finally got all the fish smell off of us and put on the new clothes. Once we were ready, she told us that we were in the house of Cueyatzin, her father and cousin of Nezahualcoyotl. The house was on the northern outskirts of Texcoco. We could wander all around the house, but it would be best if we did not venture out of the house at this time. All the servants could be trusted and our host would join us tomorrow. She led us to the dining room for a wonderful meal, and then left us in the central garden. We were finally safe.

(Texcoco to Cuernavaca, 1473)

We were still relaxing in the garden late that afternoon, when Cuiauhxochitl came to get us for dinner. She was the only member of the family at home at the time. Her father was in Tenochtitlan trying to help a relative. Her brother, Coloticmiztli, was on campaign and was not expected back for a few more years. Her mother had died a few years ago and her father had not remarried. Carlotta asked why such a beautiful young woman was not married. She laughed and said she would marry the next spring. Her betrothed was also on campaign and was expected back by then. We both expressed the wish that he return safely to her. The dinner was excellent; her cook was clearly an artist. After dinner Cuiauhxochitl showed us to our room and left us alone.

The room was large and beautifully appointed. There were a few books in the room, but they were all Nahuatl poetry. Without the venerable Nezahualcoyotl to recite them, they held little interest for me, but Carlotta read them for a while. I looked out the window across the lake and wondered what was going on in Tlatelolco. Then I looked up at the stars, and the thought occurred to me that it really didn't matter, and in any case, it was out of my control.

The next morning we rose early and went down to the garden. The many flowers were fragrant and perfumed the air. Cuiauhxochitl joined us and led the way to the dining room. She had no news from Nezahualcoyotl as yet, but her father would be returning later that morning and perhaps he would. As far as she could tell there was no interesting gossip in the Texcoco market, except that Chabi's guards were looking for someone, but did not say who or even what he looked like.

We were back in the garden later that morning when Cueyatzin came in. He was a large man with huge shoulders. He bore the scars of a man who had been on many a campaign. His weathered face broke into a warm smile in greeting and he apologized for not being home to welcome us properly when we arrived. We assured him that his daughter had done that most graciously and apologized in turn for the intrusion. Once the banalities were out of the way, he told us the news.

"My cousin told me what happened to you. Since you went underground, Chabi's guards have been searching discreetly all over the palace, all over the city, the lake, and the surrounding cities. Chabi knows that she has overstepped her bounds this time since she is not denouncing you in any way nor admitting to anyone that she has ever seen you. Meanwhile, Toragana has reached Cholula and should be in the capital in a day or so. Chabi still does not know he is coming or why, but should at least know that he is coming soon. Nezahualcoyotl will remain in Tlatelolco until he comes. He told me to tell you that Cuauhtzin is as rude as ever."

"The poor thing," I chuckled. "He probably wonders what happened to me. I can't thank you and Nezahualcoyotl and Cuiauhxochitl enough for all your help."

"It is a pleasure to help you young people and at the same time thwart that disgusting creature Chabi. I understand that Kujujuk has come up with a creative fate for her, but I don't know what it is."

"I don't suppose it occurred to him to punish himself for imposing her on us in the first place."

"I think his intention was to impose her on the hapless George, then give her enough rope with which to hang herself. But the damage she has done to Anahuac is significant, and I don't know that Toragana is the man to set things right."

"I don't know Toragana or anything about him. I suppose I should feel flattered that my life was considered worth more than all the others she used and killed, but somehow I'm not."

"The relative value of individuals' lives is a subject for dreamers. You have been on campaign. What is the value of the life of a single scout? If he never comes back, we only trouble ourselves to remember in what direction he went, not who he was or in how much esteem he was held by his family. You're 'value' is, frankly, symbolic. The Khakhan is simply using you as an excuse because you are a famous warrior descended from the great Raven. Toragana was on his way long before anything happened to you."

"Well, once we are no longer fugitives, I think we will return to Cuauhnahuac for a while and try to stay out of any more intrigues."

“Intrigue has a way of seeking one out, but I hope you are successful in your plans. Meanwhile, I’ll let you know if I hear anything else.”

We continued going from our room to the garden to meals for another two days. On the evening of the second day, we noticed quite a rocket display over Tlatelolco. It wasn’t any holiday, so I correctly assumed Toragana had arrived and was being given a big welcome. The next morning after breakfast, we were sitting in the garden as usual when Cuiauhxochitl came to us followed by Colotl.

“Colotl,” I greeted him. “Is there any word from Nezahualcoyotl?”

“Yes, sir. The speaker has asked me to take you both to his palace. Chabi has been arrested by Toragana and his assistant wants to hear your version of what transpired between you.”

“We will come at once. Thank you again, my lady, for your most kind hospitality. And please thank your father for us, again, also.”

“It was our pleasure. You must come and visit us again under more pleasant circumstances.”

Colotl led us out of Cueyatzin’s house and down to the lake. There the large personal boat of Nezahualcoyotl was waiting for us. We were swiftly carried down to the palace, which was just south of Texcoco. Servants met us at the dock and led us up the steps to the palace. Upon reaching it, we were led to the washroom where fresh clothes were laid out for us. Once we were ready, we were led to a small dining room to eat a midday meal. When we had eaten, we were led to a large throne room. There was an imposing golden throne at the far end on a platform and to its right, an ornate wooden chair on a lower platform. We were led to a spot in front of the platforms and asked to wait. The servant disappeared through a door behind the throne. Before long, the door opened again and Nezahualcoyotl entered the room followed by a tall, dour-looking man of middle years. He stood very straight and tall was clearly quite fit. Both men took their seats and Nezahualcoyotl turned to me.

“Minghan Commander Cacalotl, son of John the Healer, this is Mahtoe, assistant to Toragana, regent of the Khanate of Anahuac. He wishes to hear your version of what happened to you a few days ago in the palace of Tlatelolco.”

Mahtoe was a Hotcangara name, but he didn’t particularly look Hotcangara. He fixed me with a cold look. I told him everything that happened up to my escape, which I summarized as “getting my wife and escaping from the palace.” When I finished, Mahtoe turned to Nezahualcoyotl, nodded and got up. They both exited through the same door from which they had entered, and shortly a servant came out and led us to a very pleasant balcony overlooking the lake. He told us to wait there. Before long Nezahualcoyotl joined us.

“Well, my boy, all that unpleasantness is now behind you.”

“I hope Mahtoe was satisfied with my testimony.”

“Indeed, it conformed exactly with that of Chabi’s guards.”

“They turned against her?”

“Once they realized her star had fallen, they immediately turned on her. The unit will be issued new uniforms and sent on campaign right away.”

“Cueyatzin suggested that Kujujuk had special plans for his daughter.”

“Indeed. She has been exiled to an island I never heard of. It is called Amona. Do you know it?”

“I think it is near Boriquen. As I recall, only birds live there.”

“Well, they may want to move once she settles in. She is being sent there alone with deliveries of food once a week. I don’t think someone like her will last long like that.”

“It seems unusually cruel. Why not just put her to death?”

“No member of the Khakhan’s family can be put to death. She could kill herself, of course, but I don’t think she will. She is furiously writing to all of her relatives to prevail on her father to change his mind. The letters will never be delivered, however. Her fate is set.”

“It will be hard for me to sympathize with her.”

“Indeed. But let us leave her to her fate. I want you to meet my son, Nezahualpili, now.”

“I would love to.”

A servant led a young boy onto the balcony. He was not particularly tall, but looked rather sturdy; he would be a strong, muscular man one day. He had none of John’s shyness, but bowed respectfully to his father first and then to us. His father introduced us and he looked at me appraisingly. I had the feeling he was asking himself what this strange-looking person could possibly have to teach him. But he again bowed graciously.

“It is an honor to meet a man my father holds in high esteem.”

“You are most cordial.” I returned his bow. “It would seem you and I are to have some conversation from time to time.”

“I am at your disposal, sir.”

“Why don’t you two get acquainted,” Nezahualcoyotl said. “I’ll show Carlotta around the palace.”

When they left, the boy and I sat down on a bench in front of the balcony wall. I asked him about his studies and he indicated that they were still emphasizing Nahuatl prose and poetry in Texcoco. I told him about my few days here and how they ended ignominiously. He said that his father implied that I was very well educated elsewhere. I told him about my education, adding that the lack of Nahuatl literature in it was perhaps a cultural preference rather than a conscious judgment on its merit. He agreed, admitting that he had read some of my grandfather’s books but found them difficult to follow. I assured him that if his education mirrored that of his father, he would be well educated indeed. Then I turned to my entrusted subject.

“What do you understand about right and wrong?”

“That which is wrong goes against good order. That which is right furthers it.”

“What do you consider ‘good order’?”

“The way things should be?”

“How is that determined?”

“By custom, tradition, laws.”

“Are they arbitrary?”

“They shouldn’t be. There should be a greater good served by them.”

“And if there isn’t?”

“They should be changed.”

“How?”

“By the ruler—in consultation with his advisors.”

“What if they do not support the change?”

“If it serves the greater good, then he must do it—alone if necessary.”

“And if the people don’t agree?”

“The ruler still must do what he thinks is right. Otherwise he does not deserve to be the ruler.”

“And if the people revolt and depose him?”

“As long as he is certain he did the right thing, he should have no regrets and accept his fate bravely.”

“What if the ruler is subject to a higher ruler?”

“He should still try to change what is wrong.”

“Even at the risk of incurring his superior’s wrath?”

“Yes. A ruler’s first duty is to his subjects. He must sacrifice himself for their welfare.”

“What if a ruler thinks only of his own comfort?”

“He should be deposed.”

“What if most of the ruler’s subjects do not want him deposed?”

“One must take a stand on the right whatever the cost to him personally, even if he stands alone.”

“What if he endangers his family by such a stand.”

“You always need to weigh the consequences of your actions, but the greater good should always be the final choice.”

“How can you be sure what is the greater good?”

“You have to look at the situation from all angles and make your best interpretation of the consequences of your several courses of action. Only rarely can you be absolutely sure, but that is why one studies and learns from those wiser than he.”

“I think you do your father proud. You have answered very well, Nezahualpili. We will talk again.”

He decided to show me around the palace and did so very ably. He was particularly pleased with a high terrace on top of the palace where he loved to study the stars just as his father did. I told him that my grandfather had written in one of his books that the Hanjen believed the stars controlled the destinies of men. He said he doubted that because they are so orderly and man is so disordered, but he was inclined to think that they could indicate natural events—like earthquakes, floods and such. I wondered what my grandfather would have thought of that answer. He also enjoyed the famous garden with the tame animals I had so enjoyed as a boy. It was there that I was reunited with Cuauhtzin who let out an ear-piercing shriek in greeting and promptly flew to my shoulder and firmly attached himself. It was at this point that Nezahualpili looked like a boy, finally, instead of a small adult. He grinned at the bird and began to laugh when the latter lectured him in his foulest Otomi. I showed him how to pet him and Cuauhtzin soon was making his little contented sounds. Before long Carlotta and Nezahualcoyotl joined us. The latter was certain we were here when he heard the shriek.

Nezahualcoyotl sent his son back to his studies and sat with us in the garden for a while. I told him how impressed I was with his son and how little I thought the boy needed my input. He thanked me, but assured me that eventually I would see the need for my help. He asked me if I remembered his first legitimate son and heir, Tetzauhiltzintli. I knew of him, of course, but I never met him. After I left on campaign, he was accused as being a member of the Tenocha revolt, although he was only a boy of thirteen. He arrogantly admitted being a part of the revolt, called the Mongols vultures feeding on the corpse of Mexica-Tolteca culture and denounced his own father as a lackey of the Mongols and a traitor to his mother’s people. Nezahualcoyotl’s mother, Matlalcihuatl, was the daughter of Huitzilihuitl, the second Tenocha Mexica Speaker, and the sister of both Moctezuma and Tlacaelel. Tetzauhiltzintli’s mother, Azcalxochitzin, was the daughter of Temictzin, half brother of Matlalcihuatl, Moctezuma, and Tlacaelel. Nezahualcoyotl, needless to say, was never suspected of having any part in the revolt, but his son was duly condemned and executed by the proscribed method for the ruling classes of Anahuac, strangling. I had not heard of the incident until Theodore joined me on campaign. I remember being surprised that George would have the boy, his own cousin, executed. Of course, that was what he wanted to do to me, but at least I was seventeen years old and a more distant cousin.

“I never met him,” I answered.

“He was very well loved, but did not love well in return. Still, had I been given the choice, I would not have condemned him to death. I always held out hope for his redemption. I suppose he never gave any indication of coming around, but while he lived, I could still hope. A part of me never forgave George for having him

executed. But most of me understood the action. Not even the nephew of the Khan can be forgiven for raising his hand against him. At the time I thought it was punishment from Tloque Nahuaque for the evil way I married the boy's mother. Indeed, at that time he was my only son by my wife and I knew my people would not accept one of my natural sons as Speaker. Then, several years ago, my beloved Azcalxochitzin proved to be with child after twenty years of being barren. It seemed like an appropriate punishment that my line should die out for what I did, and yet at the last minute, it was restored and this wonderful boy was born. He is nothing like his brother. Tloque Nahuaque is not only just, but he is merciful."

"It would seem." I didn't know what to say.

"In any case, I believe you and Acapipioztzin and Theodore are the best men to watch over my boy's training when I am gone. I am also glad you all served together on campaign. That gives you an added bond."

"I have always had the greatest respect for Acapipioztzin and Theodore, but I could not pretend to be close to either, I'm afraid. You must remember, they both went on campaign as tumen commanders while I was a mere arban commander."

"Did they treat you like a subordinate instead of a friend?"

"I only served under Theodore at the end, after my tumen was wiped out, but neither he nor Acapipioztzin ever treated me as anything but a friend. I must admit I avoided them most of the time to prevent any apparent favoritism."

"Yes, I know. Acapipioztzin told me how you stuck out among the Maya like a tree in a field of centli, but made no move to seek him out. He understood why at once and was not bothered at all."

"He doesn't miss much, you know. Even then, he saw through George's explanation of the death of Khan Henry."

"He was ahead of me there, but then I was upset about my son's involvement in the sordid business, and too distracted to question George's version of the events."

"There is something else you should both consider," Carlotta said.

"What?" I asked, as we both turned to her expectantly.

"The boy, John, loves his mother very much. No matter what we may think of the woman, or how little she deserves his love, he loves her, and must be devastated that he will never be allowed to see her again. He was starved for motherly attention when I was with him and now he will think it has been taken away from him forever."

"What do you suggest?" asked Nezahualcoyotl.

"Could he stay with his aunt Christina? I know he loves her and she must love him also."

"She is married to the son of the Speaker of Cuauhnahuac," I said. "John would have to live with her, and it wouldn't look good for the Khan to live out of the capital."

"It is true," Nezahualcoyotl agreed. "He could stay with her during the summer, but would have to spend most of the year in Tlatelolco. It is not as though he is ignored. Theodore dotes on him."

"Yes, I know. But when I offered to teach him he looked like he was drowning and I had just pulled him out of the water. Is there no woman who could take an interest in him, mother him?"

"If Theodore would marry," I suggested, "his wife might be willing."

"That is unlikely," Nezahualcoyotl shook his head. "He spends all his time with the boy. Usually one doting parent is enough. Why do you think he needs to be mothered?"

"I don't know exactly," she said thoughtfully. "Perhaps it is because his mother apparently rejected him, and he thinks there is something about him that made her reject him."

"Well, once he is old enough," I suggested, "he can be set straight on that account."

“I don’t think he will want to hear that the woman who bore him is a vile animal not worthy of his further consideration,” she retorted.

“I see your point,” Nezahualcoyotl shrugged. “I don’t know what to suggest. I can urge my wife to visit as often as she can, but she dislikes Tlatelolco, like so many of the Tenocha Mexica do. Could you look in on the boy from time to time, Carlotta?”

“I would love to, but I wouldn’t want to intrude. Would Toragana object? Or better yet, does he have a wife?”

“He is not yet married,” Nezahualcoyotl frowned, “and when he is, it will hardly be a love match. As to whether he will object, I don’t know, but I will make some discreet inquiries. Meanwhile, why don’t you both go back to Cuauhnahuac, and I’ll try to get the boy sent there to visit with Christina.”

“Oh that would be wonderful”—she smiled—“Carl, could we visit him while he’s there?”

“I should think so. At least I’ll find out,” I replied.

“Well then,” Nezahualcoyotl rose up, “I’ll go back to Tlatelolco. You can draw horses from the stables when you’re ready to go. But, of course, you are welcome to stay here as long as you like. And Cacalotl, don’t forget to come by and talk to my son.”

“I won’t,” I promised.

Carlotta was as ready to return to Cuauhnahuac as I was, so we went right to the stables and selected two horses. Late the next day, we were riding into my father’s compound. He was gone again, but Tetl was there to greet us. We cleaned up and enjoyed the evening meal. After the meal, Tetl joined us in the garden, and we brought him up to date on all that had happened. He was appalled by my experience with Chabi and fascinated by my escape from the palace.

“I had often heard that people could disappear in the Palace of Tlatelolco,” he marveled, “now I understand how.”

“I’m sorry we must be vague on the exact details of our escape,” I explained, “but we promised to do so.”

“Of course” —he smiled—“I can let my imagination fill in the details.”

“When will my father return?”

“One can never be too sure, but he indicated he would be back by the end of summer.”

The following day we received a note from Christina inviting us to visit her and her family. She mentioned that John would be coming that evening, and she wanted us to be there when he arrived. Carlotta wondered if anyone had bothered to explain our sudden disappearance to John. She said that people often ignore children’s worries and they are often unable to express their concerns. I was beginning to wonder how she had become so attuned to children and suspected that perhaps she was thinking too much on the subject. I had the grace not to express these misgivings, however.

We arrived at the Palace of Cuauhnahuac in midafternoon. The servants took our horses and ushered us through the entrance and into the garden. Christina came out to greet us. She had grown into a lovely woman. Her husband, Cuauhcoatl, a small, slight man, followed her and also greeted us warmly. He told us how honored his family was to finally be related to the family of the great Raven. I thanked him for his hospitality and made the usual empty extravagant praise of his family. Actually, the Speakers of Cuauhnahuac had always been quite loyal to the Khan of Anahuac, but otherwise, none of them have ever been remembered for anything. Still, Christina seemed to be quite happy in her marriage and it was not my place to object to the alliance.

“John should be here shortly,” Christina said.

“Do you know whether Chabi has been sent away yet?” I asked.

“Yes,” Cuauhcoatl answered too eagerly, “she was led away kicking and screaming last night. It was quite a disgusting spectacle.”

“We did not see it,” Christina added with some relief, “but Cuauhcoatl’s cousin happened to be in Tlatelolco last night, and arrived here this morning.”

“Yes, he gave us all the juicy details,” Cuauhcoatl added triumphantly, confirming my low opinion of him and making me wonder about his cousin who rode all night just to be first to deliver a bit of gossip.

“Did John see his mother dragged off like that?” Carlotta asked.

“No, thanks to Theodore,” Christina shook her head. “He whisked the boy away yesterday afternoon and took him to Texcoco for the night. They will be arriving from there this evening.”

“Did John speak to Chabi after she learned of her fate?” Carlotta asked.

“I don’t know,” Christina looked at her husband, who shrugged his ignorance. “Why do you ask?”

“If Chabi talked to him, she may have blamed us for what was happening to her. He may think we are the reason his mother has been sent away forever.”

“I never thought of that.” I looked at her with some surprise. “Do you really think he would blame us for her fate?”

“In a way, we are responsible, Karl,” she said simply. “If she blames us, then it would make sense to get her revenge on us through her son. After all, he does love her and one day he will be Khan.”

“What do you think we should do?” I was startled by the logical progression she had made. “Do you think it is more likely she will have blamed me alone, since she never actually met you.”

“No, she will blame me more than you,” she sighed. “You rejected her on my account. She probably reasoned that if it weren’t for me, you would have cooperated and none of this would have happened.”

“If I had never known you, my revulsion would have been the same, but without the threat to you, I might have hesitated before taking on her guards.”

“I think Christina should make sure that John does not blame us for his mother’s fate before we see him again.”

“Carlotta is probably right, Christina, she seems to understand the boy very well.”

“If you think that is necessary.” Christina looked uncomfortable. “It never occurred to me that Chabi might try to turn the boy against you. She never seemed to pay any attention to him.”

“We would not want to further upset John. If there is the slightest indication he blames us, we will slip quietly out and return home,” I said. “Perhaps there is a place where we could remain out of sight?”

“Of course.” The fussy Cuauhcoatl led us back toward the entrance. “I’ll show you.”

He took us to a room just off the entrance where we could wait with the door ajar so we could hear what transpired in the entrance hall. Christina promised to find out how he felt about us and let us know right away. We sat down behind the door to await the arrival of John. Once we were alone, I asked Carlotta how she had managed to fathom the mind of a creature like Chabi. She said that she had known people like that before and vengeance was always paramount in their minds. I asked whom she had known who was anything like the miscreant Chabi. She said she preferred not to talk ill of the dead, or dredge up unpleasant memories. I decided not to press the point. After all, she was probably right, and I should be learning from her example. She then asked how Chabi had threatened her. I was forced to explain the threat. She thanked me for trying to shield her from that bit of information and strongly suggested I not consider espionage as a career. I was suitably chagrined.

At length we heard the clatter of a large number of horses arriving. We could hear Christina’s pleasant voice and the ingratiating braying of her husband, but we couldn’t quite make out the words. We then heard Theodore’s hushed voice and John’s tiny voice, but still could not make out any of the words. The procession of muffled voices proceeded through the entrance hall and into the garden well out of earshot. We waited in silence for a long time. Finally Christina came in looking very upset.

“You were right, Carlotta,” she said with tears flowing freely. “The monster did turn him against you. Theodore wants to see you before you go. I must go back now.”

“Wait, Christina.” Carlotta stood up. “Please try to be a mother to him as much as you can; he needs you desperately.”

“I will,” she sobbed as she ran back out of the room with her hands over her face.

I was a little puzzled that she took it so hard, but I suppose she was rather sensitive. The truth was I didn’t really care if we had anything to do with the boy or not, but I was bothered that Carlotta was upset. Eventually, Theodore joined us in the room. He looked very tired and older than he really was.

“Thank you for waiting for me,” he began. “I feel it is all my fault. When you didn’t show up for riding, I thought you had decided to sleep late and took off with John. He was a little upset, but I explained that you had probably just overslept and would go with us the next day. When we returned, we were told that Chabi was in the palace and I ran quickly to your room to warn you. There I ran into one of Chabi’s guards ransacking the place and I ordered him out. He left and I gathered your things and took them to my room. Then I went to see Nezahualcoyotl and he told me you were safe and not to worry about anything else. Meanwhile John had tried to see his mother and had been rebuffed as usual, so I took him with me for some weapons practice. He asked if I had found you and I told him you had had to leave suddenly on some personal business. He asked if you would ever come back again and I said of course you would. Things went along as usual until Toragana arrived. He barely got in the door when he announced to Chabi that she was under arrest. Unfortunately, he did this in front of John and I had to hold him back from running to her defense. He fought me fiercely as she was being hauled off. I could only calm him down by promising to take him to see her. I had some difficulty convincing Toragana to let me see her, let alone John. He had locked her in a dank cell with no light while he and Mahtoe questioned all her entourage. Once everyone had denounced her, they were all variously disposed of, the guards to campaign, the servants fired, and the sycophants stripped of all rank. Then he had her dragged up before him in chains and announced her punishment. I had begged him not to let John see his mother like that, but he insisted that the boy witness her condemnation. She screamed and wailed at the sentence and John cried and tried to go to her but was held in check by two guards. She was dragged back to her cell until arrangements could be made to get her out of the city with as little fanfare as possible. It was at this point that Toragana allowed John and me to visit her. She begged me to intercede with her father and brother for her, and I said I would do what I could. Then she told John that he must always remember those who did this to her and repay them. He asked her who had done it and she said, ‘Cacalotl and his wife.’ He was surprised and obviously hurt, but then darkened and said he ‘would get back at them.’ I am so sorry. I should have kept him away from her. I have been unable to convince him he is wrong to blame you, but I will not give up. He must understand that what happened to her, she brought on herself.”

“Don’t worry about it,” I shrugged. “At least it will be some time before I need to get out of the Khanate of Anahuac.”

“If he will listen,” Carlotta said, “tell him I love him.”

“I will.” He slumped a little.

“We better go now.” I got up.

We left the palace and found our horses waiting for us, held by a servant. We mounted up and he handed us a torch to light our way. I thanked him and we returned home. We did not speak all the way home. I don’t know what Carlotta was thinking of, but I was thinking of a way to suggest to her that we permanently move to Itsati and live among sane people. I only hesitated because it would be too cold in the winter for Cuauhtzin, and I didn’t want to leave him behind any more. I began to think perhaps we could live there in the warm months and farther south in the winter, perhaps the Alligator Ordu. That night Carlotta clung tightly to me and cried over the loss of the miserable little brat. I just held on to her and eventually we fell asleep.

(Cuernavaca and Mexico City, 1473)

The next morning we got up as usual and went about our business, with me studiously avoiding any subject that might upset Carlotta and her looking rather resigned and heaving deep sighs from time to time. I suggested a walk around the mountain and she readily agreed and packed up a small lunch for us. It was a beautiful warm summer day. The sun dappled through the trees. A light breeze would caress us occasionally. Cuauhtzin challenged every bird we encountered keeping him very busy. Insects buzzed; frogs croaked; birds chirped and sang. We drank it all in silently. We found a nice spot by a small stream to sit and eat our lunch. After eating, we sat a while before continuing.

“Do you know what I’ve been thinking of?” Carlotta asked suddenly.

“No, I can’t imagine,” I replied hoping it had nothing to do with a certain miserable child.

“I’ve been thinking about the wonderful exile we shared in the north. It reminded me that as long as I have you with me, I don’t need anything or anyone else.”

“I knew what I was doing when I fell in love with you at first brief sight so long ago,” I said as I squeezed her tightly.

“I can still see the handsome little boy with the light brown hair turning back to look at me,” she said dreamily.

“I’m so glad you came back for me.”

“It took me long enough, but you haunted my dreams until I did. Only you were even more beautiful than I remembered.”

“And you turned into such a big strong man! I could only just see that little boy in you.”

“Can we go away somewhere together?”

“You know, I would like to meet your Ani’ Yun’-wiya relatives.”

“Have you been reading my mind? I was just thinking about going back to see them and introduce you. We would have to spend the winter farther south, however. It gets too cold there for Cuauhtzin.”

“Just so we’re there next spring.”

“We could manage that if we travel slowly enough, but why next spring?”

“That’s when the baby is due.”

“What?” I was thunderstruck.

“Your father knows what he is doing. We will have a baby in the spring. If it is a boy, I want to name him for your father.”

“And if it’s a girl?”

“Then we’ll name it after your mother or one of your sisters.”

“Why? What about your relatives?”

“The only reason we’re having this baby is because of your father and I really didn’t know my mother or my relatives except for Hiacoomes, of course.”

“I can’t see naming the child after my mother, she was such an unhappy person. But I could see naming her after my sister Mathilde.”

“A wonderful choice! I want to visit her on our way to Itsati.”

“How soon shall we go?”

“As soon as your father returns. I want to tell him myself and thank him for making it possible.”

She was radiant on the way home, but my mind was racing in all directions. I wondered if she would have a difficult pregnancy and if she was in any danger from it. I wondered if we should even travel if she was with

child. Wouldn't it be hard on her? What if my father was delayed and we couldn't leave until winter? The path through the mountains to the coast was difficult in the winter. Would it be too hot for her along the coast? Suddenly I noticed she was singing a little song in a strange language.

"What is that?"

"A song my mother sang to me when I was a baby. It came back to me when I realized I was with child."

"Is that language of your grandfather's?"

"Oh no, only they spoke that. It is my mother's language, Wampanoag. You know Hiacoomes thought that your old language sounded something like my grandfathers' language."

"The written language? Where did he hear that?"

"When Theodore was visiting us, right before Hiacoomes died, they were talking about the home and language of my grandfathers."

"They were? What did they say?"

"Well, as I remember, Theodore asked if they were from the east or the southeast and Hiacoomes said from the southeast. Then Theodore asked if their language was anything like your written language and he said a few words in it. Hiacoomes said he could detect a resemblance, although he thought their language was not quite so guttural."

"Guttural?"

"Yes. He thought my grandfathers' language was smoother, easier on the ear. He wondered if Theodore was mispronouncing the language since it was mostly a written language."

"Well, from what my grandfather wrote, it was the only written language in the old country, but everyone spoke another language that was nothing like it. We have lost the spoken language, but still have the written one. He did say that our second name, Waldman, meant 'man of the forest' in the spoken language. That would be 'vir selvae' in the written language. Other than that I don't know anything else of it."

"Well, Theodore seemed very interested in it."

"I wonder what that was all about. There are times when I wonder if I even know him."

"He is a very interesting man. Do you suppose his wife knows what he's up to?"

"Maybe we'll visit them while we're at it."

"I've always wondered what she was like."

"I only met her briefly right after they were married. She seemed like a very nice person, not at all devious."

"I wouldn't call Theodore devious. I would just say he keeps his own counsel."

"I'd call him devious."

"Well, he is your brother and he has been more than a little helpful to you."

"Oh yes. But he is still devious."

We arrived back late, but Tetl had kept dinner for us, and he was delighted to see we had returned in such a good mood. Carlotta told him the news and he congratulated us warmly. He also had some news about my father. He had taken ill and was on his way back. I thought it odd that he would travel if he was ill, but Tetl said that the note did not elaborate on his condition, it only said that he would arrive back in a day or so, and he was ill. I asked Tetl if he thought it was serious, and he had to admit my father had never mentioned he was ill in a note before, so he was a bit concerned. I suggested we send a note to Theodore, but Tetl admitted he had no idea where Theodore might be. Of course, he did have a way of materializing whenever I really needed him.

It was dusk the next day when my father arrived. He did not ride in but was brought in on a wagon. The people that brought him—who insisted on helping in very broken Nahual—tenderly carried him to his bed. It turned

out they were Yope of all things. I had no idea my father was in the south. He whispered to Tetl instructions on making a mixture of herbs for him. Then he motioned one of his companions close to him and whispered something in a very strange tongue. The man rose up and motioned his companions outside. They set up a vigil just outside the house. Carlotta and I sat on either side of him and held his hands. He dozed fitfully for a while.

At length Tetl returned with the medicine and I lifted my father up so he could drink a little. He drained the cup and I set him back down. After a few minutes, he looked a lot better and he sat up in the bed. He asked us to help him to the door. We took him to the door; then he pushed us away and stood on his own. He opened the door and spoke to the Yope in their language. They all laughed and cheered and started off in the dark. He then closed the door and collapsed into my arms. I carried him back to his bed amazed at how little he weighed. He rested a moment; then he spoke to us.

“I had to do that for the Yope or they would have stayed there fasting until I died, and then for seven days after. They’d have never made it home in such a weakened state, and they would not have accepted our hospitality to recuperate. Now listen carefully, I don’t have much time. Give my notes to Theodore when he arrives and show him the bundles I brought back with me. When I am gone, I want to be buried between Metztlaconac and Paula. There is enough room there and Tetl knows the spot. I want to leave the property to Tetl with the understanding that my children are always welcome here. I urge you two to leave Anahuac and never return.”

“You know? How?”

“Theodore sent me word.”

“But how could he know? These things just happened. Where is he?”

“You should know by now not to ask how he knows things. He is very near and may yet arrive in time.”

“Oh John,” Carlotta said with tears streaming down her face, “we had such good news for you.”

“I know, my dear. I saw it in your eyes a while ago. I am very happy for you.”

“But father, is it safe for her to travel? Is she in any danger for the pregnancy?”

“Theodore can tell you those things when he gets here. I am very tired now.”

We again took up our places holding his hands and Tetl fussed about bringing us things to eat and drink. My father’s face softened in his sleep and he looked so peaceful. Not long before dawn, I woke up with a start and saw him looking above him with the tenderest smile on his face. His chest was just barely moving, so I knew he was still alive. Tetl had fallen asleep at the foot of the bed and Carlotta smiled wearily from across the bed. Suddenly, he heaved a deep sigh and was gone. The smile remained. I wondered what he thought he saw. I closed his eyes and awakened Tetl. He looked like he had lost his best friend. He begged me to let him prepare everything for the burial. I agreed with much relief since I had no idea what one was supposed to do. Carlotta and I went out of the house to watch the sunrise. I noticed that the wagon was still there with all of father’s bundles on it. I decided to leave it that way for Theodore. Because of the mountains, the sunrises are not particularly dramatic in Cuauhnahuac. Indeed, it is light for a while before one can see the sun poke over the mountaintops. But while we quietly watched, a lone horseman approached up the path. The sunlight behind him made it hard to recognize him. Finally he drew near enough that I could make out Theodore.

“I am too late?” he asked getting quickly off his horse.

“Only by a little,” I replied. “He left some notes for you and those bundles on the wagon over there.”

“I knew if I stopped to help that man, I’d be late,” he sighed. “But what can you do? That’s my job.”

“He would never fault you for that.”

“No, but he would have been furious if I hadn’t helped the man.”

“What was the matter with him?”

“He is seventy-eight years old! What do you think was the matter with him?”

“But Grandfather lived to be ninety-five.”

“True, but Grandfather was very unusual. Seventy-eight is a very good long life. I only hope we live so long. By the way, Nezahualcoyotl died yesterday.”

“He did?”

“Yes. That’s why I wasn’t here yesterday. I was with him until he died. Then I rode madly here, but had to stop in Xochimilco to help a man who was badly injured by a fall from a horse. I had him under control by late last night; then I came on here.”

“You must be exhausted.”

“Is Tetl taking care of everything?”

“Yes, he insisted.”

“Good. I will take a last look and then go get some rest. I’ll see you two at dinner.”

Once he disappeared into the house, Carlotta clung to me and began to cry softly. I held on to her gently and let a flood of memories sweep over me. At that moment, I realized that I would indeed be leaving Cuauhnahuac and never returning again. My last link to this place was severed. I was glad I had been able to bond with my father the previous spring. It was good to feel a connection with him at last even now that he was gone. I had always felt untethered, like I had no roots ever since my grandfather died. Now I had roots, but they did not hold me. I could freely move on. How, I wondered, would I be able to fulfill my promise to Nezahualcoyotl and how could I attend his funeral? No doubt Theodore would have some ideas. I led Carlotta to our room and we lay down and took a nap. When we awakened it was midafternoon, and I suggested we go to the sweathouse. Carlotta agreed and we fired it up and took a good sweat bath. Cuauhtzin waited on top of the sweathouse for us but had remained very quiet all day. We plunged into the cold stream afterward and towed ourselves dry. We went into the house and waited in the garden.

After a while Theodore joined us and bid us follow him. We went out of the house and went to a small cleared area just beyond the flower garden behind the house. There a fresh grave had been dug and father’s shrouded body lay next to the grave. Tetl and Theodore lowered the body with ropes and stood quietly for a moment. He moved to stand at the foot of the grave.

“God of our fathers”—he broke the silence—“accept your servant John who has always done his best at his chosen profession to honor your name. More than once he has been your instrument of healing, always he has poured himself out in service to your people. Welcome him now into the rest of those who stand at your right hand for all eternity. Help me live up to his shining example and truly honor his memory.”

He moved aside and motioned me to the spot he had vacated. I moved to the foot of the grave. No one looked at me, but I knew I was expected to say something. I searched my mind for a moment.

“God of our fathers,” I finally said, “if love is all we take into the next world with us, this man, my father comes before you heavily laden. He has always been an inspiration, but I only recently appreciated it. Help me learn from his memory.”

I stepped aside and Carlotta stepped into my place. She quietly cried for a moment, then looked up.

“God of all people, thank you for this wonderful man who gave life to my husband and helped me bring forth life in turn. He accepted me like a daughter into his family and gave me a home. May I always walk in his shining path.”

Carlotta stepped aside and Tetl took his turn. He said a long prayer in Otomi, and then added this.

“God of John the Healer and all his family, thank you for letting me stand in their midst and live in the warmth of their love. You only loan us such men and you have been most generous to us, leaving him with us for such a long life. I only ask that I may soon follow him in the paths of the spirit, wherever they lead.”

A few of the other servants took turns saying a few words, but I can't remember any of them. When all were done, we each took a handful of dirt and let it fall slowly into the grave. Then Tetl, Theodore, and I filled in the grave. We stood quietly for a while, then walked silently back to the house. We ate dinner in silence, all of us lost in our thoughts. We got up and drifted away to our rooms. Carlotta held me tightly through the night. I slept rather fitfully and kept waking up. Early the next morning, we gathered in the garden before breakfast. Only Theodore looked cheerful.

"Enough of this moroseness, father would not approve at all," he said looking at our glum faces.

"We mourn our loss more than his passing," Carlotta said quietly.

"I suppose I thought he would live forever," I added. "You know he had such a sweet smile on his face right before he died."

"Often when people die, their loved ones come to lead them away," Theodore explained. "I'm sure Mother came for him. Perhaps our grandparents as well."

"Really?" I asked.

"Oh yes," Carlotta agreed. "I have often heard of that."

"I hope he comes for me," Tetl said.

"What about the woman who loved you?" I asked.

"That would be nice, but I don't deserve to see her."

"What you said about taking love with us into the next world was interesting, Karl," Theodore said. "From where did you get that?"

"Khan Henry wrote a little book about God. The idea was his."

"Interesting. Did you discuss that with Nezahualcoyotl?"

"Yes, I did. Why?"

"He said something about that on his deathbed. He hoped he had loved enough in his life to have something to offer Tloque Nahuaque. I guess he did not revere Texcatlipoca like most Alcolhua—although I understand some consider Tloque Nahuaque an aspect of Texcatlipoca. Whatever that means."

"Tloque Nahuaque is supposed to be a supreme god, much like our Deus. We talked about it one day. Is there any way I can go to his funeral without being seen by the little miscreant John."

"Karl!" Carlotta scolded. "You're being very unfair to the boy. He loves his mother and she said we were responsible for having her sent away. He's only six years old. He is devastated and must feel guilty because he liked us and yet his mother blamed us for her fate. He feels we betrayed him. It is not his fault."

"Nevertheless," Theodore said, "it would be best if you avoided the boy for now. He will, of course, be at his great-uncle's funeral. It will be in Texcoco, so it will be easy to smuggle you in and with the likely throng in attendance you can certainly be there unnoticed."

"Good. But I need to speak to Nezahualpili before I leave Anahuac. Can you get him a message to meet me at Teotihuacán two days after the funeral?"

"I should think so. Why Teotihuacán? You could meet at the house of Cueyatzin."

"I have my reasons. I promised Nezahualcoyotl to speak to him from time to time and I want to speak to him there before I go. I also want to show the place to Carlotta."

"It's odd. Grandfather was entranced by the place also. I admit the pyramids are impressive, but other than that it's just another ruin."

"It is 'The Place of the Gods,' " Tetl said indignantly. "They are right to honor it."

“It was built by men, Tetl, not gods,” Theodore said. “The city was overrun by Chichimeca and abandoned. The Totonaca claim they built it. So do the Mixteca. Neither of them are gods.”

“Neither of them could have built such things,” Tetl sniffed. “I have seen their cities and they are nothing like Teotihuacán.”

“Well, then, perhaps it was built by the mysterious Nonoalco.”

“What are you two talking about,” I finally interjected. “I don’t care who built it, I find it impressive.”

“The Nonoalco were the artisans who built the great cities of the Totonaca, the Tolteca, the Mixteca, the Ben Zah, and even the Purepecha.”

“I can’t imagine such a thing,” I said. “It sounds like an attempt of one group to take credit for all the culture of Anahuac. Where are they supposed to be from?”

“The coast south of the Totonaca.”

“There is nothing there but jungle and, of course, chocolatl.”

“There are some ancient ruins there too, and some very large and rather ugly heads.”

“Heads?”

“Yes. Heads with helmets on them. Tlachtli players I suspect.”

“Tlachtli players in the jungle?”

“Yes. I have seen their tlachtli courts also. You know the Maya play the game, don’t you?”

“So do the Taino. Why would anyone carve a huge head of a tlachtli player?”

“Well, perhaps you don’t remember, but in the old days, the losing team lost their heads.”

“So they were honored for losing with a statue?”

“I don’t know, I just think the helmets look like tlachtli helmets.”

“So you think whoever carved those heads were the Nonoalco, who spread culture among the primitive barbarians of Anahuac?”

“Don’t be so defensive. You might say we Mongols brought culture to Anahuac. After all, everyone was indulging in human sacrifice before we came in and enlightened them.”

“Your brother is toying with you,” Tetl interjected. “Don’t pay any attention to him.”

“What are your plans for the house now that it’s yours, Tetl?” I asked.

“I am grateful to your father for his generosity, but I cannot accept his bequest. It should remain in your family. I will be happy to remain here until I die and am buried at your father’s feet.”

“He meant for you to have it, Tetl,” Theodore said. “You should accept it to honor him.”

“There is no point. I have no one to whom I can pass it on. I accept the gift and freely return it to you both and your children.”

“We both live in the north.”

“You may choose to retire here like your grandfather did. If you do, it will be waiting for you.”

“You have no family at all?” Theodore asked.

“None,” Tetl replied. “Except, of course, for you.”

“In that case, Karl and I will accept your generous bequest of this house and land when it is your time to make bequests.”

“There is another matter I need to discuss with you.” I changed the subject. “Is it safe for Carlotta to travel now that she is pregnant?”

“As long as you take it easy, no long hard rides over rough terrain.”

“Since it was so hard for her to get pregnant, is it likely she will have problems?”

“It isn’t likely, but it is possible. It is always possible. I take it Father gave you something to enable your pregnancy?”

“Yes,” Carlotta answered. “I stopped taking it when I was sure I was pregnant. Should I have continued?”

“No, you should have stopped. How far along are you?”

“I should deliver in the spring.”

“Make sure you are among those who can help you by late winter. Where do you plan to go?”

“We are going to Itsati,” I interjected, “but not until the spring. It is too cold there in the winter for Cuauhtzin.”

“It will be warm enough in the late winter. Follow the melting snow to Itsati and you will be in good hands. If possible, I’ll meet you there just to make sure all goes well.”

“That would be wonderful,” Carlotta said.

“How did you know what happened to us in Tlatelolco in time to send word to Father about it in Yope country?”

“I arrived in Tlatelolco the day you went into hiding. Colotl is an old friend of mine and he told me what happened. I knew where father was and sent him a message by dispatch rider. He sent the message that he was dying back by the same rider.”

“How do you have access to dispatch riders?”

“That’s a long story and I think it is time for breakfast. We will have to get going if we’re to make Nezahualcoyotl’s funeral.”

“Do you know when it is?”

“Tomorrow morning.”

We ate quickly and set off for Texcoco. I asked if it was likely we would run into John, but Theodore said he, Theodore and Christina had gone the day before. They should almost be in Texcoco. We rode at a steady pace and arrived at Xochimilco after dark. We went down to the docks and Theodore found someone who would take us to Texcoco. The boat glided through the inky waters. Overhead the stars hung low in the sky, and the moon, a mere sliver, rose above the mountains in the east. The cities of the lake were partially lit up as were the causeways leading to the twin cities. Tenochtitlan was lit up along the shore but was dark farther inland. As we approached Texcoco, we could see that the palace was well lit, but the town was only lit along the shore. We put into the town.

Theodore paid the fare and led us into the town. He stopped at a house not far from the dock and knocked on the door. The door opened to reveal an ancient man whose wrinkled face broke into a gap-toothed smile as he ushered us eagerly into his little house. Theodore introduced him as Ahuezotl and assured us we were in the best of hands for our stay in Texcoco. He then slipped out and went on to the palace. Our host served us a light meal and then showed us to a small room with a bed just big enough for us both. Early the next morning a scratching at our door awakened us. Ahuezotl told us that we had best get ready, since the funeral would start soon. We quickly got dressed and he led us out of the house and to the town square. We stayed well back in the crowd and blended in as best we could.

After a while, a procession approached from the south. Nezahualpili was leading the procession with Acapipiltzin just behind him. Behind them was a cart carrying the remains of Nezahualcoyotl. Behind the cart were the rest of the family and all the relatives. In this group I could see my cousins Theodore, Christina and

John. Behind them were the various officials of Texcoco and then the palace household. My brother was among this last group. I saw Mahtoe and a much younger man, probably Toragana, just behind young John. Nezahualpili looked devastated but bravely performed all the necessary rituals leading up to the lighting of the pyre. Once it was lit, the crowd began to drift away and the procession began to return to the palace, but Nezahualpili remained behind watching the pyre. We moved down a side street when the crowd dispersed, but I continued to watch Nezahualpili quietly watching his father's remains reduced to ashes. Finally Acapipiltzin came back for him and led him back to the palace. We returned to Ahuezotl's house.

Early the following morning, Theodore came by with horses for us. He told me that Nezahualpili would meet me in Teotihuacán the next day. We embraced him and he promised to keep an eye on us until he saw us again next spring. I had the distinct feeling he meant that literally. We thanked Ahuezotl for his hospitality and he packed us a bundle for lunch. We rode north out of Texcoco toward Teotihuacán. We didn't stop until we arrived at the site in the early afternoon. I showed Carlotta the pyramids and she insisted on climbing the taller one. Once on the top, we ate our lunch and looked out across the plain. There were many mounds covered with dirt and vegetation. Trees had sprung up in many places, and except that wood was in short supply in Anahuac (many tree stumps dotted the area), I suspect the site would be a forest now. The pyramids were largely covered by dirt, and some grass and bushes had taken root, but they were still quite discernible, and the stairs could still be followed up. Actually the stairs looked like they were periodically cleared. Carlotta also experienced the energizing phenomena on the top of the largest pyramid.

After a while we went back down the stairs and repaired to the yam that was nearby for the evening. There was a mixed lot at the yam, but most were merchants. They were buzzing a little about the funeral, but most of them were talking about the repeal of the hated merchant tax. I wondered if that would be enough to bring Sarah and her family back to Anahuac. They had left Chalco that summer as they had said they would. We kept to ourselves and were ignored by the others. We turned in early.

The next morning we ate breakfast and rode back out to Teotihuacán. We rode all around the site, trying to get some idea how large it was. It was really too hard to tell, but it looked very large indeed. We climbed up both pyramids and well as all the other mounds. There were a few bald spots among the mounds that revealed dressed stone underneath. We were atop the larger pyramid when we saw a small group of horsemen ride into the site. They rode up to the base of the pyramid and the boy Nezahualpili began to climb up. Carlotta wished me luck and started down. At length the boy arrived at the top a little after Carlotta arrived at the bottom. He sat down next to me and tried to catch his breath.

"I thought cousin Theodore was to see to my physical training."

"Stand in the center for a moment and you will be refreshed."

"Of course." He stood up and moved to the center. "It has been a while since my father brought me here. I had forgotten about that."

"Do you know why I wanted to meet you here?"

"Perhaps to avoid our misguided cousin John?"

"No, but now that you mention him, do you know what his problem with me is?"

"He blames you for his mother's exile."

"Do you know what actually happened?"

"Yes. Father told me all about it. John is wrong and when he gets older, I'll try to enlighten him. Right now he is very stubborn."

"Don't bother trying to change his mind. I am not your subject and you need not feel obliged to take my part. You must learn to pick carefully the causes you will fight for. I am sure John will give you many reasons to disagree with him over the years. If you argue them all with him, he will consider you more trouble than you're worth and move to get rid of you. That will do your people no good at all. Instead be a friend and confidant to him, so you can move him away from some of the more odious ideas he spawns without turning him against

you. Since you are closer to his age, he will likely pay more attention to you and may even emulate you, so make sure you give him a good example, without preaching about it. I suspect Toragana will pay no attention to him, so there will be little influence there. You and Theodore can do much to keep him from becoming like either of his parents.”

“Your counsel is, as usual, most wise. I will do what you suggest. Meanwhile, why did you ask me to meet you here?”

“There is a custom among the people of the north called a spirit quest. My family has adopted that custom and I think it is most worthwhile. I wanted to explain it to you and urge you to take it up in the next few years so that you will always have a special counsel in my absence.”

“What is involved in this spirit quest?”

I then explained the concept to him and various steps of preparation and difficulties and pitfalls inherent in the practice. He listened attentively and asked questions until he fully understood the custom. He was very intrigued and wondered why it hadn’t caught on in Anahuac by now. I suggested it was because the people of Anahuac had always felt superior to the people of the north, just as the people of the north had always considered the people of Anahuac decadent. But no matter, one can always learn from others if one makes the effort. He was quite excited about getting started and asked if I was sure he should wait a few years.

“It is best not to rush into the spirit quest,” I said. “You need to be old enough and well trained enough to survive alone on a mountaintop. The idea is not to endanger yourself, but to remove all distractions so that you are open to your spirit guide. You are wise beyond your years, but you need to develop more physically so you can survive alone. Toughen yourself up and learn survival skills and you will be ready. Meanwhile you can fast and practice meditation if you ever find yourself left alone for a while.”

“I see what you mean. I am rarely left alone. Someone is always teaching me something.”

“Learn what you can. It can only help you. Meanwhile, I will write to you from time to time and do reply to me and I can tell you when it is time to make your quest.”

“Where can I reach you?”

I gave him a rough outline of my travel itinerary, but suggested he only write to me in care of my sister Mathilde at the Pelican Ordu. I promised to write to him within the month. He thanked me and we walked back down the pyramid together. When we reached the bottom, we made our farewells and mounted up. Then his party moved southwest and we rode east. I had decided to take the northerly route to Texcalla through Otumba and Tepeapulco. We stopped for the night in Otumba and the next morning set off again toward the east. By midday we were winding our way through the pass from the Valley of Anahuac to the Valley of Texcalla. I could not see the lake from here, but it would be the last time I saw any of the Valley.

32

Journey to Itsati, 105–6 K

(Mexico to Eastern TN, 1473–74)

We made it to Tepeapulco well before dark and settled into the yam. There were very few people there since this was not as traveled a road, but the yam was small and cozy. We set out early, as usual, and went on to Texcalla. We spent a day in Texcalla and scoured the market for gifts for all my relatives. We were only partially successful. No one would ever accuse the Texcalla of excessive taste. We left the city early and some eight days later came in sight of the sea at the Totonaca city of Cempoalla. We spent a few days there wandering around the city, buying more gifts, and bathing in the warm waters of the sea. Cuauhtzin was a little uncertain about the sea and would not get too close to it. Other than that he had been a very good traveler. I had clipped his wings (at Tetl’s suggestion) before we left and it proved to have been fortuitous. More than once something along the road spooked him and he took off from my shoulder only to flap frantically to the ground where I could pick him up again. I brought along his portable stand to set him on at night and the yam keepers allowed him in our quarters as long as we kept him on it. I’m sure the trip was quite an adventure for him—at

least he seemed to be enjoying himself. He would challenge any birds that we encountered, shriek alarm whenever he spotted a raptor, and hurl imprecations in Otomi at anyone who had the temerity to cross our path. Most of them would stare at him and then look at us in bewilderment, but the occasional Otomi would burst out laughing. It was fortunate they had a good sense of humor.

At length we set off northward at a leisurely pace arriving in Tuxpan ten days later. We also tarried a few days in Tuxpan. My grandfather's monument was still in excellent condition and whoever had touched it up had the skin tone much closer to the mark than before. I think he had Smoking Mirror too dark, however, unless his descendants were much lighter than he was. We did not delay anywhere else along the way and about a month later found ourselves approaching the long pontoon bridge across the Thanuge River and into the Khakhanate of the Blue Sky. We didn't know it at the time, but we would never again set foot in the Khanate of Anahuac.

Once across the river, I asked the sentries on the far side if they knew of any fairly new merchants in the area. They suggested I try in the nearby town a short distance up the road. The town had sprung up over the past year and was called Khilbalikh or "Frontier City." It seemed to be made up of refugees from Anahuac many of whom were merchants. The town was not large and the housing seemed to be almost entirely the conical hide tents, set up in neat rows on either side of the road. I asked around and was finally directed to my sister's dwelling. To my surprise she and Tepeyolotl were living in one of the tents. They greeted me warmly, but both looked rather frail. All of my cousins were gone, but they expected Teypachtli back any day. Chipilotl's husband had returned from campaign and had come to get her late in the summer. Icpitl had gone with her for a short visit. We probably just missed them on the road. Iztacyochitl and John were on their first merchant trip to the northeast and would be back in the winter. Teypachtli had just gone up the Thanuge to get some of the teoxihuitl stones mined there.

I asked if they had recovered enough from their injuries to be left alone like this and they insisted that they had. Nevertheless we decided to stay with them until Teypachtli returned. It soon became apparent that we had made the right decision. They were frail because they hadn't eaten much for a while. We fixed them a decent meal from our travel stores, and then I asked them how they liked living in the tent. They admitted it took getting used to, but was necessary because the town had a way of getting flooded if it rained too much. I asked if the town would break up now that the merchant tax had been repealed. She told me it was unlikely, because most of the people here were fed up with Anahuac and would not return. I asked if they would return now, but they said they wouldn't.

The next day I set out to do some hunting while Carlotta looked after Sarah and Tepeyolotl. I had a hard time leaving Cuauhtzin behind, but Carlotta fussed over him until I was out of sight. Sarah mentioned that it had been a dry summer, so I decided I should go up the Thanuge rather than inland onto the plain. It was very late in the day before I found some deer tracks. I followed them up the river until nightfall; then I made camp. The next morning I followed the tracks again. By midmorning I found myself in a thicket and soon came upon the small herd of deer. I thought it best to get two of them, so I had to make the shots count. I got off the first shot without making myself visible and the herd bolted parallel to me rather than away. I quickly got off the second shot, but this time they saw me and immediately disappeared into the shrub. I dressed the two deer and loaded them on the horses. On the way back, I wasted a few arrows trying to get some of the large rabbits. Either they were too fast for me or my aim was a little off while on horseback. If it was the latter, I was disgracing the name Mongol. I arrived back a little after dark. Cuauhtzin roundly scolded me for leaving him behind.

The following day, we cut up and dried the deer meat. Sarah tried to help, but we wouldn't let her. We traded a little of the meat for some centli and chili and made an excellent stew. Carlotta had cleaned up the tent while I was gone and it looked a lot better. Frankly, I had been surprised to see them living in such conditions since Sarah had always been a meticulous housekeeper. I had supposed she was having difficulty adjusting to living in a tent, but Carlotta told me that they both could only move with great difficulty. She couldn't imagine how they had managed the trip here from Chalco.

That night we talked of family. Sarah wanted to hear about Father's last night and I asked if they had stopped in on Ignace and Goa on their way. They had and found them much as we had earlier. She had the feeling they would not last long. I found myself thinking the same thing of her. The next morning I was just getting ready to

go hunting again when Teypachtli rode in. He looked exhausted but had gotten a supply of the teoxihuitl stones. We warmed up some stew for him while he cleaned up. He ate, then went to rest. I decided to try my luck with waterfowl since it was the season they could be found along the coast. I found a lagoon teeming with them a short ride away and by late afternoon had all I could carry on the horses. When I got back, Carlotta prepared one of the geese for roasting while I worked on getting the rest ready to cut into strips and dry. Teypachtli awakened and joined me. We stopped when dinner was ready. Perhaps it was only my imagination, but it looked like Cuauhtzin was eyeing me suspiciously while I worked on the birds. He was very quiet and kept looking over nervously.

The next day Teypachtli, Carlotta and I worked on the fowl and by midafternoon all the meat was on the drying racks. I asked Teypachtli why his sisters had left their parents alone. He shook his head and told me that they had been very unhappy here and had jumped at the chance to leave. He only left because his mother had assured him she could manage and they really needed to do some trading to make ends meet until his brothers returned. I hated to leave them, but he assured me that he would remain with them until his brothers arrived, and thanked me for all the meat and all the help. I suggested that he get them to visit Mathilde if he had to leave them alone again. He promised he would.

Early the next morning, we made our farewells and set off again. About a month later, we crossed the Ishak River and turned north up the river. A few days later, we found the Pelican Ordu. It was a little farther south than the last time we were here. It was early winter, but was still mild enough for Cuauhtzin. Mathilde was thrilled to see us and took turns hugging us. Aspenquid was on maneuvers with the new recruits but would be back in a few days. Only two of her children were with her, Bedagi, who had just returned from Aspenquid's relatives, and the new baby, a girl they had named Carlotta. Bedagi had grown quite a bit since I had seen him. He was now a young man of seventeen. The baby was not even a year old and tended to crawl or wobble all over the place keeping her mother quite busy. They were both excited to meet Cuauhtzin, but he just lectured them rudely from the safety of my shoulder. I asked about the other two children and she told me that Paula and her husband had transferred to the Horse Ordu and she had just had her first child, a boy. Sarah was still with Sealth and his family. She then took a good look at Carlotta and asked when the child was due.

"In the spring. How did you know? Theodore?" I asked.

"No. I haven't heard from Theodore since he wrote that your father died. He was a wonderful man and I will miss him."

"It is thanks to him that we are having this baby," Carlotta said.

"I am happy for you, children will enrich your marriage and draw you even closer," Mathilde said.

"So how can you tell," I persisted. "You still haven't told me."

"Oh, it's obvious," she laughed. "You can see it in her eyes and the glow around her."

"She's always had a glow around her," I retorted. "And her eyes look the same to me."

"Never mind," Mathilde dismissed me. "A woman can tell these things."

"Father said he could tell also," I said, "so what is it?"

"If you don't know, I can't explain it," she sniffed.

I later asked Carlotta about this business, but she didn't have any idea what they were seeing in her eyes and face and suggested I not pursue it. I reluctantly agreed. Anyway, Mathilde looked tired, and I didn't want to add to that. I think the little one was a little much for her, but she seemed very happy and was always very affectionate with her. Of course, she was only forty-two, but life in the Ordu was not exactly easy. I rather hoped Aspenquid would retire soon, so they could enjoy an easier life. Bedagi was all excited about going on campaign the following spring and asked me all about it. I told him the truth, the good and the bad, and it only whetted his enthusiasm. He would make a good soldier. Aju was expected to return soon, but he faced a long trip back from the Green Mist. The eastern campaign had reached a broad plain far in the south and was now working its way inland from the coast in that area. Aju had been in the far south and would probably not get

back until spring. I hoped he got back before Bedagi left so Mathilde would not have both boys on campaign at the same time.

We stayed there almost a month. I went hunting with Bedagi, and later, when Aspenquid returned, with him also. Carlotta helped with her namesake and grew very fond of her. We told them about Sarah and they promised to look in on them soon. Mathilde told us that had the baby been a boy they would have named it after me. I was flattered, but reminded her of Grandfather's warning about naming any child in our family Karl. She kindly said that I had already proved that wrong. I thanked her for naming the child after Carlotta. She replied that she and Aspenquid felt that Carlotta was a very special person and very much wanted a tie to her, also.

"As long as she is with me she will be tied to you," I told her.

"I know, but we want her to feel close to us on her own," she said.

We had a wonderful time visiting them, but it was getting a bit cold and I was afraid Cuauhtzin would not be able to tolerate it. We bid them farewell and set off back down the river to the coast. I decided it was best to take the coastal trade road, since that would have the mildest weather. Indeed, it did warm up as we neared the coast. The name of the road was a little deceptive since we rarely were in sight of the coast, but it was the closest road to the coast and was rarely even a day's ride from it. About twelve days later, we neared the Missi Sipi River.

I noticed that most of the smaller rivers now had suspension bridges over them. These were made of wrought iron chains imbedded in rock on either side holding up a fairly flat surface of wooden planks, strong enough to hold a troop of horsemen or several wagons. It seemed the Koryo immigrants had introduced them, although they had been in wide use in the old land when the Mongols ruled there. I suppose, the Khakhan decided that we should finally risk a few permanent structures after being here a hundred years. There were also now some arch bridges in use over some of the small rivers. The wide rivers like the Missi Sipi and the Thanuge, however, would likely never see anything but pontoon bridges. They were much too broad for anything else.

Once again the far shore was misty as we approached it and I remembered what had happened the last time I crossed it. Of course, that was a little farther upriver and earlier in the winter. I was much relieved when we passed the guard post unchallenged. For his own safety, I had Cuauhtzin under my cloak for the passage over the bridge (as usual) so he didn't challenge the guards either. A day later we were in Pansfalaya land and stopped at a yam run by one named Choula. He looked searchingly at us when we presented ourselves to him. Then he looked sad and became immediately solicitous of our every need. The Pansfalaya have always been gracious hosts, but I found this rather puzzling. I decided to stay a few days since Carlotta was getting weary of all the travel. Choula was delighted to hear we were staying and insisted on getting one of the small wagons, so she would be more comfortable the rest of the journey. When he heard where we were going, he suggested we just follow spring up the Pansfalaya River, then cut across to the West Tsoyaha River and on to Itsati. I calculated that at our usual pace that would take about a month. If we went more slowly, we could take about two months and that would get us there at the right time. It also occurred to me that we could stop at Nanih Waiya along the way. I wanted to show Carlotta the place where I was led to her.

We thanked Choula for all his help and his excellent suggestions before we left. He urged us to travel slowly and enjoy our wonderful time together during the most beautiful time of year when all of nature was coming back to life. He gave us the names of several of his friends and relatives we might encounter along the way who would be delighted to offer us their hospitality. I noticed he looked sad again as we left. His odd behavior made me wonder if he had foreseen something unpleasant in our future. The Pansfalaya are almost as bad as the Ani' Yun'-wiya at that rather unnerving ability. Still, if it was anything I could prevent, I'm sure he would have warned me. I found myself warily checking for any signs of danger along our path.

Carlotta found the wagon much more comfortable than riding. She could stretch out in the back when she was tired of sitting up. I had never spent much time around pregnant women, so I didn't know if it was normal for her to be tired like this, but she insisted she was just fine and didn't want to stop and see any healers along the way. We continued along the Pansfalaya River uneventfully. As Choula had suggested, it was beautiful. The air was mild and a little humid, the earliest flowers were preparing to bloom, birds were singing (in spite of

Cuauhtzin's challenges), insects were buzzing, but they were not yet a nuisance, a gentle rain would fall almost every day, and the animals in the forest darted about. Almost a month after we left Choula's yam, we finally moved away from the Pansfalaya River. A few days later we arrived at Nanih Waiya.

Carlotta was enchanted with the place. She sat down at the base of the hill and leaned back against it. She closed her eyes and smiled dreamily. It wasn't much of a hill, but I wasn't sure she should climb it, and I didn't want to leave her by herself, so I sat down next to her. I noticed she had fallen asleep, so I tried to contact my spirit guide. I was too preoccupied and couldn't concentrate. After a little while, she woke up and smiled at me.

"I had a wonderful dream," she said. "I dreamt we had a healthy boy and Hiacoomes, your grandparents, your parents, and my parents were all there to witness the birth. They each welcomed the child and gave him a blessing. There was a beautiful bright light around them. It was so inviting."

"This is a place for dreams."

"You know it's strange, you were there also but you didn't see them."

"I often miss things," I shrugged. "How did you know my grandparents and mother? You never met them."

"Your grandfather looked like the figure on the monument in Tuxpan, except for the outfit; he had his arm around a beautiful woman who had to be your grandmother, and your mother looked like you. She wasn't sad, though, she was young and radiant."

"Well then, you've seen something I never have."

We went on to the nearby yam and spent the night. I did not sleep well. I kept waking up from broken dreams. The next morning I asked her if she wanted to climb up the hill. She urged me to go ahead and she would stay at the yam with Cuauhtzin. I thanked her and set off back to the hill. I quickly climbed up and again tried to contact my spirit guide. I was still too distracted and also too sleepy. I woke up with a start from another strange dream, which made no sense at all. I went back down the hill and rejoined Carlotta at the yam. She looked like there was a light around her. I figured I needed a good night's sleep.

I slept a little better that night and we left the next morning. The rest of the way to Itsati took another month. It was also a beautiful trip. Flowers were blooming everywhere and that fresh, clean spring scent was in the air especially as we moved into the mountains. Even Cuauhtzin's periodic shrieks could not dispel the mood. Carlotta became so peaceful and serene and was even more affectionate than usual. She did not seem to be in any discomfort, but she still did look a little tired. The last part of the trip used to be a lot rougher, but the road had been greatly improved, and I was very grateful. As we rode into Itsati, people who remembered me came up to greet us. All were enchanted with Carlotta. Finally I reached the house of Iskagua and Ghigooie. I tied up the horses and helped Carlotta down from the wagon. Iskagua came out of the house and seeing me called Ghigooie, then came forward to greet us.

"My son, you have returned with a beautiful bride," he said as he hugged me. "We have thought of you often and greatly missed you." Then turning to Carlotta, he smiled broadly, "You must be Carlotta."

"I am so happy to meet you at last," Carlotta said.

"My son! My daughter!" Ghigooie cried as she came out of the house. "At last you are here. Welcome, welcome. Come in, come in. Is that the bird you told us about?"

"May I present Cuauhtzin," I said with a flourish.

They both shook their heads. Cuauhtzin let out a particularly harsh-sounding stream of Otomi. I got his stand ready, since they were not too sure about having him in the house. They looked it over and reluctantly agreed. We all went into the house. It was somehow smaller than I remembered it. I asked after my brothers. Gatagewi was on a journey looking for herbs. He would be back any day. Cinnashote was on campaign again. The former was married and had two daughters; the latter had not married much to his mother's distress.

"You should write him a letter," she told me. "Tell him he would be much happier if he married and settled down."

“Be patient, Mother,” I chided. “He needs to find the right woman first; then he will marry.”

“He won’t find the right woman if he isn’t looking for her,” she retorted. “You two were always close. You must reason with him.”

“I wrote to him when I returned from exile telling him all about the wonders of marriage. Didn’t you forward my letter to him?”

“Of course, we did. But you need to write again.”

“I haven’t gotten an answer to that letter yet.”

“How do you know? You never stay anywhere long enough to get a letter.”

“I can’t argue with that. Very well, I’ll write again after the baby is born. Carlotta dreamt that it would be a boy.”

“So it is my son, so it is.”

She seemed to withdraw a bit and get that faraway look in her eye, but I didn’t want to hear any predictions about the future from her, so I let it pass and changed the subject. I asked about all the people I knew and told them the news about the family. I also told them that Theodore was planning to come in time for the birth of our child. Ghigooie said she was glad to hear that. Before we turned in, I took Carlotta aside and warned her about Ghigooie’s ability to see the future and suggested strongly that she not take advantage of it. She assured me that she wouldn’t because she didn’t need to. I wasn’t sure what that meant, but decided to let it go.

It is the Ani’ Yun’-wiyá custom for a pregnant woman to spend the last three months of her pregnancy in a separate hut or tent at some distance from the family house. To my surprise, Ghigooie and Iskagua did not even mention the custom. I presumed they were being tolerant of what they thought might be Carlotta’s tribal customs. They did designate a separate room that stood on its own for us, but never even suggested that she should stay there by herself. I was glad of that because I wouldn’t have heard of it.

Carlotta did ask Ghigooie about Ani’ Yun’-wiyá customs and she mentioned the custom of purification at the new moon. For this the expectant mother, her husband and another close relative (Ghigooie volunteered herself) would go down to the river to pray. The shaman would pour water from the river on the crown of her head to purify her. Carlotta liked the idea, and wanted to follow this practice. We managed two of these purifications before the child was born.

A few days after we arrived, I insisted that Carlotta rest while I went out to do some hunting so we wouldn’t be a burden. Deer were still quite plentiful in the area and I had no trouble keeping meat on the table. Gatagewi returned and came by to visit with his wife and daughters. Everyone fell in love with Carlotta. She seemed to radiate goodwill and people just liked to be with her. Of course, I had always felt that way, but she did seem a little different. I couldn’t quite put my finger on it, but something had changed about her. I assumed it was the pregnancy. I had always heard it changed women.

About two weeks after we arrived in Itsati, Theodore came. He rode in just after dark. He looked tired, but he embraced us all, then took a look at Carlotta. I noticed he exchanged one of those irritating knowing looks with Ghigooie before asking Carlotta how she was doing. He asked a few other questions out of my earshot. I was getting irritated and alarmed. Finally Theodore went out to get something from his pack and I followed him.

“Is anything wrong with Carlotta?” I asked.

“I can’t say for sure,” he replied. “I want to make something for her. You can help if you like.”

“Of course, what do you need?”

“Just get some water boiling.”

I got the water boiling and swallowed down my aggravation at such a banal project. Once it was boiling, Theodore put in a mixture of herbs and bark (I think) and let it boil for quite a while. He then took it off the fire, covered and let it steep for a long time. While it was steeping, he told us the news. Ignace and Goa had died

early in the winter. There was nothing in particular wrong with them; they just didn't seem to want to live any longer. Sarah had died late in the winter, but Tepeyolotl was still alive. She had a growth in her abdomen that gradually wasted her. He was sure Tepeyolotl had one too and would soon die also. Their sons were with them, but their daughters were back in Chalco. I withheld my opinion of the latter. Otherwise, all were well. He was pleased to add that his daughter Sarah had delivered a son about a month ago and named him Ignace. We congratulated him on becoming a grandfather. Before we turned in, he gave Carlotta the steeped tea. She liked it and slept very well.

I awoke early the next morning with a start. I must have had an unpleasant dream since my heart was pounding. I immediately looked at Carlotta, but she was resting peacefully with a serene smile on her lips. I got up and quietly went out of the room. Cuauhtzin muttered a bit, but he wasn't ready to get up yet. I went outside and got the sweat lodge ready. It was still dark, but I really needed a good sweat bath. While the stones were heating up, I went into the woods and gathered some pine boughs. When all was ready, I went into the lodge. I was only there a few minutes when Theodore entered carrying some cedar boughs.

"Mind if I join you?" he asked.

"Not at all. Why cedar?"

"My spirit guide recommends it."

"Mine has been elusive lately."

"There are times when there is nothing they can say."

"Why?"

"Sometimes events are out of our hands and there is nothing we can do to avoid or even mitigate consequences."

"Even so, some advice would seem appropriate."

"Indeed. Perhaps your problem is that you cannot open up your thoughts sufficiently to contact your guide. When the mind is full and the thoughts are racing, there is no possibility of hearing the gentle voice of our guides."

"Perhaps you could stand in for my guide?"

"I would not presume to do so. If you want my advice about something, I will happily give it, but it is not as valid as that of your guide."

"Well, until I can break through to my guide, I would appreciate it."

"What is the problem?"

"Is it normal for pregnant women to be so tired?"

"It is not unusual in the latter stages."

"Is there any particular reason why a Pansfalaya yam keeper would be overly solicitous about Carlotta and me and keep looking at us with what could only be described as condolence?"

"The Pansfalaya are a very kind and thoughtful people, on the whole. They have always been very generous to me. Perhaps the keeper was an older man and was looking at you wistfully, remembering when he was young and having his first child."

"Why do I think you and Ghigooie are keeping something from me about Carlotta?"

"When you are on campaign and you think the enemy may be ahead in force, do you sit down your men and tell them all about it?"

"No, you send out scouts to reconnoiter."

"And if they find nothing, but you still think they may be out there, do you then alarm your men?"

“No, you might tell them to keep alert, but you continue to send out scouts until your feeling is either confirmed or proved wrong.”

“Precisely.”

“Now that we’ve got the tactical lesson out of the way, why don’t you just spell out what your fears are and stop protecting me? I prefer to understand what the problem is and what the potential dangers are so I can prepare for them adequately.”

“You are probably right. But understand that we love you and do not want to unnecessarily upset you.”

“Anything is better than this uncertainty.”

“All I can do is limit your uncertainty.”

“That will do.”

“As to Ghigooie and your Pansfalaya friend, when one sees into the future, one is simply seeing one of many possible paths that life may take. It may be at any one moment that it is the most likely, but events can change the paths at any time. Therefore, do not worry about that. For my part, I am concerned about Carlotta. As you may remember the Mexica consider pregnancy to be the equivalent of battle, and they have a point. A woman is always in some danger with it. Some, of course, seem to thrive on it. Some are too young and gravely threatened by it. In Carlotta’s case, sometimes nature prevents a woman from having a child for a good reason and it is risky to thwart that prevention. I’m sure our father explained the risks to her, but having a child is almost a necessity for many women, worth any risk. I suppose she minimized the risks to you?”

“She didn’t mention any risks to me. Neither did our father.”

“He probably assumed she would explain everything to you. Anyway, it usually is not a great risk. My own practice is not to interfere with nature. That’s why I did not say anything to you when you were in the North Country. Father, however, was always bolder than I and felt it was his duty to do all he could to make his patients’ lives full.”

“I had misgivings from the start. But now that the misgivings have proven prescient, exactly what is the risk to Carlotta and how can it be minimized?”

“The risk is total. She could easily not survive delivering the child. I will do all I can to minimize it. There is really nothing you could do for her except perhaps pray.”

“I will do so.”

We left the sweat lodge in silence and plunged into the freezing river. Although it was spring, it took quite a while for the river to warm up, and of course, it was never warm at this early hour of the day. As we dried off, the sky lightened in the east and activity slowly began in the town. I looked around the familiar sights and felt empty. A deep pall had descended over me and I found it hard to breathe. Then I looked to the door of the house and there was Carlotta smiling and waving her greeting. I realized that I had her now and needed to savor every moment we had whether she survived this child or not. I ran to her and embraced her as if she had just returned from a long trip. From that moment on, I was never away from her, not even to hunt. Unlike many women might have been, she was delighted to have me hovering about her all the time. We discussed the education of the child. I must teach him to read, and when he was old enough, I must send him to stay with the Ani’ Yun’-wiya and not her people. Still, he should learn about her people and perhaps her grandfathers’ people across the sea. We speculated about them and blathered endlessly about all sorts of things. When we weren’t talking, I would pray to Deus to spare her. I made no promises or threats, I just humbly asked him to help her. Were it not for the sense of urgency, it would have been one of the happiest times of my life.

33

Carlotta and John, 106 K

(Itsati, E. TN, 1474)

It has been seventeen years since the events of this chapter occurred. Yet they are burned indelibly into my memory. The emotions I felt at that time are as fresh as if they happened yesterday. This will be the most difficult part of my life I will ever write about. It will probably take me a while to write it. Even now, before I start, I feel a lump in my throat and tears are rolling down my cheeks. I will have to try again later.

I just walked around the island a few times. The wind was blowing steadily out of the south. I imagined it blowing away my pain enough for me to write about it, but I don't think it worked. Still, it is best to get this over with. It was a pivotal event in my life and quite obviously in that of my son.

The time drew near for the birth of my son. Carlotta became ever more serene. The glow I had always seen around her seemed even brighter, to the point that she seemed to light up a dark room. One day we came upon Ghigooie sobbing in the woods a little behind the house. She insisted she was just being a foolish old woman, but the sobs shook her whole body, and she clung to us both for comfort. She finally regained control after Carlotta whispered something in her ear. We continued our walk and came upon one of the large owls sitting on a branch of a tree looking right at us. It was most unusual seeing one of them in broad daylight or even the dappled light of the woods. Of course, the owl is, for the Ani' Yun'-wiya, the messenger of death. I wondered at the time, if Ghigooie had seen the bird. Cuauhtzin shrieked in alarm at the raptor, but it ignored him and just seemed to stare at Carlotta. She just smiled at him and we walked on. Even though I had never really accepted the Ani' Yun'-wiya superstitions, an icy fear began to grip my heart.

That evening after we retired for the night, we could hear the owl calling in the night. I must have shuddered perceptively because Carlotta hugged me as if to comfort me. I forced all my fears from my mind with an act of will and concentrated on anticipating any need she might have. After all, it was I who should be strong for her at this time.

The next morning, I awakened early and stole out of the room without disturbing her. I stepped outside and walked down to the river. I sat quietly on the bank looking into the inky blackness only slightly distinguishable in the predawn darkness. Suddenly, I saw a face appear in the water. It looked like my spirit guide. The eyes burned brightly and a voice rang out inside my head.

"Be strong. I am with you always."

As the apparition vanished, I remember thinking churlishly that I wished he had been with me when I tried to contact him. But once that unworthy thought was complete, I did feel a little better. I got up and walked back to the house. In the doorway I came upon Theodore. He looked at me with the most galling sympathetic look. I wanted to be angry with him, but I quickly realized that would be unfair. Instead I stopped.

"Do you know anything I don't?"

"It doesn't look good, Karl."

"Can you make sure she feels no pain?"

"Yes, I can do that."

"How long do we have?"

"Another day, perhaps. Perhaps not even that. Stay with her. It means a lot to her."

"I will."

I went back to our room and rejoined Carlotta in the bed. She sighed and muttered something in what was likely Wampanoag, the only language she knew that I didn't. I watched her sleep as dawn slowly lit the room and supplanted her glow. I began to think back on our life together from the first time I saw her until that moment. My heart nearly burst with love for this wonderful person who so filled my existence. It seemed like the times of my life without her were passed in a trance as though I was only partly alive. And now with her I really lived. How could I survive if anything happened to her? I could not imagine life without her. She awakened and dreamily looked up at me and smiled.

"I love opening my eyes and having your sweet face be the first thing I see."

“I love every moment I have spent with you. And deeply regret every moment we have been apart.”

“Oh the time we were apart while you went north by yourself was so hard to bear. But how wonderful our time together there turned out to be. All alone, just the two of us. I often think of that time.”

“I do, too. I regretted having to leave there. I wonder if the Khakhan ever realized what a favor he did for me by exiling me.”

“And for me as well!”

“How are you this morning?”

“Wonderful. I keep having the most pleasant dreams every night. I feel as though I am being bathed in love.”

“Every one here loves you, but not as much as I do.”

“There is a sadness in you, Karl. Are you worried about something?”

“I am a little worried about you. Giving birth is a dangerous thing.”

“I suppose so, but it is so exciting! I can’t wait to present you with your healthy son.”

“I am more concerned about you remaining healthy.”

“Oh Karl, don’t concern yourself with me. I am quite strong you know and have really not been uncomfortable at all.”

We got up and went out with the others to greet the sun in the Ani’ Yun’-wiya custom. It was still cool in the morning and Carlotta shivered a little. I quickly put an arm around her and went back into the house with her. As we all ate breakfast together, I reluctantly moved my eyes from her serene face to the others. Ghigooie looked ashen, Iskagua looked devastated, and Theodore looked ill. I can’t say that I took any comfort from them. Only Carlotta had a good appetite that morning.

By midday Carlotta began to have her first birthing pain. She looked up after it passed in sheer joy and excitement. Theodore jumped to fix another concoction for her so she would feel no pain. Ghigooie led her into the birthing hut and bid me to follow. That rather surprised me since the custom called for her to be alone for this event. The hut was small, but held a sleeping palette, a chair, and had a fresh blanket on the floor in front of the chair. Carlotta sat down on the chair and I knelt down beside her and held her hand. Ghigooie whispered something to her and she nodded. Then Ghigooie left to get some things ready.

“Karl, whatever happens today you must promise to love our son as much as you love me.”

“I couldn’t love anyone as much as I love you.”

“Well then, love him almost as much as you love me. Remember he is a part of both of us. He is a physical manifestation of our love.”

“He is an independent being who will likely not be much like either of us. But how could I help but love anything that has been a part of you for so long?”

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you the dangers of this pregnancy your father warned me about. I just so much wanted to have your child, that I didn’t think much about his warnings. Still, I should have told you.”

“Yes, you should have.”

“Would you have forbidden it?”

“I could never tell you what to do. I would have advised against it, however.”

“I know, you could not bear to have me in any danger. The risk seemed slight to me and the likelihood of the medicine being successful seemed so remote that I jumped at the chance of having our baby. I hope you can understand that.”

“I understand.”

“Please don’t blame the baby or your father if anything happens to me. Promise me you won’t.”

“I promise. Just remember how much I love you and don’t be in any hurry to join our departed relatives.”

“Don’t worry. I want to be here for you and the baby. You both need me. But if anything does happen, I’ll be with you somehow anyway.”

“I know you will.”

Theodore came in with his medicine and Carlotta took it and drank it. He then moved to one side. Ghigooie returned with various things and took her place at Carlotta’s other side. Her next wave of birthing pain was painless and she looked up in surprise. Theodore explained that it was something he had picked up in his travels and it in no way affected the baby. She smiled and thanked him. Theodore felt for the baby in her abdomen and announced that it was situated properly for normal birth. The waves continued at varying intervals well into the night. As soon as Theodore detected Carlotta was in any pain he quickly gave her more of his medicine.

It must have been almost dawn when the waves became more insistent. Carlotta looked exhausted, so did Ghigooie and Theodore. I imagine I did also. Suddenly, Carlotta cried out and a watery fluid gushed out from her. She knelt down on the rug and with encouragement from all of us she pushed the baby slowly out into Theodore’s waiting hands. This was also contrary to Ani’ Yun’-wiya custom. The baby was supposed to drop directly onto the blanket and if he landed on his back all was well, if on his chest he had to be wrapped in a cloth and dipped into the river until the cloth floated freely; then the bad omen was removed. In this case with Theodore guiding him he sort of landed on his back. I remember seeing the tiny head, bald as an old man’s, slowly emerging followed by the rest of the tiny body, then the afterbirth, then the blood. Theodore tied off the tube to the afterbirth and cut it, then handed the baby to Ghigooie who handed it to Carlotta.

The exhausted look on her face was replaced with a look of such joy it was like a veil was lifted off of her. She tore herself away from the child to look expectantly at me. I smiled and nodded and she turned back to the baby and gently pressed him to her heart. The baby snuggled peacefully. Theodore had disappeared but soon returned with another concoction for Carlotta. He looked more alarmed than merely concerned. She drained the drink and we helped her to the palette. She stretched out and kept the baby on her heart. I couldn’t help but notice the trail of blood on the floor and shot a look at Theodore. He kept wiping away the blood and exchanged looks with Ghigooie. Tears were streaming down Ghigooie’s cheeks. I looked back at Carlotta. She began to shiver. I quickly threw a blanket over her. She opened her eyes and looked above.

“Oh Karl! Do you see them? They’re all here. Could you hold up the baby for their blessing? My arms are so tired.”

“Of course.” I held the child up.

“Isn’t he beautiful, Hiacoomes? Mother is that you? Father? Oh must I come now? They need me. Ohhh it is so beautiful here...”

It was so sudden I must have stood there holding up the baby and staring at her in shock for a long time. I remember she had a hauntingly serene smile on her face and her lifeless eyes continued to shine. I vaguely heard Ghigooie sobbing. Theodore must have taken the child from me because I was dimly aware of someone doing so. Still, I continued to stand over her with my empty arms outstretched over her. I think Iskagua put his hands on my shoulders then. I lowered my arms and knelt down by Carlotta’s side. I was too shocked to do anything but hold her hand and look into her face. Someone finally closed her eyes. Someone finally pulled me away from her and tried to hold on to me. I pushed him away and bolted from the room. I went outside and looked around without seeing anything. I stumbled and lurched toward the river and fell in. Someone pulled me out and carried me back to the house.

I can’t say that I remember much about the next several days. I have never asked about them and no one has ever volunteered anything. I do remember waking up one morning and instinctively looking over to see Carlotta. When it sunk in that she was not there and never would be again I began to sob bitterly. A strange sound broke into my awareness and instead of dismissing it unidentified, I got control of myself and turned to the sound. It was Cuauhtzin. He was sobbing piteously. I went over to comfort him and he leaned his head

against my chest and whimpered. I held him for a long time. Then I carried him out of the house and sat him on the sweat lodge. I heated up the stones and went into the woods for some fresh pine boughs. I stayed in the sweat lodge longer than usual, but finally emerged and plunged into the river. I climbed out, dried myself, and got dressed. I looked around and noticed that it was late in the morning. I went back into the house with Cuauhtzin.

The others were all there when I returned and looked at me with obvious concern. I calmly asked if the necessary had been attended to while I was “gone.” Theodore told me that he had taken the afterbirth and buried it on the far side of the mountains as was customary. He had also taken care of Carlotta’s body as she had asked him. Apparently she had told him she wanted to be cremated and have her ashes thrown into a river that fed into the Eastern Sea. He had cremated her, but still had the ashes since all the rivers around Itsati flow into the Southern Sea. The baby was with a wet nurse (Gatagewi’s wife, Suyeta) and had been officially named John in the naming ceremony two days after his birth. I asked how long I had been “gone.” They told me it was about a week. I apologized for failing to fulfill my parental duties and asked to see the baby and Carlotta’s ashes. Ghigooie went to get the baby and Theodore went to get the ashes.

I followed them outside and stared blankly toward the river until Ghigooie and Suyeta came up with the baby. I took the child and looked into his peacefully sleeping face. He still had no hair on his head and I can’t say that I saw any resemblance to either of us, but then it is hard to see any resemblances in babies. He was as fair skinned as me and his eyes were blue when they finally opened and looked at me. He seemed to stare at me, but I suppose that was just my imagination. Theodore came up with Carlotta’s ashes. They were in a finely woven basket with a lid. I held the baby in one arm and took the basket in the other. I whispered to him that I placed him in her protection and urged him never to forget her. I then handed him back to Suyeta. I thanked her for taking care of him and asked her to look after him for me until I returned next spring. We returned to the house and I made ready my horse. When I was ready, they each gave me a big hug, and I thanked them again for all their help. I then mounted up, secured the basket with Carlotta’s ashes in front of me, and with Cuauhtzin on my shoulder, I rode up the valley toward the east.

I have just walked around the island yet again to clear my thoughts and found myself thinking of many things instead. I have heard that people who lose arms and legs continue to feel the missing limbs long after they are gone. I have been told that time lessens sorrow and eventually one gets over even the worst tragedy. In my case, time has healed nothing, and I still feel the missing half of my being. But I also feel that she is still with me, and sometimes when I wake up in the morning, I almost feel her by my side and could swear I smell her special scent.

34

To the Eastern Sea, 106 K

(E. TN to E GA, 1474)

When I left Itsati it was already near midday, but I traveled on until dusk. I turned south along a small stream that flowed into the river late in the day and was still on its west bank at dusk. I fished in the stream and soon landed a small fish, which I roasted and shared with Cuauhtzin. I still felt rather numb like I was going through the motions and did not have much of an appetite. I slept with my head against the basket with Carlotta’s ashes. I slept quite well that night and could not remember any dreams the next morning. I did feel Carlotta by my side when I awakened and had to adjust to the shock anew when I realized it was only the basket. Still, I smelled her scent for the first time that morning.

On a whim I turned a little west and looked for the mountain of my spirit quest. It took a little while to find it since I had never approached it from this direction. It was late on the following day when I found it. I hid my horse in a thicket, took a little water, and climbed the mountain. When I reached the top, I fed Cuauhtzin a little centli and urged him to be quiet while I tried to reach my spirit guide. I lit a small fire and burned some nawak’osis in it. I closed my eyes and found myself in a field full of flowers. I remember wishing that Carlotta could see it when suddenly she was there smiling at me. Next to her was my spirit guide.

“Carlotta!”

“So this is your guide, Karl,” she said. “He is a fine one.”

“I can’t tell you how much I miss you,” I said to her.

“And I miss you. But I am still with you, don’t you feel me?”

“Yes, I do. But not enough.”

“It was so hard to leave you and little John, but I had no choice. Still, I can watch over you both even though you are apart.”

“Is the child well?”

“Yes. Do you blame him for what happened to me?”

“I’m trying not to do so.”

“He does need a wet nurse now, but don’t forget about him. He will need you when he’s older.”

“I won’t forget him. I plan to return in the spring. Should I have taken him to Mathilde?”

“No. She had her hands full with my namesake. Suyeta is a wonderful mother and loves him already like he was her own. I’m sorry about the ashes. It was silly to have you take them all the way to a river that flows into the eastern sea.”

“I don’t mind at all. I wish you had told me, though.”

“I could never think of death around you and I had forgotten all about that request. Theodore and I must have had some morbid conversations. You can pour them into the Itsati if you wish.”

“No, it means a lot to me that I can do this for you. When he’s old enough I want to bring John to the spot, so he can feel some connection to you.”

“He’ll always be connected to me. Just as you are.”

“Thank you for coming with my guide.”

“Just try to keep me away.”

“Don’t ever go away.”

“I won’t.”

I must have fallen asleep at that point, since I don’t remember anything else. But the next morning, I awakened feeling a little less numb. I went back down the mountain and found a stream in which to fish. Before long I was roasting a fair-sized fish, and Cuauhtzin and I had a good meal. Afterward I set off toward the northeast and by nightfall the next day was back at the Itsati River a little upstream from where I had left it. The next morning, I continued up the river. It was a gradual climb and the river valley narrowed considerably for the first few days. Then the river turned southeast and the valley opened up a bit. Here were some Ani’ Yun’-wiya towns. As usual I came upon the fields first; then the town spread out on one or the other side of the river. One of the towns was Nikwasi, the principle town of the so-called Kituhwa Ani’ Yun’-wiya. They were actually considered to be just like us, Ottare or “mountain” Ani’ Yun’-wiya, although there were some oddities creeping into their language. It was a large town and had a very large council house. I didn’t meet anyone I knew as I rode through it or any of the other towns and was glad I didn’t since I really didn’t feel like visiting at the time. Eventually the river turned more south and finally narrowed to a stream. I stayed with it until it turned sharply west; then I continued south over what could almost be a pass and came upon a stream flowing south just at dusk.

I followed the new stream the next day. It turned sharply eastward and eventually joined a larger river. Looking at my map, I was fairly sure this larger river was the Cusabo River. I soon came upon another Ani’ Yun’-wiya town. I hadn’t realized that the Ayrate or low country Ani’ Yun’-wiya had expanded this far south. I spoke to a man who stopped to greet me. Of course, he spoke a dialect a little different from the one I was used to speaking. It was the one called Elate. Grandfather had mentioned the various dialects in his book, but I had only rarely encountered them before. With some effort I could understand it and make myself understood.

The man confirmed that the river was the Cusabo and mentioned that there was a beautiful waterfall a little downriver and up a smaller river coming in from the west. He told me that the Ayrate had expanded far eastward and southward in the wake of the imploding populations of the Iyehyeh and Southeastern Cities many years ago. Back when Grandfather was exploring this area the Kofitachiki had claimed it. They were still thought to exist, but after the plagues and subsequent difficulties, any survivors must be way downstream and confined to only a few towns although the man did not know of any. Similarly, the Iyehyeh, after Grandfather had defeated them and the plagues had ravished them, had coalesced to a small area along the middle Sewee River. Their towns were growing again and they seemed to have recovered. Much of the western part of their former territory was now occupied by the Ani' Yun'-wiya and the Cheroenhaka. The former in the southern part, the latter in the northern part. I asked if there were any problems between them, but he had never heard of any. After all, he added, they were relatives. I remembered meeting some of them on my way to the Snake Ordu when I was a boy and they were always very gracious to me and my Ani' Yun'-wiya companions, treating us like relatives.

I thanked the man for his information and decided to have a look at the waterfall. There was a small Ayrate village at the juncture of the rivers and a man there confirmed that the roar I could hear was the waterfall up that river. He mentioned that the river and the falls were named Tallulah. I turned upriver toward the falls. I soon found myself in a deep gorge. Granite cliffs loomed at least five hundred feet above me. The river gradually narrowed and I secured the horses at the base of a rather uncertain trail. When I finally got to the top of the trail, I walked along the northern lip of the gorge, continuing upstream. There proved to be at least five waterfalls of varying heights covering that drop in altitude. I worked my way to the one farthest upstream. It was almost dark when I reached it so I camped for the night. As usual I fell asleep with my head against the basket.

That night I dreamt that Carlotta again came with my spirit guide and both approved this as the perfect site to pour her ashes. When I awakened I built a cairn a little bit away from the edge, and another smaller one right on the edge of the cliff. I carefully picked my way down to the edge of the water and waited until there was no wind. Then I slowly poured the ashes into the rushing river. I regained the cliff and threw the basket into the river also. I spent the rest of the day sitting next to the cairn fasting and meditating. Cuauhtzin remained quietly on my shoulder. At some point I found myself again in the flowered field. I turned around and there was Carlotta smiling at me. I clung to her and seemed to meld into her as if we had become one. We did not speak, but we didn't have to. I don't know how long the vision lasted, but the next time I was aware, it was dark and Carlotta's scent was heavy in the air.

The next morning I began the descent of the river. I slipped a few times, but came to no harm. I seemed to be very light for some reason. I finally regained the horses and rode back down to the small village. I found someone to row me across the Tallulah River to the south bank. Cuauhtzin was himself again and lectured the poor man quite rudely. I decided to follow Carlotta's ashes to the sea, so I continued along the southwest bank of the Cusabo River.

I kept running into small Ayrate villages along the river and could even see some on the other side of the river. They had really taken over this area. The largest town I came upon was called Estatoe. It wasn't very old but had expanded quite a bit and was rather spread out along the south side of the river. Again I was greeted politely, but encountered no one I knew. I could see quite a few scarred veterans in the town, but I suspect they had all served in the Green Mist and were strangers to me. Once out of the town, I looked for a place to camp since it was getting dark.

The following morning I fished for breakfast and soon had a nice-sized fish roasting. After eating, I continued to ride along the riverbank. Near midday I came upon a small village that was just being built. They invited me to stay a few days and help. I decided I probably should, so I pitched in while Cuauhtzin supervised with his usual rudeness. Everyone enjoyed his antics, especially the children. He also seemed to be very much enjoying all the attention. I was just glad no one understood Otomi. Indeed they all thought he was speaking his own language. I did not disabuse them of that idea. They told me they were from Keowee, the principle town of the Ayrate. It was up a river that joined the Cusabo a little downstream. The river had been renamed the Keowee after the town. I don't remember the original name for it, but I think it would have been an Iyehyeh name.

Although in Grandfather's time that river would have been near their western frontier. They were calling their new village Tugaloo.

After a few days, the houses were all up and the council house was completed except for the roof. I decided I could now move on. They thanked me for my help and asked me to stop by again should I find myself in the area. I promised I would and continued on my way southeast with the Cusabo. They had insisted on giving me some dried fish and venison for my trouble, so I didn't have to stop to fish for a few days.

About four days later, I had stopped for the evening, caught a fish and was roasting it, when an old man stumbled into my camp. He was quite unkempt and tattered. His white hair was long and matted as was his beard. His face was a mass of wrinkles and from his sunken cheeks he appeared to have no teeth. He peered at me through rheumy eyes as if he was trying to see me but couldn't. He didn't appear to have any weapons, but began fidgeting with his hands and making sucking noises with his mouth. Cuauhtzin could stand this no more and let out a shriek. The old man fell to the ground groveling in fear. I set Cuauhtzin on one of the horses and went over to help the old man up.

"Don't be concerned about the noise. It was only a bird," I told him.

"A Mongol is traveling alone here?" He looked up at me again searchingly. "I thought it was a Tsalagi come to kill me."

"Why would the Ani' Yun'-wiya want to kill you?"

"Have you not seen them? They are spreading down the river like a flood. They will not leave us even a remnant of our land."

"Nonsense, they are only taking over abandoned land. What tribe are you?"

"I am Kofitachiki."

"Don't your people believe in bathing?"

"You shame me. I have been fasting while looking for a sign."

"I have often fasted as well, but I didn't stop bathing."

"It is our way." He drew himself up with an attempt at dignity.

"Well, if you have finished your fast, you are welcome to share my fish. It is easily large enough for two. I will have to ask you to bathe first, however."

"My fasting is at an end. I will bathe as you request, but it may take me a while, I feel quite weak and rather light-headed."

"Very well, you can eat first, just stay upwind of me, or I will be the one fasting."

"You are a most impolite host, sir. If I were not lost, I would decline your hospitality and continue on my way."

"You are right, I am being rather rude. I apologize. Here, have some fish."

I gave him most of the fish, which he consumed, with some difficulty, since he indeed had no teeth. When he had finished, I gave him some berries I had picked nearby and he heartily consumed them also. Then he rose, and bowing to me, he took himself to the river and cleaned himself as best he could. I found some extra clothes I had and gave them to him since his were disintegrating in the water. My clothes were too big for him, of course, but he was still much more presentable when he returned.

"I sincerely hope I no longer offend you," he said, bowing low again.

"A vast improvement. Tell me, is your vision poor?"

"Yes, very much so. That is why I have lost my way. Is this river the Cusabo?"

"Yes it is. Where is your village?"

"It is on the south side of the Cusabo. It that where we are?"

“Yes. At it must be downriver from here because I haven’t passed any Kofitachiki town, only Ani’ Yun’-wiya towns.”

“Are we near the sea?”

“By my calculation, it is about five days ride from here.”

“Ride? You have horses, I thought I smelled them.”

“Of course, I have horses. All Mongols have horses.”

“Very few of my people do.”

“Why?”

“We don’t travel far anymore. We have no need of them.”

“Don’t your young men go on campaign?”

“Yes, sometimes, but those that do never come back.”

“They all die on campaign?”

“I don’t know, but we never see them again.”

“That’s rather odd. Is your village that mean?”

“It is small and poor.”

“It is shameful that none of your young men return. I can assure you they don’t all die on campaign. At worst only about a quarter of the men die on campaign and that is mostly from disease. Many men wander about a bit after returning, but all usually go home eventually. I did.”

“Where is your home, young sir?”

“Cuauhnahuac.”

“I never heard of it. Is it far to the west?”

“It is far to the southwest, in Anahuac. About a day’s ride south of Tlatelolco, the capital.”

“I never heard of those places. They must be far away.”

“Yes, they are. Is your village right on the river or inland?”

“Inland, of course. The banks always flood in the spring.”

“Is it visible from the riverbank?”

“Yes, just barely.”

“Well it must be east of here. The last Ani’ Yun’-wiya village I passed was about two days’ ride west.”

“It is closer than I thought. I should be able to reach there tomorrow if I keep the river on my left.”

“Why don’t you ride with me? With your eyesight you won’t see it.”

“I don’t have to see it, I can feel it when I get near. You are kind to offer me a ride, but I have never been on a horse and am too old to start now.”

“As you wish, but spend the night here and I’ll fish again in the morning so you can have breakfast.”

“You are most kind.”

The next morning I rose early and set to catching breakfast. It didn’t take long, and while it was roasting I heated some centli meal and water to make a gruel for the old man. I didn’t think he’d want the chili I would normally add to the dish. He finally awakened and went down to the river to wash, then followed his nose to breakfast. He ate heartily, if slowly, and greatly relished the gruel. Cuauhtzin liked it also, but preferred the fish.

When he had finished, he thanked me profusely and asked me if I would walk with him for a while. I agreed and we walked down the river leading the horses.

“You were right to reproach our young men for not returning. Our village is dying, as are our people. Soon the Kofitachiki will be only a memory.”

“There is more than one Kofitachiki village?”

“Yes, there are a few others. But I would guess, no more than fifty families.”

“In my grandfather’s time they were a great nation controlling most of this river valley and much of the land to the north.”

“Your grandfather must have been a very old man.”

“He was ninety years old when I was born.”

“Ah, well then, yes, in his day we were a great nation.”

“What happened to you? I know you refused to join the Khanate, and then you refused the treatment for the plagues, which must have cost you a lot of people, but then what happened to you. I can’t remember what my grandfather wrote.”

“Wrote? I don’t know that word.”

“It is a means of communication. Words are marked on paper or wood or skins.”

“Words are marked? How?”

“We have symbols that stand for sounds so that looking at the symbols we can repeat the sounds.”

“What a wonder. You have always done this?”

“Yes. As far as I know it has been done for centuries.”

“Amazing. And you didn’t teach this to anyone else?”

“We have taught it to all who are willing to learn. It is no secret.”

“We never learned it. What fools we have been.”

“You learned Mongol, but not writing? Who taught you?”

“Long ago an Iyehyeh came to us and taught us the language. He never mentioned writing.”

“I can’t imagine how you have remained so isolated. But to get back to the subject, what happened to you after the plagues?”

“The plagues destroyed us. The first took over half of our people. The second took over half again. The entire ruling class succumbed. We were afraid of our enemies so we kept concentrating the survivors and each new outbreak kept wiping us out. Finally we scattered into small groups but kept in contact and got together for special festivals or to defend ourselves. Then your army moved in and conquered the area. Our army tried to resist them but was swept away. Those who survived again fled into the swamps and scattered. When we thought it was safe, we came up the river far enough away from the Cusabo not to be noticed, then scattered into the forests. Now our young men leave and do not return. Our young women must either marry into another tribe or die childless. We are doomed.”

“Why don’t you just integrate yourselves into the Khanate. You could begin trading again and flourish. There is no need for you to disappear into the forests.”

“We would rather die out than be absorbed into another tribe.”

“No tribe really dies out, it is always absorbed into another tribe.”

“What do you think we should do?”

“Gather yourselves together into a single village somewhere along this river. Trade with the coastal and upriver tribes. Accept the treatments to deal with the plagues; learn all you can from the Mongols. In time you will return to your old greatness. You need not fear any of your neighbors in the Khanate. There is peace among the tribes. It was what the remnant of the Iyehyeh have done and they are flourishing and expanding.”

“Perhaps as a Mongol you see the Khanate in too positive a light.”

“No, I don’t. I do not approve of every aspect of the Khanate. But it is better than the chaos that existed here before we came. It took a while, but I have come to accept that.”

“Would you consider talking to my people?”

“If you think it would help.” I felt I had to offer, but it was the last thing I wanted to do.

We walked quietly for a while; then he stopped suddenly and turned and pointed at a low bluff just to our right. I looked at it and finally saw a few wisps of smoke rising from it. He confirmed that this was his village and we climbed up the bluff along an almost-hidden trail. The village was indeed very small and very poor. The houses were made of bundled grass with thatch roofs. If it were not so damp in this area, they would have to be very careful of fire. As it was, there were no fires inside the houses; everyone had a hearth in front. The people were dressed in tattered skins, but otherwise were clean and stood their ground at my approach. The Mico was brought out to greet me. He was rather short and thin (as were they all). He was a little older than me, perhaps in his forties, and had the wary look of a man who had been put upon too often. His only distinguishing vesture was a headdress rather reminiscent of those worn by the Tsoyaha, like a thin piece of cloth wound all around the head. It looked to me like all resemblance to their original tribe had already been lost.

“You are a strange-looking one. Are you a Mongol?” he asked, eyeing me suspiciously.

“Yes, I am. Your sage seemed to feel I should speak to you.”

At this point the old man broke into their language and he and the Mico had a long exchange between them. It did not appear to be heated or deferential on either side, leaving me no idea what the old man’s position in the tribe might be. I could not make out a word of their language, although at times I thought it slightly similar to Pansfalaya with which I was a little familiar. Eventually Cuauhtzin could take no more of being ignored and broke into their conversation with a very long string of Otomi curses. I struggled mightily, but eventually I had to laugh. The Mico and the old man and the few others who had gathered at first stared at him in alarm and then joined in my laughter. That broke the ice and I was welcomed to village and invited to stay with the Mico.

He explained that the old man was his father, the former Mico. He had retired when his vision began to fail and had left the village about a moon ago to fast and commune with Esaugetu Emissee (their name for God) and receive guidance about their future. Here the old man broke in and explained that he had received such guidance. He had been instructed to go in a certain direction and that the first man he met would tell him what to do. He had done so and came upon me. At first he was very confused since he thought I was a Tsalagi who meant to kill him. When I turned out to be a Mongol, but a very rude one. He was again confused. Finally after talking to me he realized the message was true; I was the one sent by Esaugetu Emissee.

I suggested that perhaps his Esaugetu Emissee was making use of me, but I was hardly his messenger. Still if I could help their people, I would be happy to do so. I then repeated to the Mico my advice to his father. He listened intently and then sat silently a while thinking it over. He asked if I would speak to the Micos of the other villages if he could gather them together. I readily agreed and he said it would take several days to bring them all together. I agreed to wait and went down to the river to fish so I wouldn’t be a burden to the village. Several of the children followed me everywhere, mostly out of curiosity about Cuauhtzin. He would sit quietly on my shoulder for a while eyeing them; then he would burst into a stream of curses bringing on gales of laughter from the children. The old man joined me on the riverbank and chatted about fishing and other things.

I had no trouble in providing most of the village with fish over the next several days while Cuauhtzin provided the entertainment. The old man and I discussed a lot of things. I told him about my recent loss and he was very sympathetic. He had also been married to a woman he had loved very much. She had died from some illness many years ago when his son was still a boy. His son, too, had missed her greatly and their shared loss helped

them get through it. He regretted that my son would never even know his mother. I told him I would make sure he would. He asked about the rest of my family and I asked about his. He and his son were all that remained of his family. His son's wife had also died, but without issue. His son had toyed with the idea of remarrying, but had decided not to do so. He hoped that if I could give them some reason to hope, his son would again consider remarriage.

I really couldn't imagine them pinning all these hopes on a few words of common sense from me. However, sometimes an outside perspective can bring things into better focus for a very inward-looking people. From what he told me, they had been extremely inward looking. They always kept watch on the river and the trails, and whenever anyone was seen approaching, they would put out their fires and dissolve into the woods until the strangers had passed. They had lived this way for at least fifty years. As I suspected, all of the things that had marked their culture had been lost over the years, and they had regressed into a ragtag group of fugitives afraid to let themselves be seen. I hoped I could help them, but I was not too hopeful. Fearful people tend to stay that way.

About eight days after my arrival, all the Micos had been gathered to listen to me. They sat in a circle around me and many others sat behind them. I first made sure they all understood Mongol. They did, although some of their pronunciation was interesting. I then told them what I had told the old man the week before. I added that from the look of them (there were about a dozen of them) they should be able to form a good-sized town if they got together. I suggested that the Micos form a council and elect one of their number to be the Mico of the new town. They should find a site on the river where they could expand easily and have plenty of room for fields. They should also consider opening a yam station and so plug themselves into the trade network.

They were astonished at my words and one after the other began raising objections. They couldn't believe the Mongols would not just wipe them out once they rediscovered them. They were sure that even if the Mongols left them in peace, the Tsalagi wouldn't. If they were on the trade network, would not that expose them to the plagues again? If they were left in peace by their neighbors and integrated into the Khanate, would they not then be forced to send all their young men to campaign or even be taxed?

I assured them the Khanate would not only leave them in peace, they would protect them from any harm. The Ani' Yun'-wiya (I would not use their term) would not bother them at all, or the Khanate would punish them. Plague wandered around with or without trade routes as their own experience should have taught them. No one was forced to go on campaign; it was always voluntary. They would have to send their young men to be trained, but campaigning was never required. As to taxes, they probably would have to pay them, but not for a while, and they had never been onerous in this Khanate, so far.

It took all day for me to answer their objections. It seemed every time I answered one, three more were brought up, but in truth they were all variations on the same things, fear of the Khanate, fear of the Ani' Yun'-wiya, fear of plague, and fear of disappearing. Eventually, I won them all over, and they asked me to help them find a good site for a unified village and help integrate them into the Khanate. I agreed to do so.

Since they had no fields under cultivation, there was no pressing reason why they couldn't all come together, so I suggested they get all their people in one spot while I looked around for a good place for them to build their town. They agreed. I went downstream and found an excellent site only half a day's ride away from the village. There was ample room for a town and fields. I hurried back to the village and directed them to the site. A few days later, I was helping them lay out the town and clear the fields. I sent an adventurous young man named Fus down the river to the nearest Cusabo town with a message for its headman. His parents were very fearful for him, but I reminded them that the Cusabo had always been a very peaceful people.

About a week later, Fus returned with a group of Cusabo headed by their Mico, Cussappa. He was shocked to learn that there were still Kofitachiki alive and wanted to help them. He brought seeds for centli, squash, and beans, and people to show them how to plant them and care for them. It was rather late for planting, but not too late. He also brought along people to help them make more sturdy houses of wood rather than grass, and teachers who could teach them to write. He actually thanked me for giving him the opportunity to help save the Kofitachiki. I later learned that his father had been a Kofitachiki who had gone on campaign and had not quite made it back home.

I stayed with them about halfway through the summer to make sure all was going well. The son of the old man had been elected Mico of the town, and he had, indeed, decided to remarry. The old man was very happy and all thanked me profusely. They even sort of named the town after me. They called it Tatalosi, which means, "bird town." I would have preferred Crow Town, but they did not revere the crow, so they got as close to it as they could comfortably. I was thanked profusely and cheered heartily as I rode out of town. Cuauhtzin considered all the noise a challenge and did his best to shout them down. My ears still ring when I remember that day.

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Tatalosi to Capawake, 106 K

(Augusta, GA to Martha's Vineyard, MA, 1474)

Not long after I left Tatalosi, the land along the river began to get swampy. I was forced to ride inland a little and soon found myself in a tangle of forest. It appeared to be a second-growth forest, so someone must have cleared the area about twenty-odd years before. After about two days of fighting my way through the tangle, I decided I'd be better off back on the riverbank. When I finally got back to the river, the bank was even swampier, so I was again forced inland. This time I found an older forest and I could move through it more easily. I had to be very careful of the direction, however, because the trees were so tall and thick that it was like twilight under the canopy. The air was still and dank and the insects were out in full force. I was very grateful that I had some of my brother's famous repellent in my pack. It was really quite effective. Cuauhtzin didn't much like the smell of it, but he did enjoy all the insects and was constantly snapping in one direction or the other trying to catch them.

I finally came out into a cultivated field and my first Cusabo town. It turned out to be Cussappa's town. He had returned from Tatalosi a while ago and now invited me to stay with him and discuss the future of the new town. I agreed, since I wanted to be sure he didn't try to turn them into a Cusabo town. He seemed to be very open to suggestion and I urged him to consult the Kofitachiki elders and try to reconstruct as much of their original culture as could be salvaged. Of course, if the people wanted to change something that was up to them, but I did feel they should have a choice. In practice, I suppose, none of the tribes were as they were when we first came here except, perhaps, for the Inuit and the other tribes of the far north, although even they have been affected by trade with us and have changed a little. I couldn't say if that was good or bad, but on the other hand, the Mongols had also changed here from what Grandfather had said. I would think cultures change when they see such change as an improvement, although sometimes it is just because they are impressed by the new culture and think the adaptation will make them equally impressive. I suspect that that caused much of the superficial change among the people native to this land. Of course, some groups were wiped out and their remnant absorbed and some simply abandoned their old ways and adopted ours to the point that their only connection to their old tribe is their names and their languages. From what I've seen in my travels, the least changed are the most isolated such as the far north and the far northwest. Of the others, those that allied with us but remained apart like the Ani' Yun'-wiya, the Pansfalaya, the Tsoyaha, and the Anishinabe have retained their identity, but others like the Ocheti shakowin, the Ka-i-gwu, the Dinne, and all those who left all and joined the Mongols were now indistinguishable in all but minutiae. And those who were defeated but not wiped out like the Hotcangara and many of the tribes of Anahuac retain a few differences out of spite, but nothing of any real significance.

I left Cussappa's town after a few days and now was on a well-maintained trade road connecting the Cusabo towns. Because of the swampy nature of the terrain along the river, I stayed at the yams in the towns along the way. Three days later, I reached the delta of the Cusabo. I left the last town in the morning and rode to the sea, or at least as close as I could get. The road ended at a small dock where local boats could put in from the offshore islands which appeared to be inhabited. I got off my horse and, leaving Cuauhtzin on the saddle, undressed and waded into the tidal water up to my neck. I returned to the shore, made a little fire, and burned some nawak'osis in a final tribute to Carlotta. Once I had dried off, I got dressed again and returned to the nearby Cusabo town.

I wandered around the town a bit wondering what to do next. I really wasn't looking at anything; I was just walking and thinking about Carlotta. The next time I was aware, I was down by the riverfront. They had a sort

of ferry set up to cross the river at this point. I had passed a bridge about a day's ride upriver, but I suppose this was thought to be the best way at this point. It was a large raft that was attached to both sides of the river with thick ropes that would be wound and unwound on either side to propel it back and forth. I had never seen anything quite like it before, and I soon noticed that there were Koryo running it. I assumed it was one of their designs.

As I watched the raft going back and forth for a while, I suddenly decided what I could do. I had never been to Carlotta's birthplace. It would be interesting to see it. Of course, she was not particularly fond of it and never expressed any interest in returning, but it was another connection to her, and I suppose my mind was grasping at anything at this point. When the ferry returned to my side, I approached and paid the fare. I got aboard and waited until it was considered full enough to cross. A light breeze blew in from the sea while we crossed and it was most pleasant. I had to put Cuauhtzin under my cloak for this passage and he was muttering imprecations throughout the ride.

On the north side of the Cusabo, the land was even swampier near the shore. The trade road was on a raised wooden causeway above and through the swamp until solid ground was finally reached about an hour's ride from the landing. There was a yam here and I correctly assumed it was the last for about ninety li, so I stopped. The air was quite dank and the night was very clammy and unpleasant. I had noticed that the road ran just about due north, so since the coast ran northeast, I was probably some distance from the sea by now. The following day, I noticed the road was still running north, and at the end of the day, I was in a small Cusabo town on the bank of a small river. The water in the river was brackish, however, so there was probably an inlet nearby.

I crossed the river over the bridge the next morning and noticed that the road turned a little northeast. At about midmorning, it began to rain. At first it was a drizzle, then a steady rain, then a downpour, then back gradually to a drizzle where it remained for most of the day with only an occasional break. It was much too hot for my rain gear—except for my 'Lingit hat, so I was thoroughly soaked through and uncomfortable by the time we reached the yam. Cuauhtzin was also fairly wet and spent considerable time preening that evening. The next few days the rain continued off and on, sometimes heavy, usually light. The night of the fourth day of rain, there was a spectacular storm with lightning crashing everywhere. Cuauhtzin did not try to shout it down but cried out piteously, so I had to get up and comfort him.

The following day, the sky was clear, the air was fresh, and the temperature was cooler. That day I crossed the Sewee River. The nice weather lasted about two days until I crossed the Winyaw River. Then, the pattern repeated itself. I was beginning to think I had made a poor decision traveling along the coastal swamps in the summer. Farther along the road, I came upon the Great Sound Tribes. I just rode through their towns and only stopped at the yams. Those of them that ran the yams were very pleasant and thoughtful. Eventually, I reached a fork in the road that was not marked on my map. As near as I could tell, the right fork was the newer road. I knew I was approaching the Great Bay, so I assumed there must be a new bridge or ferry lower down the Powhatan River than the one marked on the map, so I turned right.

Late in the day I came upon a village of the Great Bay Tribes, virtually indistinguishable from those of the Great Sound Tribes. I stopped at the yam just beyond the village for the night. The next morning I continued on the road. It turned sharply east and crossed the Nansamund River, then turned a little north and crossed another river. This one was marked on my map as the South Chesapeak River. Just beyond the river, there was a fair-sized town also called Chesapeak. Once past the town, the road turned sharply north, and soon I was crossing the East Chesapeak River. Over that river, the road turned a little to the west and crossed the North Chesapeak River. From the looks of my map, I was heading toward a dead end unless there was a really long ferry just ahead. There couldn't be a bridge across the bay.

It was a little after noon when I came over a rise and could see the bay spread out before me. The trees had been cut down from here all the way to the shore, and ahead in a small semicircular bay protected from the sea by facing west toward the Powhatan River was a bustling city that looked nothing like the Great Bay Tribe towns and was also not on my map. As I drew near, I could see that they were building ships, very large ships, in a series of dry docks on the shore west of the city. I could also see that there was a harbor in the town and about a dozen ships were anchored offshore in the small bay. To my surprise, I saw that there was a small army

encampment just before the town. It looked like a jagun detached from the Snake Ordu. As I reached the sentry, he just looked at me and waved me on. I was tempted to ask what was going on, but I decided to keep a low profile.

When I entered the city, it was afire with activity all centered on the shipbuilding. Most of the people looked like Koryo and a similar tribe, with less-flattened faces. I rode over to the shipyard and the men in charge appeared to belong to the non-Koryo tribe. One of the ships they were building was amazing. It had to be four hundred feet long and one hundred fifty feet wide. I must have been staring at it gape mouthed for some time. They were also working on some smaller ships, more like the ones on which I had traveled to the Khanate of the Clouds. I could see that they were also starting on another of the huge ships. I turned back to the city to look for an inn. I found several of them ranged along the waterfront.

None of them would let me keep Cuauhtzin in my room, but the last one told me there was a small place just east of city that would probably let me keep him. I found the place finally, in a little clearing in the woods about three li east of town. It looked more like a yam than an inn, but it was clean and in good repair. An old Leni lenape named Neconis ran it. He was delighted to have me stay and insisted I join him for dinner. His wife was a fine cook and I very much enjoyed the dinner. Like most Leni lenape, he was quite garrulous.

Neconis confirmed that this had been a yam, the only place to stay in the area before the city was built. The city was called Longjiang after some place in the old land. The men in charge were Hanjen, not Koryo, and had been here only about two years now. He had heard that there was a similar shipyard on the Western Sea in a city called Nanjing on Salmon Sound. From what he had heard, these Hanjen had fled their land because of some sort of political problem and were now building ships for the Khanate. I mentioned the size of the ships they were working on, but he didn't know anything about the ships they were building. He did tell me where I could inquire about passage on a ship. I had decided I had enough of traversing swamps and reasoned that if the trade road ends in Longjiang, there must be available transportation. He confirmed this.

The next day I returned to the city and followed Neconis' directions to a small house in front of the harbor. Inside was a Koryo with whom I made arrangements. It seemed that there was a ship leaving for the north in two days. It was bound for the new port, Zheng He, near the mouth of the Leni lenape River. This port wasn't on my map either. I asked if there were any more new ports along the east coast and he said that another was being built in the south on the south side of the Stono River. I told him that I had been in that area and the road didn't go there. He assured me that when the port was ready, the road would fork to there just as it did below here. I suspected he was right.

I went back to the dry docks to watch the shipbuilding. I got as close as I could without getting in the way and spent the day there. The workers seemed to be organized in teams, each doing a specific task. Every team was led by one of the Hanjen. About half of the workers were Hanjen and half were Koryo. I didn't see any of the locals represented except among the small group of spectators. Late in the afternoon, I felt that someone was looking at me. I turned to find it was the jagun commander.

"Are you not the Crow, the great warrior?"

"I am the Crow. Whether I am a great warrior I cannot say."

"I am honored to meet you. I am Hadebah, jagun commander from the Snake Ordu."

"The honor is mine," I replied. "Isn't that a Kadohadacho name?"

"Yes, it is. I am Kadohadacho, the tribe that contributed the immortal Smoking Mirror to the Khanate," he waxed.

"Grandfather always wrote with great admiration for him. He was probably his best friend in life."

"You are grandson of the Raven? Are you not too young?"

"No, I am the youngest son of his youngest son."

"I feel like I am in contact with the roots of the Khanate."

“Are you related to Smoking Mirror?”

“No, not at all. I was from the smaller town across the river from his.”

“Yes, I know that town, I went through it a couple of times. It is very nice,” I said diplomatically.

“You are most kind. What brings you here?”

“I am traveling north on one of the ships in the harbor. It doesn’t sail for two days so I’m watching the shipbuilding.”

“Isn’t the size of the ship amazing?”

“Indeed. Do you think it will actually float?”

“I don’t know, but Chen Huan, the builder, says it will.”

“Do you know him?”

“We escorted him here and are stationed here as a symbolic guard for him.”

“That’s rather unusual. The Khakhan ordered this?”

“Yes. It is rather boring duty. Would you like to meet Chen Huan?”

“I would. But he does look rather busy at the moment.”

“Join us for dinner tonight. He and I always eat together at the camp. Come at dusk.”

“Thank you, I will be there.”

I rode back to the old yam to tell Neconis what I would be doing that evening. He promised to keep a room for me. I think he meant that as a joke, since I was the only one staying there. By dusk I was riding up to the camp, four straight lines of conical tents. I asked directions to Hadebah’s quarters and was directed to middle tent in the first line. The guard announced me, and Hadebah came out to greet me and lead me into the tent. We sat cross-legged on the ground and chatted while we waited for Chen Huan. He soon came and bowed in greeting to us both. He was not a young man, perhaps in his fifties, but slim and muscular and full of energy like a man half his age. He was of middle height and wore a thin, neatly trimmed mustache and beard. Hadebah made the introductions and Chen Huan looked at Cuauhtzin and me with bright curious eyes.

“Are you not a Ferengi?” he asked. “And is this bird from your land?”

“I haven’t been called that before,” I answered, “but my grandfather used to be called that in the old land. The bird is native to Anahuac, where I was born.”

“Your grandfather was from the Middle Kingdom?”

I told him my family story; then he told me his. It seemed that about seventy years ago the Yonle emperor, Zhu Di, ordered a great fleet to be built and sail all over the southern and western sea. Chen Huan’s grandfather had moved to Nanjing to help build that fleet and one of his great uncles had sailed with it. Less than thirty years later, when he was just a boy, the Xuande emperor, Zhu Zhanji, ordered the fleet dismantled and all shipbuilding confined to shallow draft river vessels. His father then took his family to Choson (the new name for Koryo) so he could continue building ocean ships, but the Yi Dynasty king, Sejong, was not interested in building great ships, only smaller ones. So his father put away the plans and turned to building smaller ships. After his father died, he had remained in the craft and continued building ships in Choson. About ten years ago, a man for whom he had just built a ship for trading with us told him about the Khakhanate. He learned that Choson immigrants had been welcomed here and that there was some shipbuilding going on. He dug out his father’s old plans and moved his family here. He met with the Khakhan and was eventually dispatched to build a port and dry dock north of Dsidsila’letc, the very town to which I returned from exile. He told me it was about a day’s ride north of Dsidsila’letc and they had named it Nanjing for the city of his birth in “The Middle Kingdom.” Construction must have been under way when I was there, but no one mentioned it, and we must have been too far out to sea to see it when we sailed by. He said it only opened for business about four years

ago, about the time I was there. He came here to Longjiang two years ago and would soon move on to the new ports to make sure all is well. His sons were running Nanjing and Zheng He, and he was grooming his nephew to run Longjiang, which was named after the shipyard in Nanjing.

I asked after what Zheng He was named and he told me that he was the eunuch admiral of the Ming emperors. It was he who led the grand expeditions to the south and west. He traveled to many places I had never heard of like Champa, Malacca, Kuli, Lanca, Hormuz, and Malindi. All of these were apparently south and west of the old land. I had seen a map of the old land once in Tlatelolco, but the style was confusing, and it was a little hard to follow since it had a lot of Hanjen writing on it, and I had never learned that. I asked him if the Khakhan had asked him to draw a map of his "Middle Kingdom," but he said he hadn't. I guess that meant we weren't planning on invading it with these huge ships. So I took the plunge and asked if he knew why the Khakhan wanted the big ships. He had no idea, but was very happy for the chance to build them.

"How many dynasties have there been in the old land since the Mongols were overthrown?" I asked him.

"Only one, the Ming," he said.

"But you called the two emperors by different names."

"Oh, that. Yonle and Xuande are titles or themes for the reigns. The emperor chooses them when he is invested. Yonle means 'lasting joy' and Xuande means 'propagating virtue.' "

"Did the first bring lasting joy and the latter propagate virtue?"

"Does anyone live up to his youthful expectations? The Yonle emperor was a great man, the Xuande emperor was not."

"Did it seem strange to you to flee to Mongols after your people overthrew them?"

"My people didn't overthrow anyone. I am a Yi. We used to live peacefully by the sea in what is now Fujian Province in the southeast. We were conquered and oppressed by one northwestern tribe after the other, the Shang, the Zhou, the Qin, and the Han, and then it was far northern tribes, the Hsiung-nu, the T'o-pa, the Ch'i-tan, the Jurchen, and the Mongols. It made no difference to us who ruled the empire as long as we could exploit the sea in peace."

"I don't think I've heard of the Yi or most of those other tribes you mentioned. Grandfather tended to call all of you Hanjen, although I did hear something about a people called Sungjen."

"The Han and the Sung are northwest tribes. The Sung came after the Han and were pressed down to the south by your Chingis. Your Kubilai then conquered them. Many of the people of the Middle Kingdom consider themselves Han because of the popularity of the first Han emperor."

"How is it a shipbuilder knows so much history?"

"As I told you, when I was a boy, the Xuande emperor dismantled the fleet. My father decided there would be more hope for me in the civil service than in the family trade, so he sent me to learn as much as I could at the school in Nanjing. From there I went to the capital, Tatu, to continue my studies. By the time I had finished, my father had moved to Choson, so I joined him and reentered the family trade. He was very pleased that I chose family over personal ambition."

I could see that our host was glazing over at our discussion, so I turned back to talking about the ships. Hadebah had also been watching the construction and was very interested in the subject. Chen Huan confirmed that the ships were at least four hundred feet long and more like one hundred sixty feet wide. They were called bao chuan, which meant, "treasure boats." They were a combination of the shachuan ("sand boats") of the shallow northern sea between China and Choson and the fuchuan ("Fuchai's boats") of the southern sea. They had the V-shaped hull and long keel and used the heavy ballast of the fuchuan but had the masts and rigging of the shachuan. The keel was made of long pieces of wood bound by iron. There were two iron anchors about eight feet long in the stern and floating anchors that could be deployed from the sides of the ship to lessen turbulence in rough seas. Holes in the prow would partially fill with water in rough seas and dampen the violent rocking of the waves. The rudder was balanced and could be raised and lowered. Inside, the ship had four decks like the

fuchuan. The lower one was for ballast; the second had watertight compartments for cargo and storage; the third had the crew quarters, kitchen and eating area; the fourth held the cannon. There were nine staggered masts which held twelve square silk sails instead of the bamboo sails of the Choson ships on which I had sailed. The original treasure ships were luxuriously appointed with spacious cabins for officials and windowed halls and foyers with balconies as well as railings. The ships were carved and painted and the bottom whitewashed. Instead there would be adequate cabins for officials without any frills and the carving and painting was limited to a figure and “dragon eyes” on the prow. The latter seemed to be a custom that was supposed to make sure the ship could find its way to its destination. And, of course, the hull would be covered with copper sheets rather than whitewash.

Chen Huan added that he was also building smaller ships. Mahan or “horse boats” were only about three hundred forty feet long by one hundred forty feet wide. They were, indeed, for carrying horses. Next were gongchuan or “supply boats” which were about two hundred sixty feet by one hundred twenty feet. Then there were rongyun or “troop transports” which were only two hundred twenty by ninety feet. Finally he was also building some of the fuchuan, which were only one hundred eighty feet by seventy feet. These last were the “warships” for battle at sea. I had to ask whom the Khakhan thought he was going to battle at sea, but neither Chen Huan nor Hadebah had any idea. He added that the original fleets also had water ships that carried enough fresh water for all the crews for four or five weeks, but the Khakhan had not requested any such ships, so he doubted that they would be used for any very long voyages—at least for now.

Hadebah sensibly pointed out that crews would have to be trained to man such ships before they could go anywhere. Chen Huan agreed but said that such training was already under way on the west coast and a new port was planned for Raven Bay. Eventually there would be ports all along both coasts. I asked if any of the locals were being recruited for the crews. He assured me they were and that there was a lot of interest among the people of the northwest—he didn’t know the tribal names, but they lived north of Salmon Sound along the coast and the offshore islands. That sounded like the tribes from the ‘Lingit to the northwestern Salst people. It figured the ships would intrigue them. I suggested the Taino and the Putun Maya would likely be very interested also. I added that perhaps the southeastern Timacua, the Calusa, the Cusabo, and the coastal Northeast Bands should be recruited as well. He promised to pass on my suggestion to the Khakhan in his progress report. I told him to take credit for the idea himself rather than attribute it to me, but he said he could not do that. I sincerely hoped that I had not caused the Khakhan to return his attention to me.

I returned late to the yam, but Neconis was there to greet me. The next day I returned to watch the shipbuilding, but this time Chen Huan noticed me and called me over to join him. He then took me aboard the various ships and pointed out all the details he had been telling me about the night before. I think I learned more than I ever wanted to know about shipbuilding that day. It was an experience to be with someone who was so enthusiastic about his work. He fairly glowed as he waxed eloquently about the ships and how they were built. He invited me to join him and Hadebah for dinner again and I did. We chatted amiably about various banalities; then I thanked them for their hospitality and excused myself early since my ship would sail with the tide the next morning a little after dawn. I returned to the yam and chatted a little with Neconis before turning in for the night. He got me up well before dawn and I rode down to the waterfront in plenty of time to be rowed out to the ship. A little after first light, we raised the anchor and began moving westward out of the little bay. We turned sharply east once we cleared the northern edge of the bay and we picked up speed as we entered the Great Bay with a fair northeastern wind.

We soon lost sight of land in the south but could just begin to see land in the north. The ship cleared the bay and turned northeast just keeping the land in sight in the west. The weather was fair and the trip was much more pleasant than slogging my way through swamps would have been. I decided I really could get used to this sort of travel. Cuauhtzin also seemed to enjoy it and I was relieved to note how strongly he clung to my shoulder when we were on deck. My fellow passengers were the usual sort, merchants. I didn’t recognize any of them, but most were Leni lenape, the Putun Maya of the Blue Sky. There were also a few other tribes represented. There was one Amani Yukhan, one Numakiki, two Kadohadacho, one Taunika, and one from the Northeastern Bands. This last one I decided to talk to, since he might be able to help me reach my destination.

He proved to be a Mahican named Occon. He lived north of the new port city Zheng He, our destination. He said his tribe lived on the east bank of the Leni lenape River north of its mouth and often collected shellfish on the island where the new port was located. The port was confined to the southern tip of the island, so there was no problem. The shellfish were more plentiful on the eastern side of the island. He had been to Capawake many years ago. There was no road directly there, but one would take me near enough into Wampanoag lands that I could get directions. He warned me that the Wampanoag were not exactly friendly to outsiders, but they did respect (or fear) the Khanate, so I shouldn't have any trouble.

The voyage took ten days and it was about noon on the tenth day when we arrived at the new port and dropped anchor. New was the word for the port. There were a few dozen houses, mostly the wooden ones the Koryo or Choson favored. A long pier was under construction as was a long row of dry docks east of the port. There was a riot of activity at both construction sites and I could see that people were also building houses in the large cleared area around the port. Most of the island was still wooded. The passengers and their cargo were rowed ashore in small boats. Those of us with no cargo went first. Once ashore, I asked if there was a yam nearby and I was directed to the far northern edge of the port. It was a bit of a walk, but I reached there in midafternoon. It was right on the edge of the cleared area not far from the Leni lenape River. I secured horses and a place to stay for the night.

The next morning I set off north on the trade road. It cut through the woods eventually ending in a road that was the main trade road. To the west it would lead to the bridge over the Leni lenape River. I turned east eventually coming to a bridge over a river called the Montauk on my map. On the far side, there were towns of one of the northeast bands called the Wappinger along the road. The road turned northeast for some distance, then gradually turned more east. I continued on it for seven days. The other bands I passed through were the Niantics and the Narragansetts before coming to the Wampanoag. The yam at which I stopped on that seventh day was at the point where the road turned sharply northward. I asked the keeper if he could direct me to Capawake. He looked at me as if I was confused and asked if I really wanted to go to that miserable island. I assured him I did. He shrugged and suggested I follow a small trail leading southeast to the coast, then take the coastal trail south to a village on the coast across the straight from Capawake. There I might be able to bribe someone to take me over to the island. He warned me it would be about a hundred and twenty li and there was no yam on that trail, so I would either have to get a village to take me in, or camp along the path.

The following day, I found the path (it wasn't even a trail), and late in the day, it debauched on the coast at a tiny village. I found where the trail turned south along the coast and followed it until it got dark. I camped on the beach. The next day I continued on the trail and arrived at a tiny village late in the morning. I asked if anyone could take me over to the island, but all the boats were out fishing, and I had to wait until late in the day as they came in. After asking several of the men, I finally found one who had not had a good day and was willing to take me over for a fee. I paid someone else to look after the horses and got in the small boat. I helped row the twelve li across and got his promise to return for me in two days.

The island was heavily wooded, and there were no trails through the woods that I could see, so I turned right and walked along the coast. I knew Carlotta's Nashanekammuck was in the southwestern part of the island, so I thought this was probably the best course until I found someone and got directions. I camped for the night on the beach and felt very close to Carlotta. That night I dreamt about the first time I saw her. In the dream I turned and rode after her wagon, but it remained just out of reach no matter how hard I rode. The next morning I continued along the beach. I came upon a path around midday just as I was reaching the western end of the island. It looked like there was a little island off the west coast of the main island, but I found out later that it was connected to it by narrow piece of land.

The trail took me through the woods to the south side of the island, and then turned along the beach toward the east. I followed it and, late in the day, came upon the tiny village. There were only a dozen houses and all the people were on the beach taking care of their catch of the day. I approached the small group on the beach and they looked up warily at me. I spoke to them in Mongol, but only one of them could answer me, and his Mongol was barely intelligible. I explained that I had married a girl from this village and had come here to see it after her death. It took a while, but he finally understood and asked who the girl was. I told them, but they didn't recognize the name. Then I mentioned Hiacoomes and one old man remembered him. With some difficulty, he

managed to direct me to the site of Hiacoomes house. The house was long gone and there was really no trace of it, but the man was certain of the spot. I thanked them for their help and camped on the site for the night. I was on the place of Carlotta's birth!

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Capawake to the Pelican Ordu, 106 K

(Martha's Vineyard, MA to W. LA, 1474)

I did not sleep well that night as I was troubled by strange dreams that kept waking me up. I realized the next morning that this had not been a great idea. I didn't really need to chase down Carlotta's roots to be near her. She would always be as close to me as my memories. I caught the lone Mongol speaker before he left to go fishing and asked him if there was a trail across the island to the north side. He gave me some rather convoluted, if picturesque directions. I was to travel into the sun (east) until I saw the boulder next to the three bent trees that had no leaves. Behind that boulder I would find a path. The path would lead me to a spring. Beyond the spring I would find another path that would lead me east again. I should only follow it for twenty paces, and then I should look for a bush shaped like a whale on the left. Behind it I would find a very small trail leading north. After following it some distance, I would notice that it would begin to get wider. At that point I should look for another small trail that headed to the northwest. That would lead me to the northern end of the island not far from the tip. I had to have him repeat the directions a few times and even drew an impromptu map in the sand to make sure I understood him. I then thanked him and the old man who had pointed out the site of Hiacoomes' house and set out with more than a few misgivings.

Fortunately, the man's directions were very good. I did have a little trouble with "the bush that was shaped like a whale." I didn't see the resemblance at all. I also almost missed the last turn, but indeed, about midafternoon, I did come out just a little east of where I had landed the day before. I walked down the beach to the spot where I had agreed to meet the man from the mainland village. I could see that there were a number of boats still out on the sea in the channel and eventually one of the boats turned toward me, landed, and picked me up. It was not the same man but another who had not had much luck that day. I suppose a paying passenger was better than nothing. We returned to the village and I picked up my horses and left late in the day. At dusk I again camped on the beach.

The following morning the sky looked threatening so I got ready quickly and rode north. Before I reached the small village, the rain had already progressed from drizzle to downpour. I continued anyway and before long I was being pelted with hail. Cuauhtzin whimpered under my cloak. The hail returned to rain but continued heavy. Late in the day, I found a small trail heading off to the left and decided to try it since I did not relish spending a night in the rain. The trail was short and it ended at a tiny clearing just big enough for a small rundown hut. It looked abandoned so I entered through the door. It was indeed abandoned but the roof seemed to be sound. I left Cuauhtzin in the house and found the horses some slight cover under a thick stand of trees. I returned to the house and shared some stale centli bread with Cuauhtzin before turning in for the night.

The next morning, I woke up early, gathered the horses, and went back down to the main trail. It was still drizzling, but I really did not relish hanging around here any longer. It continued raining all day, but not as hard as the day before, and by early afternoon, I had reached the yam. The keeper remembered me and asked if I had made it to Capawake. I told him I had. He asked me what I thought of it and I admitted I had seen few meaner places. He dropped the subject and I didn't pursue it. I had decided to return to Zheng He and get back south before summer turned to fall and the nights got too cold for Cuauhtzin.

I retraced my path to the port not really noticing much around me since I was lost in my memories. By the time I reached the yam north of Zheng He, I snapped out of my reverie and began thinking about what I would do next. I thought about spending the winter on one of the Taino islands, and then I thought I might instead go visit my sister Mathilde or maybe just wander around the south. In the morning I walked down to the town to secure passage on the first ship going south. I had decided to let that dictate where I would go. I got directions to the house of the agent and asked him how soon he could get me south. He told me that I had just missed the ship that was heading to the Khanate of the Clouds. Another would be sailing the next morning to Anahuac. Among

other places, it would be stopping at Tonggye, the very place I had landed when I returned from campaign some eleven years before. I booked passage to Tonggye and then wandered over to watch the construction.

The pier was already finished and there were a few ships tied up to it. I noticed that they were already working on building a second pier, but it was just getting started. I went over to see how the dry docks were coming. They seemed to be finished with four of them and they were working on a fifth. None of them looked as large as the huge ones in Longjiang. It looked like materials were being gathered to begin building a ship in the first dry dock. I was watching them get started when a voice interrupted me.

“Minghan Commander Crow, you will come with me.”

I turned to see four members of the Kashik (the Khakhan’s personal guard) standing behind me. Their leader had the sash of a jagun commander. All wore the black armor with red trim of their unit as well as the wary look of hunters waiting for their prey’s next move. I looked them over for a moment, and then told the leader to lead on. I couldn’t imagine that the Khakhan was here, but I knew I had done nothing wrong and in any case was a little indifferent toward my fate. They led me to one of the ships tied up to the pier. It was not particularly large or ornate. I looked just like one of the fuchuan type ships. Once aboard I noticed that there were a large number of the Kashik on board. I really wondered who was on the ship. They led me to the stern to the main cabin area and I waited outside the door as the leader of my “retinue” went in to announce me. He soon opened the door again and motioned me in. I followed him into a large room with many people standing around apparently waiting. He did not wait there but continued through another door leading down a long hallway to yet another door. This opened to reveal a large room with an empty elevated chair. There were windows cut into the back of the cabin, but they were covered with heavy red curtains. My guide left me and returned through the door.

I stood there for a while scratching Cuauhtzin’s head and looking around the room. It was illuminated by a rather thick candle in a heavy iron holder fastened to the floor just to the left of the chair. The room was not furnished, except for the candle and the rather ornate raised chair. It had some rather stylized animal parts carved into the back and the arms and feet. There was the head of either a very strange bird or some sort of monster looming up over the back of the chair and the arms and legs of the chair looked rather like claws or talons. The whole thing was painted black and lacquered. Otherwise, there was a white wool rug just under the chair and covering the platform. The rest of the floor and the walls were highly polished wood with an almost golden glow to it. Finally a young man approached me from a door to the left. He wordlessly indicated that I should follow him and led me to a door on the right. He opened the door and ushered me in. He indicated a chair and left. I wondered if he was a mute.

This smaller room was furnished with a table, two chairs, and a smaller, unlit candle in a holder fastened to the table. There was a window above the table and the red curtains were tied back to let in the light. The table, chairs, floor and walls were the same highly polished wood as the floor and walls in the larger room. It occurred to me that this cabin was quite similar to the Khakhan’s yurt in Khanbalikh, although necessarily scaled down. Maybe he was here. I sat down and stared absently out the window for a while until finally the door opened. I stood up to greet my host and found it was the Khakhan. He looked older than when I last saw him, but he was still tall and slim with the same intense eyes. He motioned me to sit and stared at me for an uncomfortable while.

“I am sorry about the death of your wife,” he finally said.

“Thank you—it was a heavy loss,” I replied.

“It seems I need to thank you for bringing the Kofitachiki into the Khanate and for suggesting tribes to recruit for my ships.”

“No thanks are necessary. I wanted to help the pathetic remnant of the Kofitachiki and I would not want the local tribes to think your navy was only for the immigrants.”

“Remarkable foresight. Where did you get that bird?”

“It was a childhood gift from Nezahualcoyotl.”

“It must be a nuisance to have that attached to your shoulder all the time.”

“No, he’s usually quite well behaved, although he can be rather rude at times.”

“Rude?”

“He speaks Otomi, or rather he curses in Otomi.”

“No wonder he was given to you. He must be rather old by now. How long do they live?”

“He may outlive me. I understand they can live seventy years or so.”

“Well, I suppose it’s fortunate you like him. But what do you plan to do with yourself now. You have been wandering around aimlessly since your wife’s death. Down the Cusabo, up the coast over to Capawake? What are you doing?”

“You seem to be rather well informed about my travels. Perhaps you also know that Carlotta wanted her ashes poured into a river that flowed into the Eastern Sea. After I did that, I followed them down to the sea. Then I decided to visit her birthplace, since I had never been there.”

“Isn’t that a bit morbid?”

“Perhaps. But I thought it might make me feel closer to her.”

“I envy such an attachment to another person. I can’t imagine it, but it must have been remarkable. To be able to trust someone so much that you are devastated by their loss.”

“I am sorry that you did not have such a love.”

“It isn’t in my nature. But to return to the question, what will you do now? Why are you going to Tonggye?”

“It was the first ship I could get that was headed south. I need to be south before fall. It can get too cold for Cuauhtzin.”

“You’re going south because of the bird?”

“Yes.”

“I don’t remember seeing you with it before. What did you do with it when you were on campaign?”

“My father had a servant who was very fond of Cuauhtzin and took care of him. The last time I left he was getting too old and felt he would soon die, so I took Cuauhtzin with me.”

“So what will you do in Tonggye?”

“I’m not sure. I may go visit my sister or I may just stay among the Pansfalaya.”

“Why don’t you go on campaign again? You would surely be a tumen commander this time—especially if I recommend it. By the time you returned, your son would be old enough to go with you wherever you wanted to go and you would no doubt cover yourself with glory again. Besides we are getting close to the end of the land way in the south and there is a vast plain there just like in the middle of this Khanate. It is probably even warm enough for your bird.”

“If I went back on campaign, it would be in the Khanate of the Clouds. I would not feel right in the Green Mist.”

“Still loyal to your relatives, eh. You know the boy hates you and wants you dead. If you go there, I can’t protect you.”

“I am not afraid of death. You need not trouble yourself with protecting me.”

“As you wish, but you are a dangerous fool if you don’t fear death.”

“When your reason for life dies, would you not also welcome death?”

“All the more reason to go on campaign. It is easy to get killed on campaign if you want to die, and you will be remembered and celebrated in song and poems.”

“I don’t really care if my passing is not marked as long as I can be with Carlotta again.”

“How can you know you will be with her again?”

“I have seen her in visions and dreams and she has told me we would be together again after I die. But I can’t seek death, I promised to look after our son, and I won’t go back on that promise.”

“Very well. Good luck to you. I hope you find some peace.”

“Thank you, sire.”

“Now. What is your interest in shipbuilding?”

“I have none. It is rather interesting work and was diverting while I waited.”

“In Longjiang as well?”

“Of course. Chen Huan is a fascinating man, very caught up in his work. He lost me completely while explaining his art.”

“He is indeed a great artist, but he is too trusting. He should not be showing strangers his secrets.”

“I was not exactly a stranger. We had dined together the night before. He is a very well educated man and we got along well.”

“So you do not remember enough of your instruction to be able to build the ships yourself?”

“He only showed me around one day. You must have a very generous opinion of my abilities.”

“I have learned never to underestimate your family.”

“Even if I could build such a ship, why would I, and how could I afford such an undertaking?”

“You wouldn’t build it for yourself, but you might for someone else.”

“Who? Only you could afford such a ship. Anyway, I can’t imagine what you would want with it. But then I can’t imagine finding you on a ship in a port along the east coast. I thought you always stayed in Khanbalikh.”

“Good. I’m glad you can’t imagine what you would do with such information or what I want with the ships or why I am here. I see no reason to detain you further. I may need your services next spring. Can I count on you?”

“As long as you don’t want me to do anything immoral, I don’t see any problem.”

“That is not the best answer to give your Khan, but with you that will have to do. Don’t worry—I know who you are. You will be contacted at the time if you are needed.”

He rose and left the room quickly. Soon the young man returned and led me through the door to the hall. He indicated down the hall and disappeared back through the door behind me. He must have been a mute. I suppose that was one way to make sure he couldn’t tell anyone what was going on. I hoped he was born that way. I went down the hall, opened the door into the reception room, and passed through the large group still waiting. They all cast envious looks at me as I passed by. I went out the door and onto the deck. I nodded to my “escort” and went down the plank off the ship. I walked back into town and returned to watch the shipbuilding again. In the late afternoon, I walked to the yam and turned in early. I rose well before dawn the next morning and got to the pier in plenty of time to get aboard my ship. The Khakhan’s ship was still tied to the pier. The only activity aboard it was the guard, but I did notice a light dimmed by a drawn curtain in one of the rooms of the Khakhan’s cabin. The eastern sky was just beginning to lighten when we weighed anchor and eased away from the pier. We cleared the harbor islands and turned south. I could just see some of the villages on the coast of the large island called Montauk, as the sun began to rise. After we passed that island, the only land visible was to the west.

By midmorning I could no longer see land anywhere. I kept to myself the first day, just looking out at the ocean and wandering down to the kitchen to eat whatever was being served in silence. As usual there were no private rooms. All the passengers were housed in a large room right next to the kitchen area. We could go up on the main deck as long as we stayed out of the way of the crew. Fortunately there were only about twenty passengers so we weren't too crowded. The next day I looked over my fellow passengers. All but two were obviously merchants; as usual almost all of them were Leni lenape. The other merchants I couldn't immediately place, but eventually I figured out that they were an Anishinabe, a Taunika, and a Hewaktokto. The last of them was the hardest to figure out, his dress was like that of someone from Anahuac, but he didn't look dark enough to be from there. The other two passengers looked like travelers. I supposed they could be agents of the Khakhan, but they looked like members of the Tsoyaha. As they spoke together, their language sounded more like Wazhazhe, but I really didn't know that language very well. I decided to keep my own counsel on this trip and eschewed any fraternizing.

The downside of my aloofness was that it was a very long trip. Even with favorable winds, the trip took about two months. We stopped at Longjiang and exchanged a few passengers, all of them merchants. We stopped at the new port at the mouth of the Stono River, the agent in Longjiang had told me about. It was called Fuzhou. I remember thinking when I heard the obviously Hanjen name that it must be another place of significance to Chen Huan. I found out later that it was his birthplace. I was a little surprised that the Khakhan had indulged him like this, but I suspect he really didn't care what the ports were called as long as they were built. Whatever the Khakhan's faults were, they did not include self-aggrandizement or all of the ports would have been variations on his name. In a way, I decided I would miss him when he died.

We also stopped at the large Taino island of Cuba at an obviously refurbished port called Habana. It was named for the local Taino chieftaincy since there were no Taino towns on this spot. They favored placing their towns on hills overlooking the sea. The port was full of Tainos, however, so they seemed to have decided to amend their custom somewhat. The port had a few long piers and it looked like they were starting on dry docks. Needless to say there were quite a few Choson and perhaps some Hanjen in charge. I wondered how the easygoing Tainos were getting along with the driven Choson and Hanjen.

Again we exchanged passengers and, indeed, two of the Leni lenape merchants and I were the only ones left from the original complement. The new additions were a real mixed lot, Putun Maya, a few from the tribes of the Khanate of the Clouds, some from Anahuac, some Ben Zah, and various representatives from the Blue Sky. There was even a pair of whose origin I had no idea. Even listening to their language did not give me a clue. I concluded that they had to be from the Green Mist. But I still kept to myself and did not engage anyone in conversation.

Finally we pulled into Tonggye. It was now mid autumn. The majority of the passengers disembarked along with me, but another load of merchants and a few suspicious-looking types took our places. Tonggye had grown quite a bit since my last visit. There were three piers and some dry docks and several inns. The town itself was at least twice as large as I remembered it and at least two-thirds of the people were locals, mostly Timacua, from the Southeastern Cities and Pansfalaya. There were also a smattering of other tribes represented. The Choson had become the minority in their own town.

I didn't even bother inquiring for lodgings at the inns but headed straight for the yam north of town that had been run by Hoopa Ullah eleven years before. I found the yam still operating although it only had a few horses and looked a little rundown. The keeper was a Timacua named Harpaha. He told me that Hoopa Ullah had retired a few years before after his wife died. He had moved to the Green Mist to stay with his son. Harpaha planned to close the yam this coming winter since there was so little business. He could only provide me with two horses since he was down to so few. I assured him that would be enough.

Over dinner I asked him what he planned to do after he closed the yam. He said that he would take over another one nearer to his home village. He asked me where I was headed and I told him I was going to Nanih Waiya. I had just decided to go there while talking to him. After that, perhaps I would get some guidance. After wasting my time going to Capawake, I was ready for some guidance.

I left early and followed the road west for about a week, then turned north for two weeks finally reaching Nanih Waiya late in the day. It had not changed at all since I had last been there. I liked that. I wanted to be rested when I contacted my spirit guide, so I went to the yam for the night. Konshak Lusa was, of course, long dead. His nephew, Ishtaya, now ran the yam. He was well past middle-age, but did not look so ancient as his uncle had. He was just as small and dark, however. He was also very friendly and remembered my last visit the year before as well as my visit long ago. He said that his uncle had remarked after I left that first time that I would likely return again whenever I needed guidance. I replied that his uncle had been right.

“My last visit here I was with my wife, the love of my life,” I added. “She died this past spring and I need to find some direction in life.”

“I am sorry for your loss. To have such a love in life is both a blessing and a curse. A blessing for you could never have imagined such happiness. A curse for one day it must end and the survivor feels like only half a person.”

“Exactly. Still, I would not have missed it.”

“How could one regret tasting such bliss?”

“You sound like someone who has had a similar experience.”

“I have. My wife died some five years ago. My daughter helped keep me alive long enough that I made the adjustment. Still, I think of her constantly and dream of her every night.”

“I have spoken to my wife in both dreams and visions. That keeps me going. But it has been a while and I need some guidance.”

“Tomorrow should be a good day. You will have the hill to yourself since there is no festival and no one else is staying here tonight. Also it is late in the year, the insects are gone.”

“I look forward to it.”

I skipped breakfast and climbed up the hill the next morning. I fed Cuauhtzin and admonished him to be still. I sat down, made a little fire and burned some nawak’osis. I sat back and suddenly I was in the field of wildflowers. It occurred to me that it was the place where we had been married. I looked around for the very spot and soon found it. Suddenly it disappeared and I was in the miserable hut where I had spent the rainy night after leaving Capawake. The door opened and there in the rain was Carlotta.

“Why did you bring me here?” I asked.

“To make a point, dear one.” She smiled her beautiful smile. “Wherever you are I am with you. You don’t need to go anywhere to find me except in your heart. That is where I abide.”

“I know that now. How is John?”

“Fine. He is growing strong in spite of all that strange water dunking to which your Ani’ Yun’-wiya are constantly subjecting him. Is it really necessary?”

“It is to them. I remember all that from my childhood. Sometimes I thought I would never dry out.”

“Your brother is looking for you again.”

“Really? He always seems to know where I am. What is wrong?”

“Nothing, he just thinks of you often and wants to check up on you. You don’t blame him or your father for what happened to me do you?”

“No. It isn’t anyone’s fault. I do wish you could have been resigned to not having any children. I’d still have you with me. We could have returned to our ‘exile’ again.”

“That would have been wonderful. Do you think of that time fondly?”

“It was the happiest time of my life. But I could never go back there again without you.”

“I told you. I am always with you wherever you go. You can’t go anywhere without me.”

“You are never far from my thoughts.”

“Nor you from mine.”

“What do you think I should do now?”

“Visit your sister. She could use some help and it would keep you busy until next spring. Then do go get our son.”

“I will do exactly as you suggest.”

“I couldn’t always get you to do that while I was alive.”

“I’m sorry if I was headstrong.”

“No. More often than not, you were right.”

“I so miss you.”

“I know my love. I miss you too.”

We embraced and the next thing I remembered I was back on the hill and Cuauhtzin was muttering quietly in Otomi. I looked around and realized it was already afternoon. The poor bird was probably hungry. I fed him a little, then went down the hill and back to the yam. Ishtaya greeted me cheerfully and invited me in for an early dinner. He said he could tell from my demeanor that I had gotten my answer. He suspected I would be hungry and that I would be leaving early in the morning. I confirmed all of his assumptions.

“So, where will you go?” he asked.

“To visit my sister in the Pelican Ordu. I will leave early tomorrow morning.”

“I will have a good meal ready for you.”

I turned in early and rose before dawn. I sat quietly at the base of the hill and watched the sunrise. Then I went back to the yam to have breakfast. As soon as I was finished, I took off on the road to the southwest. About a week and a half later, I was crossing the Missi Sipi on that same long bridge I had crossed several times before. Cuauhtzin was safely under my cloak while we crossed the wide river again. Another week and a half later, I was approaching the Pelican Ordu. I was pleased to find that they had moved a little farther south along the river, although they were still on the east side.

I asked for Aspenquid’s tent and was directed to the far eastern side of the camp. As I rode up I could see Mathilde busily smoking meat and running after little Carlotta. I watched the happy laughing child for a moment and remembered my last visit here and how much Carlotta had enjoyed the little girl. I sighed heavily and pulled up to the tent. Mathilde stopped suddenly and turned around.

“Oh Karl,” she whispered and ran to me. She clung to me crying and just said over and over, “I’m so sorry.”

Little Carlotta stopped and looked at us and came over, clung to her mother’s leg, and started crying also. Cuauhtzin had to get into the act and also started making crying sounds. That helped break the mood and we all had to laugh a little. Still Mathilde and I could not say anything to each other without tearing up again and we had to sit in silence holding on to each other with little Carlotta in our laps. When Aspenquid came in and saw the scene, he came in behind us and put an arm around each of us and laid his head down on Mathilde’s head. I knew what he was thinking. It could have happened to him and he would have been just as devastated.

It was a difficult day, but we got through it, and I plunged myself into helping them get ready for winter. They already had enough food for themselves, but as usual, Mathilde was looking out for the families whose men were away and that kept Aspenquid (when his duties would permit) and me busy for a few weeks. Of course, I could not take Cuauhtzin along hunting, so I had to slip out before dawn and get severely lectured on my return. Everyone loved to hear him carry on. Still, sometimes Mathilde would look at me and start crying again.

Comforting her helped me learn to deal with my loss. Also, to my great joy, I began dreaming about Carlotta every night again. Spending the night dreaming of being in her arms made every day easier.

I had, of course, asked after the children. Aju had returned in the spring and had stayed on through the summer, but had felt that inevitable urge to travel and had gone west. Paula was expecting her second child in the spring. Her husband would be going on campaign next year and she would be coming back after her baby was born. Bedagi had gone on campaign this past spring just before Aju returned. He had not written yet, but was surely there by now. Sarah was still with Sealth's family but should also return in the spring. Mathilde wearily confided that if she could just make it through the winter, she would have all the help she would need. I promised to stay with them unless the winter got too severe for Cuauhtzin. She and Aspenquid said that it did snow here, but not much and it usually melted in a few days. They rather liked that the Ordu kept moving south every year.

After I had been there almost a month, I got a much-forwarded letter from Nezahualpili. He had sent it to Mathilde who had sent it on to Itsati and Ghigooie had held it until she heard where I was. He wrote that he had gone on his spirit quest and had a number of questions about it. It seemed that he had more than a little trouble getting his brother to let him go on the quest. The latter was afraid some harm would come to him alone on a mountaintop. The final compromise involved him going on his quest with an escort that was not allowed to speak to him or in any way interfere with him, but only make sure that no harm came to him. From his questions it looked like he succeeded in spite of all the precautions. I answered his letter right away. I also got a letter from Ghigooie bringing me up to date on my son and reminding me I had promised to write to Cinnashote about settling down and raising a family.

I did feel I should write him a letter telling what had happened. As it turned out, that letter was helpful to me. I was able to put down all my feelings about Carlotta, the baby, and all that happened. I think it helped that had to organize my thoughts to write them down. It forced me to step aside for a moment and put everything in perspective. I asked Mathilde to read the letter before I sent it to make sure I had not rather discouraged him from settling down. She said that she had never read such a testament to love in her life, and if it didn't make him long for it, there was something wrong with him. I wasn't sure if that was true, but I sent him the letter.

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The Khakhan Again, 107 K

(W. LA to II D'Orleans, QB, 1475)

Somewhere in midwinter my brother Theodore finally caught up with me. He looked as hale and hardy as usual, but I noticed his hair was beginning to turn gray. It had been just over half a year since I had seen him and I was a little surprised that he looked older already. On the other hand, perhaps I just hadn't noticed it since I was more than a little preoccupied at that time. He looked at me closely, no doubt trying to read how I was holding up. Then he gave everyone a hug and asked Mathilde and Aspenquid about their children. After answering, Mathilde turned the tables on him and asked about his family. He reported that Sarah and her new son were fine. John was studying with a colleague of his in Anahuac. Paula had also decided she wanted to be a healer and was beginning her studies with Mahwissa's cousin, Nizhevoss. (Women were often healers, but they usually did not wander about like so many of the men did.) He also assured us that Mahwissa was well. He did not know about our relatives in Anahuac since he had not been there in a while. But he would soon be going there to pick up John and take him to another colleague of his.

Not surprisingly, we encountered each other the next morning heading to one of the sweat lodges along the river. We found an unused one and got the fire going. While the lodge was heating up, I went to get some pine boughs. He had brought along some cedar boughs. It was a good thing, I didn't recall seeing any cedar around here. There was cypress, but not cedar. When I got back with my boughs, we went in and poured some water on the hot rocks.

"I'm glad you have adjusted to your loss," he said. "It cannot have been easy for you."

"No, it wasn't," I agreed. "I think it was almost as hard for Mathilde."

“She has always been very close to you and feels your pain as though you were her child. In some ways, I suppose you were.”

“Well, Mother was rather caught up in her own thoughts.”

“I know. I was hoping you wouldn’t follow her example.”

“I can’t be sad when I think of Carlotta; she always made me happy.”

“She was quite a find. You managed to find your perfect complement. In that you took after both your parents—in their first marriages.”

“I often wondered why they married each other. I would think it would only make them miss their lost loves more.”

“It might have, although they had always been close friends, and the arrangement was satisfactory for them both.”

“I can’t imagine remarrying.”

“Don’t even think about it, then. If it comes along for any reason, don’t be afraid or ashamed of it. It can be a great comfort in its own way. At least, that’s what I’m told.”

“I don’t see it.”

“It’s not important.”

“Do you know why the Khakhan is building huge ships?” I decided to move quickly into another topic.

“So, you noticed that while you were in Longjiang?”

“Why do you always know where I’ve been? You’re as bad as he is.”

“I’m much better than he is. I bet you were surprised to see him in Zheng He. I knew he was going there when he set sail from Longjiang.”

“When was he there?”

“About a week after you left.”

“What is he up to?”

“I must admit—I’m not sure. He seems to want a huge navy including warships. But we have no enemies with warships. I don’t think he plans to invade the old land because the majority of the ships, including all the large ones, are being built on the east coast. He might be planning to invade our ancestral home, but I would think he would first reconnoiter, and I know he hasn’t. My best guess is that he thinks he will have to invade one of the Khanates and wants to be ready to invade in force from the sea. Of course, it will take him quite a while to train crews for those ships even after he gets them all built. He has kept his plans very close to the vest. No one I know has any solid intelligence on his intentions. How do you like his mute ‘chamberlain?’ Isn’t that predictable.”

“I just hope he was born mute.”

“He was. The Khakhan is not a monster. Except for his suspicious nature, he is one of the better ones we’ve had.”

“I was thinking the same thing myself not long ago. What is Juchi like? I’ve already seen Toragana.”

“Toragana is one of those remarkable men who seemed to have been born without a heart. I hope he goes on campaign and manages to get killed. Juchi is an odd sort. He is a little reckless, but seems to be very good-hearted. With a little maturity, he may be all right.”

“What about Berke?”

“He is a dreamer. I think he is too much like his namesake. He lives alone in the mountains in the west. He’s probably more like our cousin ‘Enri by now.”

“Did he ever marry?”

“No. I think his father has written him off completely. I know that no one is allowed to mention his name to him. At least two members of the Kashik changed their names to avoid offending him.”

“Why does he keep following me around? And what task do you suppose he wants me to do for him next spring?”

“He follows you so he can find me. I have no idea what he wants you to do for him. Did you agree?”

“I told him that as long as it wasn’t immoral, I would be happy to serve.”

“That must have kept you firmly on his wrong side.”

“He did not appreciate the limits I placed, but he assured me it would not be a problem.”

“I think he likes the fact that you are so honest with him. I think he may even respect you.”

“I don’t know about that. It is odd that he keeps bringing me in to talk to him. He again suggested that I go on campaign in the Green Mist. He even promised me a tumen command. I wonder why he gives me any thought at all.”

“Well as I told you, he follows you to catch up with me since I always elude his spies. But he talks to you because he likes you and respects you.”

“Hmm. Why does he follow you?”

“He has a suspicious nature. He doesn’t trust anyone who moves around as much as I do and eludes his spies with such ease.”

“Be careful of him. He acts on his suspicions.”

“From me he gets only more questions, no answers. As long as I keep him off guard, I have nothing to fear.”

“I’m not sure his suspicions aren’t justified. You’ve always given me the impression that you are much more than you appear to be.”

“How flattering! Nevertheless, I am what I appear to be.”

“You don’t really expect me to believe that, do you?”

“It is the truth.”

“Why do you elude his agents if you have nothing to hide?”

“I don’t like anyone nosing into my business. My patients and colleagues should not be subjected to the inquiries of his pathetic minions.”

“They aren’t that pathetic. I never notice them. What do you look for?”

“It is better that you do not elude them. It is one of the reasons he probably likes and respects you. He thinks you are completely without guile. He’s right about that, you know.”

“I’m a fairly decent hunter and tracker.”

“It’s not the same thing. His agents look like they belong where you see them because most of them do. He simply hires people already in place to report to him on certain people. You, of course, are very easy to spot because of your light complexion and military bearing. Remember how much trouble Hiacoomes had trying to help you blend into invisibility? All the Khakhan’s agents know to look out for you and report seeing you. I would guess about half of all yam managers were his agents—especially those near the larger towns and, of course, the ports. They are perfect agents. No one marks them as strangers or suspicious.”

“I should have learned that lesson from my experience with that miscreant Aztahua.”

“Well, you stepped into that one with both feet. We were both lucky that I was able to help you get your neck out of that one.”

“I am convinced that an essential part of being that age is complete stupidity. I was such a fool.”

“There were elements of foolishness in your sentiments, but on the whole you were simply looking at the situation with your customary honesty and innocence. When one lives under an absolute monarch, one needs to be subtle and cynical if one wishes to survive.”

“I think I’ve just been damned with faint praise.”

“No, Karl. I have tremendous respect for you myself. I feel you are a breath of fresh air. You are always so honest and direct I don’t need to conspire to get the truth out of you. There aren’t many people like that anymore.”

“Except among the more primitive tribes.”

“You must not have had much exposure to primitive tribes.”

“Perhaps I should be more devious.”

“No. Stay as you are. You and Mathilde are the two most wonderful people that I know. I’d hate to see anything change you.”

“Speaking of Mathilde, is she all right?”

“She is a little rundown. The little one is a handful and she’s a very conscientious mother who’s no longer very young.”

“Carlotta wants me to get John in the spring. She wants me to raise him until he is old enough to go back to the Ani’ Yun’-wiya as you and I both did. But, he will only be a year old. What should I do with him? I thought of bringing him here to Mathilde, but that would be much too hard on her. I understand little boys are worse than little girls are.”

“Don’t get him until you have finished with the Khakhan. I would suggest that you also leave that bird of yours behind, but I wouldn’t wish him on Ghigooie. Once you’re done with the Khakhan, go pick the boy up, and take him out west to visit relatives. It will keep you busy and they’ll all enjoy putting up with him for a while. Just don’t stay anywhere longer than a month or so. By the time you’re finished seeing them all, he’ll be old enough to enjoy.”

“I don’t think we have that many relatives.”

“Of course, we do. I can give you an itinerary if you like. I know where they all are.”

“I probably should get that from you. I don’t think I know where half of them are.”

“Done. You’ll have it before I go. I’ll even send you any necessary updates next spring.”

“We better get out of here before we start melting.”

We got out and jumped into the Ishak. It was cold, but not as cold as I expected. We climbed back to the plain, dried off, dressed, and returned to Mathilde and Aspenquid’s tent. I picked up little Carlotta and took care of her while Theodore put together a tonic for Mathilde. When he finished he sent her off to take a sweat bath and together we played with the little one and chatted. He gave me many much-needed bits of advice on taking care of little children. It was a good deal more complicated than I had thought. Little Carlotta was indeed a handful. She ran everywhere, tripped over everything, got into everything, knocked over everything, and broke a lot of things. I think she could easily have put one of the mischievous little bears (raccoons) called kvkli in Ani’ Yun’-wiya or mapachin in Nahual to shame.

Theodore stayed with us about a month and between us we kept the little one busy until she needed a meal. That was about all we let Mathilde do. As a result she looked more her old self by the time he left. Even after Theodore left, I continued to watch the girl and we grew quite fond of each other. By the middle of the winter,

Mathilde had so much energy that she was helping others with their children and shooing me away to go fishing or hunting with Aspenquid when he was off duty. He was particularly grateful for my help with the child. He admitted to me that he had been worried about Mathilde's health before Theodore and I came.

Before he left, Theodore had given me the list he promised, and I had to admit I did have a lot of relatives, and they were scattered across the Khanate. I decided not to write any of them. I would just go to their homes and stay as long as the situation permitted. Late in the winter, Sarah returned and immediately insisted on taking over Carlotta. She was only partially successful, however. The little girl was used to me and very headstrong about getting her way. I wondered from where she got that. Mathilde and Aspenquid never struck me as headstrong. Just as I was finally getting ready to leave, Paula arrived with her two young children. The new baby was a girl. I stayed a few extra days to get reacquainted with my niece and her children. She was a lovely girl, reminding me very much of her mother. The children were still very young, but both seemed much more calm than little Carlotta.

Finally, I took my leave, taking care to make the biggest fuss over little Carlotta. I assumed if the Khakhan needed me, I would hear from him on the way to or when I arrived at Itsati. The trip was uneventful until I reached the Missi Sipi River. It was flooded and the pontoon bridge was still not in place. The local Taunika had set up a transport service that was doing quite well. There was some danger involved because all sorts of things were floating down the river and could knock over a boat if the boatman was not very watchful. It would have been even harder on the horses if they had to swim across the wide river behind the boat, but instead there was a brisk horse exchange in progress on both sides of the river. Of course, one would end up some distance down the river on the far side, but a wagon would then haul the boat, boatman and passengers back to the main road. I asked, and, indeed, the bridge was usually in place by now, but every so many years there was really high water in the spring and the Taunika, among others, made a killing.

Eventually I got to the far side and continued on my way, arriving at Itsati in early spring. It was not easy returning there at this time; everything reminded me of my missing wife. John was in fine shape, crawling around everywhere, but not really getting into things. He would look at everything, but would not touch it. I thought that odd, but something of a relief. It was hard to say which of us he more closely resembled. He had blue eyes and his complexion was as fair as mine. He had the blond hair I had at his age. He had a sweet smile that reminded me of his mother, and he was very quiet like she had been also. Seeing him reminded me how much she would have been thrilled with him. I felt I should spend as much time with him as I could. He particularly liked Cuauhtzin and giggled whenever he saw him. Much to my surprise, Cuauhtzin seemed to like him and made little cooing sounds to him, rather than the usual Otomi insults. He even would help me watch over him, landing gently on his back if he thought he was too close to the river. Whenever he did that, John would stop and giggle and make bird sounds.

The boy took to me almost instinctively. He loved having me hold him with Cuauhtzin on my shoulder. He would look up and smile at each of us in turn and melt our hearts. He would only reluctantly go back to his wet nurse. I would only leave him to hunt and was surprised to find that Cuauhtzin preferred staying with him while I was hunting, so I didn't have to sneak out early anymore. I began to dread the idea of leaving him for whatever the Khakhan wanted. I rather hoped he would get on without me. Unfortunately, it was not to be. After only about a week, a dispatch rider arrived and presented me a letter with the Khakhan's seal.

I was to leave at once and report to Longjiang. There I would present myself to Hadebah, who would give me further instructions. With a heavy heart, I spent as much time as I could with John that day and then turned him over to Suyeta again. He looked at me with a wide-eyed innocent look when I bid him good-bye; then he reached up to Cuauhtzin and the latter flew over and landed on Suyeta's shoulder, startling her considerably. I tried to retrieve him, but he would not come to me. Suyeta asked if she could keep him also while I was away since the boy loved him so much. I reminded her of what that entailed, but she was insistent, and he was not inclined to rejoin me. Also, John seemed so happy to have him with him. I wondered if Cuauhtzin was repaying me for all the times I left him behind with Tetl, but I suppose he really wasn't that human.

It seemed strange the next morning riding off without Cuauhtzin firmly attached to my shoulder. Before I had gone far, I found I missed him and John almost more than I could bear. The trip took about three weeks at the

usual pace. Of course, a dispatch rider could have made it in a week or less. I reported to Hadebah who greeted me warmly and handed me another sealed envelope. He volunteered that he had no idea what was in it. I opened it to find orders to embark on the ship in the Longjiang harbor that was flying a white pennant. That was all it said. I told Hadebah and he just shrugged and we rode into the harbor. I noticed that the first huge ship was gone and the second one was afloat in a wet dock while the rigging and sails were being installed. A third was already under construction. There were about twenty ships in the harbor, but only one was flying a white pennant. I thanked Hadebah and got myself rowed out to the ship.

The ship looked like one of the ones Chen Huan had called a fuchuan. A mixed crew manned it, but all were wearing green uniforms. There was one exception, a Kashik. He was peering intently at the boat as we approached, and threw down the rope when we pulled alongside. I climbed up the rope and onto the deck. He took a look at me, then beckoned me to follow him. We went to the main cabin and entered a hallway with several doors on either side and one at the end. We went to the one just left of the one at the end. He knocked once, then opened the door, ushered me in and left.

“You took your time getting here,” another Kashik who was wearing the sash of a minghan commander growled.

“I wasn’t aware that it was an emergency,” I replied evenly.

“I am Wawnoshe. I have orders to take you to Zheng He.”

“And then?”

“I have no idea.”

“I see. Where shall I stay?”

“You are to have the cabin next to mine. You may, of course, wander about the ship as you wish as long as you do not interfere with the crew. That is all.”

“Thank you.”

With that I turned and left the room and tried the door of the cabin next to his (farther back up the hall). It was open and not occupied. It was not large, but there was room for a bed, a table and chair, a washbasin, and a storage bin. There was a small window above the table on one side of the room. I noticed that we set sail almost at the moment I set my pack down. I went out on deck and watched the port recede. Once we cleared the harbor, we turned east into the Great Bay. I looked over the ship. The men in green were the crew of the ship. There were over two hundred of them and they were a mixture of tribes that lived along the east coast. I could see northeast bands, Leni lenape, Great Bay and Sound tribes, coastal Iyehyeh, Cusabo and Timacua. There were even a couple of Mingue. The captain and the officers were all Choson, however. Other than Wawnoshe, there were ten Kashik on board also. I was fairly sure they were his escort, not mine.

The ship was fairly large, but much swifter than the cargo ships on which I was used to sailing. There were emplacements for cannon, but none were aboard yet. I assumed that this crew was still in training. There were no other passengers on the ship besides me. The second deck had storerooms, but they only had provisions in them. The third deck had the crew’s quarters and the kitchen. I chatted with some of them when they were off duty. They all seemed to enjoy the adventure of being on the open sea in the large ships and had the greatest respect for their Choson officers. The latter were a little aloof and only chatted among themselves in their language when they were off duty. The Kashik were also rather aloof and kept to themselves. Within four days, we were pulling up to the pier in Zheng He.

As soon as we arrived, Wawnoshe and his contingent debarked and marched over to another ship just like this one. I waited patiently on the deck for a while, and then I walked down to the pier and started walking toward the town. About halfway down the pier another contingent of Kashik marched by me, but didn’t bother me. When I reached the end of the pier, I looked around to see how the construction was coming. There were now four long piers in place, each having a number of ships tied to them, and the dry docks were all built, and ships were under construction in them. I wandered over to the dry docks to watch the work. I had just found myself a

nice spot when a short almost wraithlike fellow approached me. He was likely only middle-aged, but he looked ancient and cadaverous, he was so thin. He was dressed in nondescript clothes and looked like might be from one of those tribes in the far western desert.

“Are you the Crow, son of John of Anahuac?” he asked me.

“Yes, I am,” I replied looking him over.

“I have a message for you.” He handed me a sealed note, turned, and scuttled away.

I looked after him a moment, then opened the note. I didn’t recognize the seal on the note. Inside was an order to ride to the new port of Yangzi and report to the commander of the jagun stationed just north of the port. It included directions to the new port. It looked like it was on the coast west of the peninsula of the Nausets. That seemed a little far north for a port, but perhaps the winters weren’t quite so bad along the coast. I walked toward the yam north of town only to discover a horse yard just beyond the town. I secured two horses there and started riding north. As I passed the yam, I noticed that it was deserted and beginning to fall into ruin. When I reached the end of the north road, where it joined the road heading east and west, there was a new yam there. I stopped for the night. Some six days later, I arrived at the same yam from which I had turned to go to Capawake.

“You again.” The keeper recognized me. “Are you going back to Capawake again?”

“No, I am not,” I replied, volunteering nothing else after what Theodore told me about yam keepers.

The keeper did not pry, making me wonder if I had misjudged him. In the morning I continued on the road as it swung sharply north. At midmorning on the following day, the forest suddenly opened up and before me was spread a small town and port in the midst of being built. I couldn’t help notice that one of the huge ships was in the harbor, but anchored well out from the new pier. Smaller ships were tied up at the one pier. Another pier was under construction, but it didn’t look like there would be any shipbuilding here; I saw no sign of dry docks. I rode through the busy streets and north of the port came upon the encampment of the jagun. I inquired after the commander and was directed to a tent in the front row as usual. The commander took one look at me and wordlessly handed me a note.

The note told me to ride north of town until I was contacted. This was getting ridiculous. It would be summer in a few weeks and I was wandering from note to note of instructions. I was beginning to think the Khakhan had lost his mind. I had given my word, however, so I remounted and continued riding north—actually the road ran a little east of north. At the end of the day I came to a yam. It was not very large, or much used from the look of it. The keeper was a Hotcangara automatically convincing me he was one of the Khakhan’s agents. I fully expected him to be my contact, but he wasn’t. In fact, he barely said a word, the surly wretch.

The following day I continued north. The road had gotten a little narrower, but it continued onward. Smaller paths and trails joined it from the west generally, although occasionally one would lead off to the east, no doubt leading to a small coastal village. Each evening I would find another yam, although they kept getting smaller and meaner. On the fourth day I came to a fork in the road. To the right was the larger coastal road and to the left was the smaller north road. I assumed I was to take the latter. I reached a very small and apparently rarely visited yam that evening. I wondered how soon the yams would give out entirely. Actually, I hadn’t thought there would be any away from the coast. On the evening of the seventh day, there was no yam, just an empty wooden shack with a small adjacent coral, also empty. I supposed one was expected to do for oneself here. There were firewood and utensils for cooking, but no food. There was a shed that had hay for the horses, however. Since there was plenty of grass in the corral, I didn’t bother with it.

I rose early the next morning and fixed myself some breakfast. I was beginning to wonder if I had missed the person I was supposed to meet. I suspected that if I had, he would have found out at the yams through which I had passed and would be coming after me. So I decided to continue north. At any rate, I was curious to find what the next “yam” would look like. Late in the day I came upon a man with his back toward me camping in a small clearing on the side of the road. I wondered if this clearing was the local yam. I decided to ask the man if there was a yam farther along the road. He stood up and turned around as I rode up and dismounted. He was tall, but did not dress like one of the local northeast bands. He looked something like them, making me think

perhaps he was Leni lenape, but he didn't look exactly like one of them either. I decided he must be Kensistenoug or Anishinabe.

"Finally you have arrived," he greeted me.

"You are the one I am to meet?" I asked.

"Yes. I am Kineu. I am to take you on from here."

"An Anishinabe! I didn't know any of you were into intrigue."

"Do you think we are a simple people?"

"Not at all. After all the great Odinigun was one of yours."

"Well, I am not related to him. My mother was Dzitsiista if that helps establish my devious credentials."

"I don't mean to criticize. It is just that I have been following notes all the way from Itsati and the whole business borders on farce."

"Indeed!" he said chuckling. "Our Khakhan does have a flair for overdoing his precautions."

"Do you have any idea what he wants with me?"

"I'm sorry to report, I do not." He shook his head with an ironic smile. "I only know that I am to take you along a small difficult path to the next location where your next guide will take over."

"Will I get to my final destination before winter?"

"Since we are heading northwest, I would think so. By winter we would be among the Inuit."

"So how far will you be taking me?"

"It should take about five days to get you there. We will have to ride as though we had a road even though we will only have a path."

I was not too pleased with this information. Of course, it was hardly Kineu's fault. We had dinner together and I asked him about his work for the Khakhan. He said that he was mostly a tracker. He was rather puzzled by this assignment and had no idea where I was going. Normally he would hunt down fugitives from the Khakhan's justice, but he had been summoned in the spring and told to familiarize himself with the path on which he would be guiding me. Once he was comfortable with its nuances, he was told to wait for me here at the terminus of the trail. I asked if there were any more yams north along the road, but he told me there were not. If another were built it would be farther along, anyway. I asked whom he had been tracking recently, but I didn't recognize any of the names. He would return with them or their heads as the events unfolded, but he would always return successfully. He supposed that either the Khan wanted him to become familiar with this area, or he had nothing better for him to do. I sincerely hoped he would not one day be looking for me.

In the morning we had a light breakfast and rode northwest. To call our path a trail would be too generous. It was little more than a trace. Once we were into the deep woods, I have no idea how he knew where he was going. He maintained a very steady pace, necessitating frequent ducking to avoid low branches, and we only stopped in the evening, as it got dark. All we ate was dried meat and centli meal seasoned with whatever we had, chili in my case and salt in his. We occasionally came upon a hunting party of the local band, called Abenaki, but did not stop to speak to them. Late on the third day, I noticed we were riding along the north bank of a river. We continued along the river for two more days reaching the end of the river late on the fifth day. It ended by joining a larger river, which I thought must be the Wendat River. Kineu confirmed that it was and also told me that this was as far as he would be taking me. Someone else would meet us the next morning. We made camp and I noticed he made certain the fire would give off a lot of white smoke and proceeded to shape the smoke by interrupting its normal path with a blanket. He explained that this was a means of communicating among the local people here. He added that they were related to the Kensistenoug, but called themselves Ne-e-noilno.

The next morning we were just finishing up breakfast when a small boat pulled up to the bank of the Wendat in front of us. The river was tidal here and a lone boatman had come upriver with the tide. The man was obviously a local who did not speak much Mongol. Using hand signals he indicated that I was to go with him as soon as the tide began to go out. Kineu wished me well and got the local to take him across the small river we had followed northwest. He did so, but then had to paddle hard to get back over to my side again. We waited in silence until midafternoon when he deemed the tide sufficiently reversed and ushered me aboard. I noticed his boat was made of a frame of sticks covered with birch bark. It looked rather flimsier than the dugout boats of the south, but it seemed to hold us well enough. He would not let me help paddle, but expertly handled the maneuvering by himself. Before long we were putting into the south coast of a large island in the middle of the Wendat.

Once ashore he motioned me to a small path and then put back into the river, rowed for the north shore, and continued downstream. I walked along the path through a mostly beech forest with a few maples here and there. I finally came to a small camp. Here I found sitting before a fire a lone man who looked up balefully at my approach. He was a large man, not just tall, but broad, not fat, but muscular. He did not change expression as he looked me over, but he finally drew himself up to stand about half a head taller than me. He was dressed like a Mongol, but did not look enough like any particular tribe, so I imagined him to be a rather thorough mixture.

“You must be the long-awaited Crow,” he muttered lugubriously.

“Yes. I suppose, like everyone else along this bizarre path, you have been waiting for me a long time.”

“No, just two days.”

“Well, where do we go from here?”

“Nowhere. We spend the night. Tomorrow I’ll take you to the Khakhan.”

“He’s here? Way up here?”

“He should be, tomorrow. He’ll tell you what he wants you to do.”

“Do you have any idea?”

“No.”

The next day my loquacious guide led me along the path for some distance. Finally, around midafternoon we came out of the woods to the southern shore of the island near its eastern end. There in a barely adequate bay was a ship looking much like the one on which I had last encountered the Khakhan. We went down to the shore where a small boat was waiting. In the boat were two of the men in the green uniform of the navy. They beckoned me aboard and rowed me out to the ship. I climbed aboard the ship, and as I was being led to the main cabin, I noticed that there were some small islands just east of our position and on the nearest one there was some sort of a palisaded town. I had not seen any such towns in this area so my attention was drawn to it. But I quickly dismissed it since I was most curious about what the Khakhan wanted with me in this remote place.

38

The Eskuldunac, 107 K

(St. Laurence River to Newfoundland, 1475)

There was no anxious crowd waiting in the large anteroom this time. In fact, there was only a handful of Kashik looking at me with suitable suspicion. Not standing on ceremony, my guide opened the door to the hallway and pointed to the door at the far end. He then closed the door behind me as soon as I passed through it. I walked to the far door, opened it, and found myself again in the traveling throne room. Before long the mute chamberlain came up and led me to the same side room again. I sat down and looked out the window. It looked out on the large island from which I had just come. I could see that the large man who had guided me to the boat had made a camp on the shore. I assumed he was waiting for further instructions.

I had not waited very long before the Khakhan opened the door, waved me back into my seat, and sat down across from me. He still had that intense almost haunted look as he eyed me carefully. He was dressed in

unadorned but fine quality cotton clothes. It occurred to me that except for his intensity he might pass for a merchant. When he was finished studying me, or whatever he was doing, he sat back a little.

“Do you have any idea why you’re here?” he asked.

“None at all, sire,” I replied.

“Good. Then even your brother doesn’t know. I understand you were wondering why I wanted a fleet.”

“Well, it seemed rather curious, since we have no sea-borne enemies.”

“Not yet. But we may. You are aware of the fishing incursions of your fellow Ferengi, I presume?”

“Yes. Once in a while a few of them are shipwrecked. My wife’s two grandfathers were survivors of such a shipwreck.”

“Good, that could be helpful. In any case, it occurred to me that it was not wise to have strangers plying the seas off our coasts. They should either pay for the privilege of fishing if that is all they are doing, or they should be executed for spying if that is what they are doing.”

“From all I’ve heard, they are nothing more than simple fishermen.”

“It is best to be certain of such things. I came upon an old book describing the experiences of your illustrious grandfather. In it was a prophecy by a Pansfalaya mystic warning of a ‘great evil’ from across the Eastern Sea. It occurred to me that perhaps your distant relatives were planning to invade us. From our Mongol histories, they were easy to defeat when we invaded their homeland, but one can never assume they have not learned a few tricks since that time. After all, we have learned a few tricks.”

“I do remember that prophecy. As I recall, the council was rather puzzled by it at the time.”

“Indeed. I do not like to be puzzled, however. Therefore, I have had one of the ships intercepted and the crew captured and brought here. Their ship did, indeed, appear to be merely an adequate fishing vessel, although it is carrying a cargo of salt. We towed it to a secret port to check it out more carefully. As I expected, the crew is a problem. Their gibberish is completely incomprehensible. I thought perhaps you could communicate with them and ascertain whether they are what they claim to be, and what they planned to do with all the salt.”

“I will be happy to try, sire. I do know an old language my family has always called ‘the written language.’ If any of them can write, perhaps I can communicate with them.”

“Excellent. Do your best; their lives depend on you. See if you can find out where they are from and what sort of place it is. I need to know if I have any reason to worry about them.”

“I must admit, I am curious about them myself. I wonder if they might know of my wife’s grandfathers.”

“Any information you can give me about them will be helpful. Do your best.”

“I will, sire.”

“Excellent,” he said as he rose up. “But I should warn you, they are a foul-smelling lot. They don’t seem much inclined to bathe. You may want to talk to them in the open.”

“They don’t bathe!” I wrinkled my nose in disgust. “Where are they?”

“They are being held in the enclosure on that small island. You will be taken there at once. Follow me.”

We left the room and I followed him down the hall to the anteroom. There he ordered one of the Kashik guards to get me over to the smaller island. He saluted and led me out the door back on deck. He told one of the Choson officers of the Khakhan’s wishes and the latter led me to the side of the ship where the small boat that had brought me was still waiting. The crewmen climbed down quickly and I followed them. They rowed me around the ship and over to the small island. Once I was ashore, they pushed off and returned to the ship. I approached the enclosure and found the door. It opened as I reached it. Inside was a jagun of Kashik all looking as stern as usual. I wondered what effect they had on the poor captives.

The jagun commander introduced himself as Sayga nea (another Hotcangara). He showed me around the enclosure. There were barracks for the Kashik around the periphery, and inside was a large house patterned after the Mingue long house. Outside of the house was a small area in the open with a cooking fire. Lounging around the house were groups of unimpressive-looking, meanly dressed men with fair, although reddish complexions and hair and beards of shades from black to medium brown. They ranged in age from young to old and in build from emaciated to portly. All were of medium to small stature, the tallest half a head shorter than I. I looked them over for a while from a safe distance. They did not seem to take any special notice of me, although I was the only one not dressed in black. Finally I approached them. The sour smell emanating from them gagged me and I had to immediately retreat again. I assayed the wind and approached again keeping them downwind. They began to eye me curiously, and a bit apprehensively as I drew near.

“Hail, men of the sea,” I greeted them in the old language.

They looked at me in shock and started talking to each other rapidly. The language was very strange to me although I almost felt I could understand a word or two. I repeated my greeting and one of them said something like “ladeen” and called into the long house for someone with a name that turned out to be Luis. This proved to be a young man of small stature and slight build with black hair and the slightest beginnings of a beard. He came out and exchanged excited words with the man who called him. Then he cautiously approached me and greeted me in the old language. I just recognized it, however, because his pronunciation was rather different than what I had learned. He said “salve” instead of “zalwe” as I would pronounce it. It looked like Hiacoomes was quite right when he suggested that my family had lost the pronunciation of the language since we only wrote it. I tried writing the language and had much more success. Soon he was correcting my pronunciation and with much effort we were able to communicate slowly.

He told me that he was the only one of the men who could read and write Latin (as he called the old language). He had been studying to be a priest until the past year when he had been kicked out of the school for some misdeed. He then joined the crew of the ship we had captured. He could see that I was not like the rest of his jailers and asked if I had also been captured. I assured him that I had been born here, but mentioned that my wife’s grandfathers were from a place called Sanjandeluz. He said that it sounded like Saint Jean de Luz, a port in the province of Lapurdi in the southwestern part of the Kingdom of Frantzia (France). He and his fellows were from the port city of Donostia in the province of Gipuzkoa, just south of Lapurdi, but they were loosely affiliated with the Kingdom of Gaztela (Castille). He added that it was likely that my wife’s ancestors were Eskualdunac (Basque) like he and his fellows were. I asked if that was the name of his tribe and he said it was. I then wondered why his tribe was divided between two kingdoms. He replied that it had been united four hundred years ago, but they were small and isolated and, since they lived on both sides of a mountain range, were easily divided between their larger neighbors. It was fine with them, however, since they were autonomous and could vote down any edict of the king. There was an Eskualdunac kingdom, Naparoa (Navarre), but it was ruled by Juan of Aragon, and only consisted of the largest of the seven provinces.

This was getting confusing, so I asked what his ship was doing off our coast. He said that he and his fellow crewmen were just fishermen who were following in the wake of generations of fishermen who had exploited the rich fishing grounds off the east coast of our land. There had been warnings that they must never go ashore on the mainland, like they used to do in early times, because armed bands of horsemen had been seen patrolling the coast. Recently there had been reports that there were ships now also, but the profit from the fishing of makailo (cod), a large, bland fish popular with the northeast bands, outweighed the danger and they sailed anyway, much to their subsequent regret. He wondered what we were going to do with them. I assured him that if what he said were true they would likely be released. However, he would have to tell me about this Gaztela place from which he hailed and explain the salt cargo.

He said that the salt was for salting the fish—their preferred way of preserving it. I told him we dried or smoked fish and other meat. They also dried the fish, but first they salted it. It would keep much longer and taste much better. As to Gaztela, it was a kingdom on the peninsula that is at the western end of Europa, their name for the whole landmass. Their king, Enrique IV, died the previous year and now there was a struggle between his sister, Isabella, and his possibly illegitimate daughter, Juana, for the crown. The former was married to the heir of the kingdom of Aragon, Ferdinando. Once Ferdinando’s father died, they would probably unite the kingdoms and

hold the entire peninsula except for Naparoa in the north, Portugal in the west, and the Moro (Moor) areas in the south. I asked if it was likely that the succession struggle would go on for a while. He thought it likely since Portugal favored Juana and they were almost as powerful as Aragon. I then asked what he thought the ultimate winner would try to conquer next. He was certain they would next turn their attention to the Moros since they were not Christians. I remembered that word since Grandfather had mentioned that we were sort of Christians. I asked him what Moros were and he said that they were followers of a vile creature who taught them to worship a false god and persecute the Christians. It was very important that they be driven out of Espainia (his name for his peninsula) as soon as possible. I then asked why Naparoa would remain independent if Aragon now ruled it. He said that Juan would likely will it to his younger son, since the elder would get Aragon. I wondered how they kept all this sorted out.

It certainly looked like there was no threat from these people in the foreseeable future, but I had to ask him why they didn't bathe. He assured me that it was not practical when at sea and if they had a pot large enough to heat sufficient water they would gladly bathe. I replied we all usually bathed in cold water except sometimes in the winter. He assured me that such a practice was very unhealthy and we surely all died young. I told him that my grandfather bathed nearly every day and reached the age of ninety-five. He was shocked to hear this. I continued that the odor from him and his comrades was repulsive to us and we would be very grateful if they would bathe. He shook his head that it was too ingrained in them to eschew bathing in cold water at all hazards. I took my leave and told him I would report to the Khakhan that his people were no threat to us. He asked if it was possible that they might be released and I said I thought it was very likely, but I couldn't promise anything. I would, however, keep them informed.

It was near dusk when I was rowed back to the ship. I was ushered right into the same room without any ceremony, and before long, the Khakhan joined me. I told him all I had learned about his prisoners. He questioned me closely until I was certain I had repeated every word of Luis at least twice. He then sat back and thought a while. Then he got up and told me to report back to him in the morning. The chamberlain would show me to my quarters. I followed him out of the room and waited for the chamberlain. He soon came and led me out the door into the hall, stopping at the last door on the left side before the anteroom door. I stepped into the room and found it furnished simply with bed, trunk, washbasin, table and chair as usual, but all the wood was highly polished. I had just sat down on my chair when there was a knock on the door and one of the sailors brought me my evening meal.

While I was eating, I thought about the men and wondered what life was like in their land. It had been so strange to be surrounded by so many people who looked like me, but were still so very different, speaking a strange language and having such reprehensible hygiene habits. I wondered if Grandfather's Holy Roman Empire was still around and if the Black Forest still existed. I hoped I would be able to talk to Luis again.

I rose early the following morning and went out on deck to wait for the Khakhan's summons. It was a pleasant morning, cool for summer, but only slightly so. The sky was clear, the air was pleasant smelling, and there was a light easterly wind. I looked toward the large island and noticed my guide was still camped on the shore. I turned to the small island and noticed that the jagun was up and smoke from cooking fires was rising from the compound. I had not been on deck long when one of the Kashik tapped me on the shoulder and beckoned me to follow him. As before I was pointed toward the door at the end of the hall, and once through it, ushered into the small room. I was surprised to find a light breakfast waiting for me there. I ate it quickly, not wishing to be eating when the Khakhan entered. As it turned out I needn't have worried, it was some time before the door opened and a servant I hadn't seen before came in and took away the remains of the meal. Shortly thereafter the Khakhan entered and sat down across from me.

"I think, from what you have told me, that we need have no concern about these fishermen. However, I need to know more about the people of their lands. What sort of government do they have? He mentioned a handful of kingdoms, are there many more? Is any one kingdom stronger than the others? How big are their armies? What sort of fleets do they have? Are they united or all rivals? In other words, I need to know all I can about them. Do you think you can get all this information from this person you were talking with yesterday?"

“I can try. He seems to have some education, since he can read and write. But he mentioned he was studying to be a priest, so he may not have much practical information.”

“Don’t be so sure. In our experience, the priests are the most politically adept members of the tribes we encounter.”

“My grandfather was always leery of them.”

“With good reason. The only thing they serve is power.”

“I will see what I can find out.”

“Excellent. Also see how loyal he is to his king. Perhaps he would consider becoming our agent.”

“Agent?” I wasn’t at all sure I heard him rightly.

“Indeed. He could be very useful if he is willing. But he must be willing. I don’t want to waste my time and resources being played for a fool.”

“It is a delicate matter to ask someone to betray his people.”

“I’m not interested in his betraying anyone,” he testily corrected me. “I want information about the place and ample warning of any aggression against us. Obviously, I couldn’t send any of our people, they would stick out prominently. Even you would hardly blend in with them in spite of your similarities. Besides, most kings are tyrants and hardly inspire loyalty.”

“I’ll see what he is willing to do.” I couldn’t believe that last comment.

“Good. Report back when you’re done. I’ll be waiting anxiously.”

I returned to the compound on the little island, and assaying the wind again, approached from the safest direction. As soon as the men caught sight of me they excitedly called Luis and all fixed me with expectant looks. Luis came scurrying up and asked if they would be allowed to go. I told him I thought so, but first he would have to answer some more questions. He jabbered to the others and their expectations faded to concern. Then he turned back to me. I told him that the Khakhan wanted to know more about his land.

“I don’t know how much I can help you.” He frowned. “My studies at the university were limited by my calling.”

“What is a university?” I interrupted him.

“It is an institution where teachers teach students various subjects.”

“What sort of subjects?”

“Well one can take subjects like law, medicine, arts, and theology.”

“Everyone studies such things?”

“Oh no. Usually one takes only one of those disciplines. Although some students do sit in on lectures in subjects other than their main one.”

“And you were studying theology?”

“No, actually I was studying law. I was to be a canon lawyer.”

“What does that mean?”

“An expert in canon law, the laws of the Church.”

“The Church has laws? What of your rulers?”

“The Church laws deal with things like morality, heresy, all the pronouncements of the councils and the popes. The rulers only defy such laws at their peril. The pope could excommunicate them and they could be hunted down and killed with impunity.”

“Your rulers allow priests to control them like that?”

“Well, the law of God takes precedence over the law of man, even if he is a king.”

“Amazing. Was it always so?”

“Yes, the Christian kings always had to yield to the head of the Christian Church. Anything else would be barbaric.”

“So all of the Christian kings are weaker than this pope you speak of?”

“Haven’t you heard of the pope? Aren’t you a Christian?”

“My grandfather did mention that we were Christians and I think I vaguely recall him mentioning a pope as a sort of ruler as were some people called bishops.”

“The pope does directly rule the Papal States, but only in the Holy Roman Empire do bishops rule states. Bishops are the pope’s representatives in dioceses. The Christian world is divided into dioceses and each one is led by a bishop.”

“So your kings have to deal with both popes and bishops?”

“Sometimes the bishops are very loyal to the kings and even mediate differences between them and the pope.”

“How many kings are there?”

“Well, let me see. I would say there were about fifteen kings and of course one emperor.”

“Is the emperor over all the kings?”

“No, he only rules the electors and dukes and bishops and such in the empire. It is mostly the lands of the Alemainiera (Germans).”

“So there is no unified empire of Europa?”

“There are four kingdoms and one emirate in Espainia alone. Kings shift alliances constantly and fight among themselves. Ingalaterra (England) and Frantzia have been fighting off and on for centuries. The Alemainia states of the Holy Roman Empire are constantly getting into spats and the cities in Italia are always fighting each other and the Papal States and the empire.”

“Do you feel any special loyalty to this Gaztela?”

“I am indifferent to it.”

“Would you consider becoming our agent, to report on developments in Europa?”

“Become a spy?”

“Not exactly, more like a representative. Letting us know if any of the kingdoms plan to invade us.”

“They can’t invade you; they don’t know about you.”

“But you and your fellows know about us.”

“You don’t understand. This is our secret. Only we Eskualdunac know about this place. We would never tell anyone else about it. If we did, we would destroy our monopoly.”

“What monopoly?”

“We supply all the makailo to southern Europa. Our only competition fish in North Sea; they don’t know about this place.”

“So the king of Gaztela, your king, doesn’t know you come here?”

“Well, he might now that he is dead, but his sister and his daughter do not know.”

“That is very good to know. Might you know how large the armies of the various kings are?”

“I don’t really know, but unless they are at war they only have a small standing army to protect them.”

“What, perhaps ten thousand or so?”

“Possibly that many, but I doubt it. Armies are expensive and kings are cheap.”

“What can I tell the Khakhan about you becoming our agent?”

“If it means he will release my fellows, I will.”

“How long have you been here?”

“Here, at least a month. We were the first ship to reach the mouth of this river this spring and those huge ships of yours apprehended us almost at once. Our ship was taken to a small harbor near the mouth of the river and we were brought here.”

“I will go back to the Khakhan at once. I’m sure he will let you go.”

“Thank you so much for your help, sir.”

I returned once again to the ship and was quickly ushered into the usual room. It was a little after midday, but no one bothered to feed me this time. Soon the Khakhan joined me and I told him all I had learned. He listened intently as usual, and questioned me at length on some of the particulars. Finally he sat back satisfied.

“You have done well. The young man will stay with you and you will teach him Mongol. His fellows may fish as long as they want. When they are ready to return, the young man may go with them. He must then come back next spring to report. In return, his tribe may fish off our shores and even come ashore to dry or salt or whatever they do to their catch. Go back and tell him this, and if all are agreed, the crew will be returned to their ship immediately. I will send a fairly large pot with you so our new agent can clean himself up. It won’t do to have him gagging you since you must work closely with him.”

“Thank you, sire. That is most thoughtful of you.”

He waved me away and I returned to the boat, which delivered the large pot and me to the small island. I brought it with me into the compound. I told Sayga nea what the pot was for and he nodded grimly with some relief. I went up to the men and Luis immediately came forward. I gave him the pot and told him what the Khakhan had proposed. He spoke to the others and they were at first relieved, then seemed to have some misgivings. He explained to me that they were concerned for his safety. I assured him that his fellows need not be concerned; I would make certain he was with them when they were ready to go. He passed this on to them and then told them something, which seemed to reassure them. He later told me that he had told them that my wife’s grandfathers were Eskualdunac, so they could trust me. I let that pass and urged him to make use of the pot. I gave him some of my clothes to wear once he was clean. I went back to the ship again to report to the Khakhan.

This time he was on the deck and called down to me for their decision. I told him they had agreed and he ordered me to return and tell the men to get on the canoes that would soon come to the island. They would take them to their ship before dark. I returned and told Luis who in turn told the others. The Kashik guards opened the gate for them and they hesitantly walked through it toward the shore. Before long a swarm of canoes arrived, each manned by two men of one of the local tribes. Three of the men got on each one and were quickly propelled downriver and out of sight. Luis watched them till they disappeared, then returned to warming the water for his bath. Once he was cleaned up and dressed in my far-too-large clothes, we were rowed to the larger island where the big man was camped. He was roasting a haunch of deer and shared it with us. After dinner we camped with him on the shore.

The next morning the Khakhan’s ship was gone. Our stolid guide, whose name turned out to be Chaaygee (another Hotcangara name, although he didn’t look Hotcangara at all), suggested we move over to the now-abandoned compound on the small island. I agreed and we took up residence in the barracks. Chaaygee hunted and fished and prepared meals for us without any complaint or much comment of any other kind for that matter, while Luis and I concentrated on the task at hand.

I proposed to Luis that he would teach me his language while I taught him Mongol. He agreed, but warned me that only his people spoke his language, no one else in Europa even understood it. We talked about Europa. He explained that the western part consisted of his peninsula, Espainia, northeast of it across the mountain range where his people lived was Frantzia, east of it were the Alemainiera lands, the Kingdom of Ardangori (Burgundy), and the Holy Roman Empire, south of them was the peninsula of the Italianiera with the city states in the north, the Papal States in the middle, and the Kingdom of Napoles (which belongs to Aragon) in the south. East of this were the kingdoms of Poloinia (Poland), Bohemia, Hungaria (Hungary), Lituainia (Lithuania), and the various Rusiera (Russian) states. South of these was the Ottoman Empire, and north of them were the kingdoms of the Escandinaviera (Scandinavia). North of Frantzia is the island with Kingdoms of Ingalaterra in the south and Ezkozia (Scotland) in the north. West of this island is the island of Irlanda (Ireland) and far west of it is the island of Islanda (Iceland). The last island isn't too far from our east coast, but Luis' people avoid it since they are fishing competitors of theirs.

Luis had a lot of difficulty learning the Uighur script. He found it very alien. I used the Latin script for learning his language. Although he insisted it was not at all like Latin, he had to admit they didn't have a script of their own. I did see some similarities in words, but they were probably imported words like we have done with centli, nawak'osis and so on. But even if I had less trouble than he, we both made progress. By late summer he was speaking fairly decent Mongol and he assured me I was speaking tolerable Euskera. By early fall his writing of the Uighur script was almost decipherable. He promised to continue working on it back home this winter.

At length, Luis felt that it was time to get him back to his ship, so Chaaygee took the boat downstream to the secret port for instructions. He returned with the tide the next morning and told us that a ship would be waiting for us at the port this evening. Once the tide reversed, we followed the river down to the port. It was on the north side of the river and was screened by a good-sized island on its side of the shore. In the small harbor was one of the fuchuan ships. We put into the small town, which turned out to be a barracks with a stockade around it. It was again manned by Kashik, about a jagun from the look of it. It turned out to be the same one that had been guarding the prisoners. Sayga nea was still in charge. He informed me with a barely disguised smirk that the place was called Khereekhot. While that means Crow Town in Mongol, I was not about to presume it was named for me and just affected mild interest. We were told to go aboard the ship right away.

Chaaygee rowed us to the ship, then turned back to the town without bidding us farewell. I rather hoped he was not used on any diplomatic missions. As usual the ship was crewed by a mixed lot from the eastern tribes and officered by Choson. We had barely gotten aboard when the anchor was hauled up and we started moving downriver. Dusk soon caught up with us and we were shown to our rooms and given a meal. The next morning we were anchored off the eastern end of a large island in the mouth of the Wendat. There were dozens of the Eskualdunac ships in view. The captain of our ship asked Luis which one was the one with which we were supposed to rendezvous. He intently scanned the ships and asked the captain to get closer to the huge island to the east—the island of the Beothuk (Newfoundland)—and sail along its southern coast.

While this was being done we were served a meal on the deck so he could continue to look for his ship. We sailed along the southern end of the island. I could just make out quite a bit of activity on the shore. Luis told me that they were drying the salted makailo. I asked if they ever had any trouble with the Beothuk, but he said except for a little stealing, they tended to stay away. I told him that we had driven them inland long ago because they were so hostile, but had never settled the island ourselves. There were some villages of the mainland tribes on the island, but they were in the north and west. No one lived along the southern coast.

We went some distance along the coast of the island before Luis indicated a small island to the captain. It was at the mouth of a fair-sized bay formed by a large peninsula that jugged southwest from the island. There were some tiny islands nearby, but he guided us to the east end of the island, facing toward the bay. There was another camp with a small dwelling, many drying racks filled with fish, and a small group of men working near the shore. Luis called out to them and they waved enthusiastically. The captain ordered a boat lowered and we were rowed to shore. He told me not to tarry; he had orders to take me to Zheng He.

Once ashore Luis introduced me to his fellows and I asked them about their luck this summer. They complimented me on learning their language and assured me that catching makailo involved neither skill nor

luck. One only had to lower a hook on a line and bring up the fish. There was no fight, but the fish could be heavy. Once the fish was aboard, it was split, cleaned, spined, and salted. Then they were brought ashore to dry. They told us that we had just gotten back in time; they expected to be finished and sail home in a few days. I wished them well, reminded Luis to work on his Mongol and to return to this place next year. I hoped to see him again. He promised to work on his Mongol. I got back on the boat and was quickly returned to the ship. Once we were aboard and the boat was secured, we pulled up anchor and headed south. Luis and his fellows waved from the shore.

We moved around the small island and headed for the straight between the tip of the peninsula and two islands, one long but narrow in the middle and the other small. Once past these, we lost sight of land for a while, before passing a long narrow island just before dusk the following day. About eight days later, we were pulling up to one of the piers in Zheng He.

39

Return to John, 107–8 K

(New York, NY to SW LA, 1475–6)

It was late morning when we arrived and I had barely debarked from the ship when I was met by a lone Kashik who ordered me to follow him with the usual presumption of complete unquestioning obedience. He led me to the Khakhan's ship, which was tied up to the westernmost pier. Before long I found myself waiting in the now most familiar little room. I didn't have long to wait this time. The Khakhan swept right into the room waved me back in my seat and sat down to study me as usual. Finally he spoke.

“Did the young man learn Mongol?”

“Yes. And I learned his language.”

“You did! Excellent. You have served me very well, and I will remember it. Now I want you to return here early next spring. Be here by the equinox. You can go to Longjiang or any convenient port and a ship will bring you here. I would also request that you not mention anything about your activities this summer.” He paused and looked off to the right for a moment. “On second thought, you may tell your brother, if you will do me a favor.”

“What is that, sire?”

“Find out what he already knows before you tell him and let me know by dispatch. I very much want to know if I have plugged the leaks in my staff.”

“Where will you be, sire?”

“I've just been waiting for you to get back. I will be going back to Khanbalikh tomorrow. You can send the dispatch there. You need not fear for your brother. I very much admire him and only want to know if, at last, I have slipped something by him. I wish he worked for me. I have tried to get him on my staff. Perhaps you can convince him to join me.”

“I will convey your wishes, sire.”

“Very well. Have a safe trip back. There is a ship tied to the second pier that is sailing to Longjiang tomorrow. Here is a gerege for you.”

“A gerege?” I asked as I studied the small gold plate inscribed in the Uighur script: This is my ambassador. Do as he asks. Khakhan Kujujuk.

“I've reintroduced them. The Hanjen called them p'ai-tse. Our ancestors used them in the times of the Yuan Dynasty. I think they were a little larger, but gold ones were the most important, then silver, then wood. They remove any doubt about the authority of those who serve me. I'm surprised none of my predecessors used them.”

“Well, I'm most honored to be given a gold one and to be called an ambassador. I would think my role would only merit a wooden one and my title more along the lines of servant.”

“No. I consider your mission of paramount importance to the Khanate and, therefore, the title and gold gerege are appropriate. I do not want to suffer the same fate as our Yuan Dynasty.”

“It was overthrown because they relegated the Hanjen to inferior status. Since they were the vast majority—that was unwise. I have never seen such behavior in the Khanate.”

“Of course not. But then, the native tribes of this land are divided into hundreds of tribes, not just one overwhelming tribe like the Han who swallowed up all the smaller tribes of the old land. Besides we had to conquer Hanjen and we didn’t exactly conquer this land.”

“That’s quite true for the most part here in the north, but in the other Khanates, it was definitely conquest.”

“Well, you are right about that, I suppose, but I don’t think there is any simmering resentment against the Khakhanate because of it.”

“No. Most of the conquered tribes are quite accommodated to their role in the Khakhanate.”

“Well, you are quite well acquainted with our history. Your grandfather’s books I presume?”

“Yes. He wrote extensively on many topics.”

“A gifted man. Second only to the immortal Kaidu in my opinion.”

“I am honored that you think so, sire.”

“When you see your brother, tell him to visit me this winter. I need to talk to him.”

“I will, sire.”

He rose and left the room. I waited a moment, then followed out of the room, down the corridor and back on the deck. I left the ship and went into the town. I sought out the harbormaster and, presenting my gerege, asked him which ship was sailing for Longjiang the next day. He scrambled to check his records and called his assistant to lead me to the ship in question, bowing deeply as I left. The assistant was afraid to talk to me, but just led me with excessive bowing and hand gestures to the ship. It was, indeed, tied up to the second pier just as the Khakhan had said. The assistant bowed me aboard as I thanked him for his help. Once aboard I asked for the captain. I was taken to an enigmatic Choson who eyed me with studied disinterest until I presented my gerege. He bowed low and asked how he could serve me. I simply told him I needed to go to Longjiang and I understood that he would be sailing for that port the next day. He said he would leave at once if I wished, but I assured him there was no hurry, we could leave as scheduled. He bowed again and showed me to the large room in the rear of the ship. Obviously it was his room. I told him it was more than I needed, an unoccupied room would be quite acceptable. He bowed again and showed me to the fourth room on the right. It was small and neat. I thanked him and stowed my things.

I had just decided to go into the town again when there was a scratch at the door and an excessively bowing crewman brought me a light midday meal. I thanked him and sat down and ate the meal looking out the window onto the pier and the other ships. There was quite a bit of activity with cargoes being loaded on and off the nearby ships and carried into or from the town. When I finished, I left my room and went out on deck. I leaned against the rail and watched the activity for a while, then left the ship and walked down the pier into town. When I reached the town, I wandered around a bit. The dry docks were being used to repair ships rather than build them, it seemed. Perhaps the Khakhan had enough ships. One of the huge ships was in dry dock being outfitted with copper plating on its bottom. It was quite a tedious job from the look of it.

I wandered along the other piers and noticed they were almost full. We had become quite the maritime nation. Late in the afternoon, the tide began to go out and a number of the ships began to move away from their piers. Among these was the Khakhan’s ship. I wondered why he was sailing to get to Khanbalikh. It would be quicker to go by land from here, I would think. While I was in the town, I bought a few gifts for the relatives. Finally I returned to the ship and my room. I sat down and practiced writing Euskera for a while until my evening meal was brought in. I turned in early.

The next morning I awakened and distinctly detected motion. Looking out the window, I could see that we had indeed set sail in the night. I didn't know they could do that. The passage to Longjiang took only three days with the favorable winds. No wonder the Khakhan wanted to go by sea. It probably was quicker. I was glad of the fast passage since all the deference from the crew was beginning to annoy me. I wondered what dire threat hung over anyone insufficiently honoring a bearer of a gerege. Anyway, once ashore I wandered over to the dry docks and noticed they were still building ships here. I decided to look up Hadebah in the camp south of the town. He greeted me warmly and invited me to stay the night with him. I showed him my gerege and told him about the excessive deference I was getting.

"It is not surprising." He shrugged. "Word has it that a holder of a gold gerege has the power of life or death. One offends them at great peril. Most people in my position would escort you into town and dispossess the occupant of the grandest house there for your use."

"I don't think that's what the Khakhan has in mind for bearers of these plaques. I think it is just so that we can get requested information to him quickly and get where he wants us to go without delay. I better tell him when I write what is going on."

"There is an inherent fear of the Khakhan, because of his intensity and his complete power over us. If he sends someone in his place, the fear would logically devolve on that person. It is probably best for his purposes that it be so."

"I'm not so sure. Fear leads to hatred. Hatred leads to rebellion."

"Not always. In fact I have found that fear leads to paralysis."

"In the weak perhaps, but the strong?"

"More people are weak than strong."

"I suppose that is why we have tyrants."

"Of course, you are speaking in general."

"Of course. But you know the Khakhan himself told me that most kings were tyrants and hardly inspire loyalty."

"He did?"

"Yes, in exactly those words."

"Interesting."

"Very."

"He doesn't see himself as a tyrant. I suppose he does not equate absolute power with tyranny."

"He must view tyrants as those who rule arbitrarily. That would not apply to his rule at all. He has always been consistent and, in his own way, quite fair."

"He is widely respected, but not revered like Kaidu, Juchi, or your grandfather."

"He also told me he holds my grandfather second in esteem only to Kaidu."

"In Anahuac, I suspect, he is honored above all. Here he is second to Kaidu or third behind Juchi."

"Anahuac was conquered after Kaidu died, of course. My grandfather had the greatest admiration and respect for him as well as Juchi. After all, Juchi and he had quite an adventure together."

"Ah, the famous first probe into this land. It is still celebrated in song and tale around the campfire. I suspect most of the tales are exaggerations, but even so it must have been quite an adventure."

"Grandfather wrote about it in a special book for our family. The true story needed no embellishment. They both showed raw courage wandering into the unknown like that. But then they did it again once they got here—many times."

“Tell me what your grandfather wrote about that first adventure.”

I told him the tale well into the night until we turned in. I very much enjoyed retelling it and he was completely captivated by it. We were both transported to another time and place reliving the wonder and excitement of that epic adventure. The next morning I picked up a couple of horses and rode south toward home. Hadebah still had that faraway look in his eye as I bid him farewell.

This was a fine time of year to travel. The weather was quite pleasant, no longer hot and not too cold, although after I turned west away from the coast, it was not long before the nights grew cold. It was about mid fall when I rode into Itsati. I rode right up to Iskagua and Ghigooie’s house. I had barely gotten off my horse when I heard the unmistakable shriek that could only be Cuauhtzin. Ghigooie came running out and hugged me warmly, then led me into the house. Cuauhtzin shrieked until he gained my shoulder, then let out a memorable, thoroughly obscene lecture in Otomi laced with a few words in Ani’ Yun’-wiya. John ran in from the other room and came right up to me and grabbed my leg. I lifted him up to look at him. He looked so much like Carlotta it broke my heart and tears came to my eyes. He looked at me very seriously.

“Agidodah [father] is hurt, Agilisi [grandmother],” he said to Ghigooie.

“No child,” she replied, “he is just so happy to see you and so proud that you can talk.”

“Yes.” I choked back the tears, “I am so proud of you, John, and I missed you so much.” Once I was in control again, I asked, “He has learned to walk and talk while I was away?”

“He began walking late in the spring. He began talking this summer.”

“He knows me!”

“Of course, he does!”

“Tell me all I missed.”

She brought me up to date while I sat down holding John in my arms, and of course, Cuauhtzin was on my shoulder. John had stopped nursing on his own early in the fall, telling Suyeta that he had to be ready to travel with his father when he returned. He often dreamt of his mother and she would tell him things. He would remember the dreams and tell Ghigooie in the morning. She would explain them as best she could. It was Carlotta who told him I was returning soon and it was time to stop nursing so he could go with me. Suddenly I was transported into a field full of flowers of intense colors on a too-bright day with a warm, gentle breeze and walking toward me as I stood in wonder was my Carlotta. She wrapped us both in her arms.

“Agi’ tsi-i [Mother]!” John said.

“Carlotta!” I said.

Slowly the vision faded and we were back in the room with Ghigooie looking at us with some concern. I must have been smiling stupidly, for she soon was smiling also and patted both of us solicitously, and left us to enjoy our experience.

“Agi’ tsi-i is so beautiful, Agidodah,” John whispered dreamily.

“Yes, she is, John,” I agreed. “She loves us as much as we love her.”

“She visits me at night when I am asleep.”

“She visits me when I shut out everything else. She has never come to me like this before.”

“Me either. Wasn’t it wonderful?”

“Yes, it was.”

At length John dozed off in my arms and I carried him to his bed and went to take a sweat bath. Cuauhtzin remained by John’s bed on guard. When I had finished and washed off in the river, I returned to find Iskagua had come home. He also greeted me warmly and told me how bright John was. He also told me that he would make a fine shaman, since he had deep sight. I suggested it was a bit early to make that decision.

“Normally you’d be right,” he said. “But this child is very different. He readily sees into the world the rest of us can only visit with difficulty. I think he sees both worlds equally. It could make life difficult for him. I knew of one other so gifted a person. He became so taken with the other world, he neglected his requirements in this one and died.”

“Don’t you think that will fade as he gets older?”

“Perhaps, but part of the problem is his mother.”

“How is she a problem?”

“She should move on and become one with the creator spirit, not stay around here in the dream world. I think she is the reason John is so attached to the other world.”

“She loves him and me. She told me that love is all that remains when we leave this world. How could she abandon those she loves?”

“It isn’t abandonment. When you become one with the creator spirit, you become love. She could only love you more, not less, but without being constantly involved with your lives in this world. I think it would be better for John and I know it would be better for her.”

“She is a mother. He is her son. She barely saw him before she died. Can you really think she could leave him so soon?”

“It has been a year and a half. I would hope she would see that he is well provided for and now he has his father with him again.”

“I appreciate your concern, Iskagua, but I would not deny her access to her child for as long as she wishes it. I would not deny her anything. She died to have this child. They are inexorably connected by a bond too strong for either of us to understand. I know she will do nothing to harm the boy, and when she feels it is time to go on, she will.”

“Perhaps you are right.”

We spoke no more of it and Ghigooie did not give me any of her unsettling looks indicating foreboding about my future, so we passed a pleasant few days, before I decided I had best move south for Cuauhtzin’s sake. Already the nights were quite cold in Itsati. I looked over the relatives’ list Theodore had given me the year before, but most of them lived in the north. I decided I would spend the winter with Mathilde and Aspenquid. I wanted to visit the falls where I had poured out Carlotta’s ashes, but I decided I had best stick to the yam trail since I had John and Cuauhtzin with me, and the nights could be cold out in the open. Before leaving I made a point to visit Suyeta and Gatagewi and give them some gifts I had bought in Zheng He and thank her for nursing John. She had tears streaming down her cheeks as she thanked me for giving her that honor. Even Gatagewi seemed to feel the same way. I decided not to explore that bit of strangeness any further.

We left early one morning. John was in a carrier tied in front against my chest and Cuauhtzin was on my shoulder. John would always look dreamy when I looked at him, but would quickly smile when he caught my eye. Otherwise, Cuauhtzin would make little cooing sounds to him and he would giggle and imitate them. There were two roads out of Itsati, one heading generally east and the other west. We took the west road. It followed the Itsati River downstream to the West Tsoyaha River. Here there was a fork leading north across the bridge over the Itsati at the town of Tunessee and up the West Tsoyaha to the town where there was a bridge across it, and the other led south down the West Tsoyaha. We took the latter. It swung west with the river and eventually we had to choose to continue along the river, which now turned north, continue west, or turn south into Pansfalaya land. We turned south again. I wanted to visit Nanih Waiya. It was almost the winter solstice when we arrived at the site. I left the horses at the yam and walked over to the hill. I found the spot at the base where Carlotta had leaned back and had her dream. I sat down in the same spot, leaned back, and closed my eyes.

Almost immediately we were in the too-bright field and there was Carlotta. After she embraced us, she whispered that this was a place for family and moved beside me. The field became bathed in a radiant white light and soon nothing else was visible. Then, out of the light, figures began to emerge and draw near. Soon I

could distinguish them. All were in the full bloom of vibrant youth, smiling radiantly to see us. First were my parents. My mother was actually smiling and happy. Next there were Ignace and Goa, Sarah and Tepeyotl, my grandfather and a beautiful woman he introduced as my grandmother, then a tall dark haired man another beautiful woman he introduced to me as my other grandparents. Behind them were their other children, then more ancestors. I looked on in shock at all these strange yet oddly familiar faces warmly greeting me and blessing John. Then another group approached and Carlotta introduced me to her ancestors. I never would have recognized the tall strong young man as Hiacoomes. Her parents and brother and sister were just as she had described them—her siblings were still children. Her grandfathers looked just like the Eskualdunac I had met that spring. They spoke to me in their tongue and I answered them. I met the woman for whom Carlotta had been named and she was almost as beautiful as her namesake. I met Hiacoomes' stalwart ancestors, all tall, dignified, elegant people. Again each in turn blessed John. Then we stood there bathed in the radiant love of all these people who in some way were aware of and cared for us. Then they all disappeared back into the light and it faded into the field again and only Carlotta was there.

“Is that what you saw when you sat here?”

“Not all that, but some of it. They all told me they would be with me always and that they would be with you and my baby as well. They have been, also. They were all there when I had John and they helped me get back to you. Don't worry about anything, dear; they and I will always be with you both. You will never be alone.”

“Iskagua thinks John should be a shaman. Do you?”

“He will know his path at the right time. Until then, it doesn't really matter. Let him be a little boy. I'm so glad you're taking him to meet Mathilde and her family. I love them as though they were my family.”

“They felt the same way about you. Your namesake is quite a handful. Nothing like you, I'm afraid.”

“She is more like me than you think.”

“Well she did take to me right away.”

“Just like me.”

“Do you know about Iskagua's concerns about you and John?”

“Yes. It is as it always has been. People can only see part of the next world. The whole is too much for them to comprehend, and there is no need for them to do so. He is a very good and wise man, but there is no need for you to worry about John or me. Being one of spirit is neither as simple nor as complicated as it sounds. Being one with Cautantowit or Deus, as you call him, does not mean I can no longer watch over you and John.”

“I'm so glad. I look forward to joining you.”

“Not for a while, my dear. You have a boy to raise and a few more adventures before you can join me.”

That is all I can remember of the vision. When next I was aware I was leaning against base of the hill and it was just barely twilight. John was looking up at me with the sweetest smile. He almost seemed to glow in the gathering darkness. I got up slowly and returned to the yam. I didn't have much appetite, but John and Cuauhtzin seemed to be ravenous. The next morning I rose early and took John and Cuauhtzin up to the top of the hill with me. I burned a little nawak'osis and tried to commune with my spirit guide. He came quickly and reinforced Carlotta's advice to me. He told me John would know what to do with himself after he made his vision quest. He soon urged me to return to my charges since they were both hungry. It was still early morning when I got back down the hill and got us breakfast. We set off right afterward, taking the road leading a little north of west toward the Missi Sipi River where one of the bridges crosses it.

We crossed the river on the long pontoon bridge. As usual, I was concerned that something might spook Cuauhtzin causing him to fall into the river, so I put him under my cloak next to John, and they made little noises to each other. Once across the broad river, I returned him to my shoulder, but they continued to communicate. We turned south toward the coast since it was already winter and I wanted to make sure it didn't get too cold for Cuauhtzin. When we finally reached the Ishak River and turned north, it still wasn't very cold. We quickly came upon the Pelican Ordu as they had moved still farther down the river. Since they were this far

south, I was sure we could stay the whole winter with them. I asked the guard where Aspenquid's tent was and he indicated the far left side of the camp, near the river. I soon found them. As usual Mathilde was busy in front of the tent, working on a hide this time, and little Carlotta was running around in circles. As I approached she looked up and ran up to me yelling "Uncle Crow." Mathilde turned and seeing me also jumped up and ran toward me.

"Oh Karl," she sighed as she gave me a very tight hug. "And this is my nephew, John." She took him from me.

Little Carlotta demanded that I pick her up and I obliged. She reached for Cuauhtzin, but he eluded her and flew over to Mathilde's shoulder startling her considerably. She was a bit nervous having that large beak so near to her face. But he just cooed to John and ignored her. We went into the tent and I set up Cuauhtzin's stand next to me, but he only went to it once I had John back. Little Carlotta was much interested in John, but rather resented having to share me with him.

Mathilde brought me up to date on her family. Aspenquid was busy training recruits and would be back that evening. Aju had not returned from his wanderings yet, but he had written. He was with her brother Sealth when he wrote that summer, but had said he would be going north. She was a little concerned about him, but knew he could take care of himself. Paula was helping a friend of hers in the Ordu who just had twins. Her husband was still on campaign as was Bedagi, who did finally manage to write one letter. He was far away to the south on a large plain. Sarah had met and married a young man from the Ordu this summer. She was expecting her first child in the spring. I thought she should have waited until she was a little older to get married, but Mathilde said sixteen was a very typical age for Ordu girls to marry—in fact many married at even younger ages. I thought Mathilde looked well, so I supposed she was getting enough help with the little one.

When Aspenquid returned, he wanted to know what the Khakhan had wanted with me, but I explained I was only supposed to tell Theodore by his order. Aspenquid shrugged and observed that it probably wasn't any of his business anyway, but wondered if I could at least tell him whether it involved his people at all. I assured him it didn't and asked him how he knew I had been in that part of the Khanate. He said that Theodore had told them that was where I'd be. I asked if they expected him this winter. They did.

Indeed, within a week of my arrival, Theodore came in. His hair was completely gray now, but otherwise, he looked as vigorous as ever. He said that he had run into Aju that fall and found him well. He was visiting my old friend Ganook at the time. He suspected he was still in the North Country. He asked Mathilde and Aspenquid about the other children and we all asked about his. He said that Sarah and her boy were fine and she was expecting again in the spring. John had finished in Anahuac and was now studying with a Ben Zah friend of his. Paula was still studying with Nizhevoss. Mahwissa was also well and visiting with her brother. He then asked about my activities.

"First, I am supposed to ask you what you already know."

"Ah, our beloved Khakhan wants to know what I know."

"He wants to know if he has successfully plugged up the leaks."

"Fair enough. I know that you were sent to Longjiang and from there went by boat to Zhen He. From there you went by horse to the new port, Yangzi. From there you rode north and I lost you for a while, but I know you ended up on a small island in the Wendat River with a strange person. You next surfaced alone in Zhen He this fall, where the Khakhan gave you a gerege. From there you went home."

"Well, I don't know how happy the Khakhan will be to hear how much you know, but he told me I could tell you the rest as long as I told him how much you already know."

"By all means."

I took him aside and told him the rest. He was most interested in how we were mispronouncing the written language, Latin, and in the language of the Eskualdunac. I told him that the Khakhan wanted to see him as soon as possible. He agreed to go see him after he had rested a day or so. I wrote up the information the Khakhan had requested and went to see the Ordu commander the next day. He was busy, but presentation of the gerege got

me an immediate audience. I told him I needed to send my dispatch to the Khakhan by fast courier and he immediately gave it to a subordinate to get it on its way. He assured me it would be in the Khakhan's hand in a few days. He asked if there was anything else he could do for me, but I assured him there wasn't. He bowed low to me as I left.

When I returned I told Theodore about the reaction I was getting to the gerege. He said he was not surprised since word had been circulated that holders of gereges must be obeyed instantly and without question. I told him I found it very uncomfortable. He asked when I had to return to the Wendat. I explained that I was to be in Zheng He by the spring equinox. He suggested I go by sea from the newest port a little west of the mouth of the Ishak River. It was called Kujujuk. He rather felt that was appropriate since the Khakhan was responsible for all the other port building. He felt that I could get to Zheng He within three weeks with favorable winds. Since that meant I could stay a little longer, I thought it a good idea.

Within a few days Theodore went north. We told him to be careful since he was heading north in the middle of winter. He promised he would and that he would let us know when he reached Khanbalikh. We finally heard from him just as it was time for me to go. I was relieved to hear he had made it safely. As the time for me to go drew near, I wrestled with whether to bring John and Cuahtzin with me. I reluctantly decided I didn't want to risk either of them on a sea voyage. Mathilde was thrilled to keep John for me and resigned to keeping Cuahtzin also. She had to admit the latter was a big help with the children. I clung to John for a while before giving him to Mathilde. Cuahtzin immediately went with him. Little Carlotta cried when I left and ran after me until Aspenquid caught up with her and hauled her back. I really hated to leave.

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Debriefing Luis, 108 K

(SW LA to Boston, MA, 1476)

I rode down the Ishak to the suspension bridge and crossed over. About three days later I rode into Kujujuk. It was rather small but heavily under construction. The port was on the western side of one of the rivers that emptied into the large protected bay. All the rivers were crossed with suspension bridges about a li or so from their mouths. The port had repair facilities, but no building docks and only one pier, although another one was under construction. There were a number of ships in the port, but very few were merchant ships. I rode to the harbor and asked for the harbormaster. I went to the house indicated and found a rather harried middle-aged Choson who waved me away impatiently until I produced my gerege. Then he bowed low and asked how he could serve me. I explained that I needed to get to Zheng He by the solstice and wondered if any of the ships in the harbor were heading there. He looked over his books and told me there was a ship that could get me there. It was almost finished being repaired and would be ready to leave in two days. It was a fast ship and would be honored to take me to Zheng He. I thanked him and asked him to direct me to an inn. He prevailed on me to take his house, but I insisted on an inn, and he directed me with a lot more bowing and promised to get me as soon as the ship could be boarded. I thanked him and went to the inn.

The inn to which he sent me was on a bit of a hill and had obviously just been built since it was suffused with the pleasant smell of freshly cut wood. I found the innkeeper and told him I needed a room until my ship sailed. He showed me to a pleasant, bright, spacious room with a nice view of the harbor. We agreed upon a price and I stowed my gear and went out to walk around the town. It was a warm day and much of the town was in a building frenzy. Near the harbor most of the houses were made or being made of wood. On the fringes of the town, there were grass houses and the hide tents, as well as a few of each being put together. A little north of the town, I could see that there was an encampment of at least a minghan. I couldn't tell the Ordu from this distance. One would think they would be from the Pelicans, but Aspenquid hadn't mentioned being responsible for the port. The people in the port were mostly Ishak and Titskan Watitch doing all the work, Hasinai doing most of the supervising with the usual contingent of Choson artisans and Leni lenape merchants. I noticed that there seemed to be something of a pecking order with the Choson on the top, the Leni lenape and Hasinai in the middle position, and the other two on the bottom. I wondered when that sort of thing had begun and why it was tolerated.

I returned to the inn in the evening for my meal and found the keeper bowing and scraping excessively and assuring me he wouldn't dream of accepting any payment from me for my accommodations. I presumed he had gotten word about the gerege. I insisted that I would be insulted if he didn't accept our agreed-upon price. He begged that I at least let him provide my meals. I agreed, although I was rather surprised that they weren't included. As it turned out, the food was good enough for an extra charge. The cook obviously knew what to do with chili and whatever was served was always perfection. Who would have expected that in this rather semi desert? I recall the food generally matching the mean existence of the local tribes whenever I passed through here.

I wandered around the new town a bit more the next day while waiting and found that food was about all that was plentiful. The stores had little else to sell. What fabric, weapons, and tools that were for sale were definitely utilitarian. The only adornments I could see were small copper bangles and feathers, and all were clearly overpriced. I noticed that the merchants were all young men, so I supposed they were just getting started.

The second day a young man in the green navy uniform came to inform me that the ship was ready. As usual he was bowing excessively. I paid the innkeeper, complimented him on his cook, and followed the young man. He led me to one of the piers and indicated a fine-looking ship for me to board. It was a very trim ship, not much of a hull, nor as large as the fuchuan type, but rather top heavy with sails. The uniformed crew betrayed that it was a naval rather than merchant ship, but I could see no cannon. Word had gotten out about my gerege, for everyone on board was bowing whenever I came into view. I was presented to the captain who also started bowing. I told him he would very much please me if he gave me a room that was not intended for anyone else and if he could convince his crew to stop bowing all the time. He began to protest that it would be disrespectful, but I insisted that it would not be safe for the crew to be watching for and bowing after me instead of manning the ship. Besides it would make the trip very unpleasant for me. I think that last part struck terror in his heart and he quickly assembled the crew and instructed them to ignore me during the voyage.

We left with the tide that very evening. I mostly kept to myself, staying in my room except for a few daily turns on the deck to get some fresh air. The ship seemed to be under full or almost full sail most of the time. There was no sight of land until the sixth day when I could just see some small islands to the north. The next day we turned north so I assumed the islands were the small chain off the southern coast of the Timacua Peninsula. We were in sight of land again for a while on the seventh day but lost it by evening and did not see it again until we approached Zheng He on the fifteenth day. It was the day before the solstice. I had rather cut that one a little close and had been fortunate that a fast ship had been available.

It was midafternoon when we tied up to the pier and I left the ship. I didn't see the Khakhan's ship, so I went into town and looked for the harbormaster. He remembered me as having a gerege and immediately dropped what he was doing to rush up and bow before me. I asked if the Khakhan was in town, but he said he wasn't aware of his being here, but he could assure me his ship was not in port. I thanked him and went out into the town. I went to the merchant stalls to look for a present for Luis. I was looking at a fine raw silk shirt when the same wraithlike man who had accosted me the year before thrust a note into my hand and disappeared into the crowd.

The note proved to be from the Khakhan. It told me to report to the governor on the Northeast Province in his capital, the port of Yangzi. I wondered when we started having governors and provinces in the Khanate. I bought the shirt and returned to the harbormaster to see if there was a ship bound for Yangzi. He told me there was and sent his assistant to lead me to it. It proved to be one of the fuchuan type ships, again a naval vessel with a full complement of cannon. The captain did not try to give me his quarters, but led me to a nice room on the port side of the ship. He only bowed slightly and the crew paid no special attention to me at all. I was relieved but puzzled.

We set sail before dark and on the morning of the fourth day were anchored in the Yangzi harbor when I got up. I ate quickly and was rowed ashore with very little ceremony. I walked into town and secured directions to the governor's house. It was a large house near the center of the town. It was made of wood like the Choson houses but was rather more ornate, with a flared roof and an interesting paint covering. With all the bright colors it reminded me of the houses of the Huasteca. It looked as though it wasn't quite finished since there was some

scaffolding on one side. There was an arban from the Osprey Ordu on duty in front of the house. I went up to the commander, showed him my gerege, and asked to see the governor. He saluted and led me into the house. He showed me into a nice waiting room and left. Shortly, an officious-looking sort, about my age, who had to be a Hotcangara, came into the room and, bowing low, asked me to follow him. He led me to a room in the back where there was an older man seated at a table. He rose when I entered the room and waved my guide away.

“I am Watomika, the governor of the Northeast Province. You are the Crow, of course.”

“I am. I didn’t know any Leni lenape were in the Khakhan’s service. But then, I didn’t know we had provinces and governors either.”

“You are not alone.” He chuckled. “The Khakhan has decided he needs help to run the Khanate of the Blue Sky. He appointed us in the winter. It was a brutal trip here from Khanbalikh in the middle of winter, but I suppose that was the first test of our office. To my surprise, the house was almost ready when I got here a few weeks ago. The Khakhan thinks of everything. As to your observation about my tribe being underrepresented on the Khakhan’s staff, you are quite correct. I think I am the only one. My brothers are merchants, of course.”

“That is more normal.” I laughed. “Now, what does the Khakhan want me to do this year?”

“Just intercept his agent and debrief him. See if you can get him to bring a map of this Urope, or whatever it’s called, next year. Tell him to come here and report to me directly next year. His ship can fish the nearby waters. I understand the fish they like grows larger in this area than up north. There is a ship standing by to take you to that small island where you found his ship last fall.”

“So after I debrief him, I report to you and I am no longer needed?”

“Those were my instructions. Although, I am also to thank you again on behalf of the Khakhan.”

“Shall I return the gerege to you?”

“No. That can only be given back to the Khakhan himself. Until he demands it back, you can keep it. Of course, you shouldn’t use it unless you are on his business.”

“I wouldn’t dream of it. Until this last leg from Zhen He, I had to insist that captains not give up their cabins and that the crew stop bowing to me instead of manning the ship.”

“Yes, word just came from the Khakhan that holders of gereges must be obeyed and respected, but were not due the deference afforded the Khakhan. It seems he was unaware of how silly it had gotten until he talked with someone this past winter.”

“Well, I certainly appreciate the change.”

“Your ship awaits you. My assistant will take you there at once.”

He rang a bell and we both rose and bowed slightly to each other. The assistant proved to be the Hotcangara, who bowed low again and wordlessly led me out of the house and down to the harbor. He went down to one of the piers and led the way onto another naval fuchuan. This one was also fully armed with no less than thirty cannon in place. The crew was not currently armed, but I noticed bows and arrows stowed in specially built holders around the deck. There were also chests that held swords and shields. Later on, I encountered half a jagun of heavily armed soldiers below. It seemed the Khakhan wanted to be ready for any contingency.

The governor’s assistant introduced me to the captain, who nodded grimly and led me to my room. We didn’t sail until the next morning. Some six days later, we were approaching the peninsula jutting south from the island of the Beothuk. We dropped anchor and waited. A few days later, a host of sails appeared on the eastern horizon. There must have been hundreds of them. A single one was in the lead and I suggested to the captain that it was likely the one carrying Luis. He shrugged and lifted anchor. We went out a little and turned, presenting a broadside toward the ships, just in case anything was amiss. As the lead ship got close, I could just hear Luis’ voice greeting us in Mongol. The accent was still a bit off, but it was understandable. I answered him in Euskera and the captain turned our ship to pull up alongside Luis’ ship. He swung aboard our ship and

greeted me warmly. We both waved to his shipmates as the ships drew apart. Our ship then turned southwest to get out of the way of the approaching fishing fleet.

I led Luis to my room. I noticed he was staring at the cannon on the ship's deck and then looked off to the north and west scanning the horizon. I suspected he was checking to see if we had laid a trap for his fellows, but the absence of any other ships reassured him and he came along without comment. He handed me his report written in the Uighur script. It needed quite a few corrections, but really wasn't too bad at all. I showed him his mistakes and rewrote his report asking a few questions to clarify some things.

It was an interesting report. It seemed that the difficulties with the succession in Gaztela continued. Last year Juana, who claimed to be the daughter of the last king, proclaimed herself queen of Gaztela with the support of the neighboring Kingdom of Portugal, whose king, Alfonso the Fifth, she had just married. Civil war was now raging all over Gaztela. It looked to him like Juana had the advantage, but he wouldn't rule out Isabella's chances. He felt the latter's husband, Ferdinando, was quite the politician. There was also a civil war in Ingalaterra over the succession, but the current king, Eduardo the Fourth (Edward IV), had staged a little incursion against Frantzia in conjunction with Ardangori until the king of Frantzia, Luis the Eleventh, bought him off. The Ardangori, whose king was Carlos Ausarti (Charles the Bold), were still at war with Frantzia as well as some of their neighboring Alemainiera, the Suizos (Swiss) especially. The current emperor, Federico the Third (Frederick III), had been under harassing attacks from the kings of Bohemia and Hungaria, Jorge and Mateo (George and Matthew), respectively, although they had now turned against each other since Jorge was a vile heretic who had been excommunicated and condemned by the aitasantu (the Euskera name for the pope). Poloinia had also gotten in on this by proclaiming one of their princes, Ladislas, as king of Bohemia, replacing the execrable heretic Jorge. Mateo also wanted to be the new king and was now fighting Poloinia. One of the city-states of the Italianiera, Venezia (Venice), was at war with the Ottoman Empire, which had also invaded a province of Poloinia. It was obvious the whole lot of them were too busy fighting each other to bother us.

I asked him if he had experienced any problem with his people over becoming our agent. He assured me that the council was very pleased with our arrangement and he had been given expenses to travel about a bit to get information for us. He told me he had made inquiries in St. Jean de Luz about missing men, but there were too many to be able to distinguish my wife's ancestors. It seems quite a few ships had never returned from the fishing expeditions. But, according to Luis, a few successful seasons can make one quite well off, so there were always more willing to try their luck. In truth, more were successful than not, so it was a good risk.

I told him what the Khakhan wanted from him next year, and he was certain he could copy a map he had seen at the university. He was sorry that I would not be meeting with him again, but I told him we could write. I would have a letter for him at the governor's residence and he could send me one from there. The governor would know how to get it to me. Meanwhile I thought he should meet the governor and check out the new fishing site for his companions. He agreed, and I told the captain to return us to Yangzi. The captain shrugged and ordered the move.

Luis was given the room next to mine, but we spent most of the voyage together chatting. He wanted to know about my family history and I told him what I knew. He told me that the Black Forest was still there. It really wasn't black, but it was so dense that when you were in it, it was dark even in the daytime. It was in the southwestern part of the empire. Innsbruck was also still there and still run by a bishop. It was in the south of the empire. He had never heard of John of Carpini or King Bela, but they would have been a long time ago.

"But tell me, Carlos," he asked. "Have you heard of Marco Polo?"

"No." I shook my head. "Who was he?"

"He was from Venezia, the Italianiera city state at war with the Ottoman Empire. He wrote a book about visiting the Khanate. Most people thought it was a fraud, but one of my teachers thought it was legitimate."

"He visited here? Did he come over the sea alone?"

"No, he went overland through Persia and on the Spice Road."

"Overland? When was this?"

“About two hundred years ago.”

“Two hundred! We’ve only been here about one hundred years.”

“Isn’t this Cathay?”

“I never heard of Cathay. Where is that?”

“It is what we call the Khanate.”

“You must mean the old Khanate. About two hundred years ago, the Khan would have been Kubilai.”

“Yes, that’s the one Marco Polo visited. He was an official of the Khan for twenty years.”

“It is possible, the Mongols usually gave all offices to foreigners. That way there was no question of loyalty. But the Hanjen drove us out of there a hundred years ago. That’s why we came here. We crossed over the frozen sea in winter far to the northwest. There were only about five thousand of us, but we now rule this whole land.”

“What is this land then?”

“It is a continent. There are two very large landmasses connected by a narrow isthmus in the middle. This is the northeast corner of the northern landmass. The old Khanate is far to the west and is ruled by the Hanjen now, not us.”

“But you have silk, you gave me this shirt.”

“We trade with the Choson who live near the old Khanate, but we have our own silk industry in the southern part of this landmass.”

“So there is another whole continent between Europa and Cathay. The world must be a lot larger than I thought.”

“I’m sure there is a map of the continent at the governor’s residence. I’ll show you when we get there.”

“You seem such a powerful people. How were you thrown out of Cathay?”

“For fear of being absorbed by the Hanjen, the Mongols kept them in subservient roles. Eventually they revolted, and, since they far outnumbered us, they prevailed. We have avoided that problem here. Everyone, in theory, has the same opportunity as anyone else.”

“In theory?”

“Well, it holds fairly well, actually, but sometimes I have seen some of the more primitive tribes brushed aside. Of course, there isn’t much they could do about it. The majority of the people seem to thrive under the Khanate.”

“What was here when you got here?”

“There were a multitude of tribes of various sizes with various forms of governance and levels of sophistication.”

“And your five thousand took them over?”

“We had quite a few things they didn’t, and many of them were quite willing to join us to get them.”

“Like what?”

“They didn’t have horses, iron weapons, compound bows, gunpowder, rockets, silk, decent battle tactics, army organization, things like that.”

“Why we, or rather one of the kingdoms of Europa, could have conquered them if they didn’t have those things.”

“Perhaps. But those that opposed us fought very hard. I took part in one of the campaigns in the southern landmass, and it was not an easy thing at all.”

“Why don’t you retake Cathay?”

“We might eventually, but we still haven’t taken all of this land yet. Our forces are still conquering their way southward on the southern landmass, the Khanates of the Clouds and the Green Mist.”

“Why are there other Khanates?”

“Because of the size. This is a huge continent. The northern part is the Khakhanate of the Blue Sky, the middle part is the Khanate of Anahuac, and the southern landmass is divided into the Clouds in the west and the Green Mist in the east.”

“And the Khakhan is above the Khans?”

“Yes.”

“And you are from the middle one?”

“Yes. My cousin is the Khan.”

“You’re royalty?”

“No. My father was the youngest son of the first Khan of Anahuac. His eldest son succeeded him and his second son was the first Khan of the Clouds. My father was a healer.”

“And they are all fair skinned like you?”

“Well my father and grandfather were, but none of my living relatives are except for my son.”

“You have a son?”

“Yes, he’s about two years old now. He’s staying with my sister.”

“Did something happen to his mother?”

“My wife died giving birth to him.”

“I’m sorry.”

“So am I, but I still feel her with me.”

We talked a bit about our families. He was the third son of shepherders in the mountains of Gipuzkoa. His brothers were also shepherds, but he had learned Latin from the local priest and his family reluctantly let him go off to be a priest. When he was kicked out, he went to the port of Donostia to try his hand at fishing, because he didn’t want to return home a failure. He was very pleased to be our agent because it is quite a mark of distinction. We prattled on pleasantly for the duration of the trip. Once we reached Yangzi, we pulled up to one of the piers, and Luis and I debarked. As I led the way to the governor’s house, he looked at all the people and the houses in the town and also received no few curious looks in return.

“Where is the church?”

“What church?”

“Aren’t you Christian? Where is the church for this town?”

“I may be Christian and most of my relatives may be, but no one else here is. There are no churches. Religions and priests are not encouraged in the Khakhanate.”

“But your relative is one of the Khans. Aren’t his people Christians?”

“No. They all have their own gods, although many of them also honor the Mongol god, Tengri.”

“The Church will want to send missionaries here.”

“What are missionaries?”

“Priests who teach the true religion.”

“Luis, don’t even think about sending priests of any kind here. Once they are found out, they would be executed.”

“But it is monstrous to allow all these people to go to hell.”

“All these people are just like everyone else, some are good and some are bad. Those who are good will be welcomed by God, those who are not will not be. They don’t need to belong to any religion.”

“Oh but they do, Carlos. You have been away from formal training too long. No one who is not baptized can see God.”

“I really don’t believe that. Also, you had best keep any such opinions to yourself. If word got back to the Khakhan that you were trying to introduce a religion with priests into the Khanate, he would surely turn on you and your people.”

“Really?”

“Yes. Priests are considered enemies of the Khanate. They have been since the earliest times when we first came here. It was priests who always inspired resistance to us, and bitterly opposed us whenever we encountered them.”

“Well those weren’t real priests, they were idolaters.”

“They led complicated ceremonies just like all priests do and they try to rule by placing themselves between the people and their gods, making them think they can only communicate with them through their good offices. I suspect your priests are no different. My grandfather wrote that his ancestors had little use for them since they were an immoral lot.”

“Well, there are some immoral priests, but many are not. I’m sure quite a few of the friars would be willing to come here to preach in spite of the threat to their lives.”

“It isn’t a threat. It is a guarantee. Even if they are brave enough to come here to die, you would be blamed for bringing them and our arrangement with your people would be over.”

“It his hard for me to ignore my Christian duty, but my people are poor, and this is their only real asset. It would be disloyal of me to take it from them.”

“Good. Speak no more of it to anyone here or back in Gipuzkoa.”

“I won’t.”

“What is a friar?”

“A member of one of the religious orders. They take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, completely dedicating themselves to the work of the Church.”

“Sort of fanatics?”

“Ahh, well, perhaps some are.”

When we reached the governor’s house, I presented myself to the jagun commander again, and he led us right into the waiting room. Shortly the Hotcangara assistant came in and led us to the back room. Watomika rose to greet us and I made the introductions. He eyed Luis for a moment, then took my report and read it quietly.

“Quite a quarrelsome lot these people,” he remarked when he looked up from the report.

“Yes,” I agreed. “It looks like we need not concern ourselves about them for a while.

“Do you think they will ever unite?” he asked Luis.

“They never have, even in the face of severe threat to them all. When your people invaded long ago, only those in their path rose to stop them, none of those farther west lifted a finger to help. Even now, only those directly threatened by the evil Ottomans make any move against them. The rest stand aloof.”

“We ran into some of that here, eh Crow?” He smiled.

“It seems the general way of things. Only the Hotcangara and the Chikasha united against us,” I agreed. “In the Clouds we just took one tribe at a time.”

“It was the same way in the Green Mist,” Watomika shrugged. Then he turned back to Luis. “What makes these Ottomans evil?”

“They...” He hesitated and looked at me. “They simply are trying to conquer all of Europa and destroy our...heritage.”

“Well then, I can see why you resist them. Did you know that the Crow is quite a legendary warrior?”

“Legendary?” I interjected. “Lucky, perhaps, but hardly legendary.”

“Nonsense. I heard the whole story. He and a handful of others were all that remained of a tumen that was surrounded and greatly outnumbered by the enemy. And then he bravely acted as a shield to protect his cousin, the brother of the then Khan of Anahuac for the rest of the campaign.”

“I had no idea, Carlos.” Luis looked at me in awe. “I have never been in a battle. What is it like?”

“Brutal, confusing, exhausting, frustrating,” I began.

“Don’t forget terrifying,” Watomika added.

“And that’s only the rare battles,” I continued. “They merely punctuate the endless marches in all kinds of weather.”

“And the counter marches and confusing orders,” Watomika pursued.

“But you were heroic and did not run,” Luis said reverently.

“There really isn’t any time to think about running.” I shrugged. “An officer is too busy to even consider it.”

“Exactly!” Watomika laughed.

“Even so, I often wondered if I would stand and fight or run,” Luis said quietly.

“I suspect thinking about it would make it more likely,” I said. “But to the people of this land, running from battle is worse than death. They prefer to die than run away. In our battles taking this land we rarely took prisoners, but in truth, few offered themselves.”

“I hope my people never become your enemies,” Luis shuddered.

“You are our allies,” Watomika reassured him. “Unless you betray us, we will never be your enemies.”

“That is true,” I concurred. “We have always been true to our word.”

Watomika promised to send the report on to the Khakhan and agreed to deliver any mail between us next year. I asked if there was a map of the land and he had his assistant lead us into the map room. It was a large room with a huge table on top of which was a large map of all the land. I pointed out to Luis where we were, where his shipmates were and some of the places significant to me. He was clearly dumbstruck by the size of the land. I noticed that the southern tip of the southern landmass had finally been mapped, but there was a blank space inland from the coast. The Clouds seemed to stop at a large desert area some distance from the tip, while the Green Mist was much closer to the tip. On the other hand, the Mist did not go inland as far in the north as the Clouds did. The latter seemed to have explored all the huge mountain ranges in the west and even penetrated into the jungle lands beyond. The former seemed to have explored the major rivers and a small strip of coast in the middle, but penetrated more deeply in the south. I wondered if there would be any land disputes between the two Khanates.

Luis noticed the blank areas, and I explained that they were not yet mapped. He also noticed that the northern coast of the Khakhanate was a little vague, and I explained that it was very difficult to map that area since the coast was hemmed in with ice most of the year and in the brief summer was plagued by swarms of mosquitoes. I added that we had never really incorporated much of the area into the Khakhanate, but had left the rather primitive people there alone. He told me that there was a large island north and a little east of the Beothuk

Island where there used to be a colony of people from Escandinavia, but all had perished. It now contained a savage people who ate raw meat. The land had been called Gronland (the Green Land in the language of the Escandinavia). He had had a classmate from Escandinavia who told him about it. I told him I wasn't aware of them, but I had heard that a long time ago some fair-skinned people had landed in the north to cut down trees and take the logs back with them.

He also tried to estimate where Ice Land would be on our map scale. It looked to be some distance out into the sea east of Green Land. He said his land, Euzkadi, was just a little south of due east of Beothuk Island. I asked if it was cold there, but he said it wasn't particularly cold, even in the winter, although the winters had gotten colder from what the old folks said. I told him the same thing was said here.

It was hard to get him away from the map and, frankly, I didn't mind studying it myself. I asked him if he had the time would he make another copy of the map of Europa for me and mark on it the Black Forest and his land. He agreed to do his best. Eventually we went back to the ship and prevailed on the captain to show us the fishing grounds the governor mentioned. He agreed and we sailed out of the bay around the Nauset Peninsula and south a little distance.

The next morning Luis and I lowered the little boat and he showed me how they fished for the makailo. All we did was lower a bare hook on a line and jerk it a little. Before very long we hauled up these large fish from three to five feet long and very heavy. Before long the boat was full and we returned to the ship. He showed me how they split and cleaned the fish and salted it using some salt he had brought with him. He only salted the two largest fish and gave the rest to the crew to eat fresh. It was prepared in the usual way but, frankly, I thought it was rather bland. I could see that most of the crew agreed with me—although it was, at least, something different.

I told Luis I thought the fish was rather bland and he agreed and told me his people never ate it fresh, but only after it had been salted and smoked. He promised to give the crew a taste when we returned him to his crewmates. I told the captain to return us to the small island off the coast of Beothuk Island. We weighed anchor and headed north.

41

More Travels with John and Cuauhtzin, 108–9 K

(Newfoundland to SE CA, 1476–7)

In a few days we arrived at the tiny island where Luis' shipmates had set up their fish-drying station. Luis and I were rowed ashore and he brought the two large salted fish with him. His fellows ran up to greet us. We dragged the small boat ashore and Luis showed the others the fish and told them where he had gotten them. The others were a little reluctant to pick up again since they were in the middle of drying their fish, but they had to admit fish that size would be worth starting over again. Still they had to wait for their ship to return at dusk. I told them that our ship could lead them there if they wished and that pleased them also.

Near dusk their ship returned and they rowed out to explain the situation. The crew discussed it among themselves, passed around Luis' two fish, and decided that they had nothing to lose. They busily hauled all their fish and drying racks from the shore back to their ship until darkness forced them to stop. True to his word, Luis sent us some of the salted and dried fish to try. Most of us agreed it was better that way, but I thought it needed something yet—chili, perhaps. The next morning at dawn they continued to load their ship, and then I returned to the fuchuan and told the captain to lead the other ship to the fishing site. He gave me a look suggesting he was more than a little tired of going back and forth over the same bit of ocean, so I assured him that once he had done so, he could drop me off in Yangzi and be done with me. That rather warmed him to the task.

The fishing boat had a hard time keeping up with us and we had to cut sail to a minimum. It took about eight days to get to the area. We dropped anchor briefly, and when the ship finally caught up, I told them this was the place. Luis and I bid each other farewell and promised to write. Then his ship turned toward the nearest shore to set up their drying racks and our ship returned to Yangzi.

Once back in Yangzi, I returned to Watomika. He thanked me again and assured me he would send along any letters between Luis and me. He asked if I wanted to take a ship back to Kujujuk or anywhere else. I decided I should, since it would get me back sooner than traveling overland. He urged me to do so, since I was returning from the Khakhan's business and had every right to make use of my gerege. We made our farewells and I wished him luck in his new office. He thanked me.

I sought out the harbormaster and discovered that there was a ship going to Kujujuk currently tied to the pier. I was directed to it. It turned out to be another naval ship of the fuchuan type. It was as heavily armed as the one that had taken me to meet Luis and also had a whole jagun from the Osprey Ordu aboard. I noticed that this unit was armed with the latest version of the hand cannon. I chatted a bit with their commander and he and most of his men proved to be Mingue. He told me that they were an elite unit, as only about half the Ordu had a hand cannon jagun. I asked how they like being on the ship. He admitted that it took getting used to, but so far they had all adjusted well. They had already sailed to the mouth of the Wendat and back. I would seem the Khakhan had been ready to fall on the fishing fleet had there been any provocation.

I noticed that many of the ship's crew were Pansfalaya and I asked one of them when they had joined. He told me that the Khakhan was recruiting among all the coastal tribes and near coastal tribes in the south. He speculated that it was thought desirable to have representatives of all the tribes on the ships. I asked if there were any Ani' Yun'-wiya yet, but he didn't think so.

Along the voyage we stopped occasionally for a battle drill of sorts. The ship's crew would clear the decks and fire the cannon; then the jagun would run onto the deck and fire their hand cannon. It was quite a loud show. The commander of the jagun told me that in battle his men would only fire at close range, otherwise, they would stay below, out of the way. It seemed that the hand cannon were only useful when fired en masse, since they weren't too accurate. I speculated that the bow would probably be of more use and he had to agree, although he did feel that receiving a salvo from his jagun would be quite demoralizing to an enemy.

It was late spring when we reached Kujujuk. I noticed that the building frenzy had rather trailed off and the town was now about medium sized. I secured some horses and rode out immediately. A few days later, I was again approaching the Pelican Ordu from the south. I planned to stay only a few days, then take John and Cuauhtzin north to visit relatives, but a letter from Nezahualpili delayed me. It was quite a long tome with much philosophical speculation and some rather insightful questions for such a young man. I took the time to answer his questions and encourage his speculations. I also passed on a few of my personal observations on related topics. It took me quite a while to write the letter since I had to think and meditate on it to do it justice.

Finally we set off north. We must have been quite a sight, the two-year-old John, Cuauhtzin, and me. John was, of course, again strapped to my chest and Cuauhtzin was firmly attached to my shoulder. I passed up the eastern relatives and headed straight for Khartsgaibalikh (Hawk City), the old site of the Hawk Ordu. I took a rather roundabout route so that I could return to the site of my marriage to Carlotta. It was still as I remembered it, although the road through it was more pronounced and I suspected before long someone would settle there. I could see that more than a few people had camped there that year. Still, I found the spot where we had camped and spent a few days lost in wonderful memories.

John proved to be a very good traveler. He didn't really cry, but he would have a troubled look, which would uncannily draw my attention whenever he needed anything. When I left him with Mathilde, he spoke fairly clear Ani' Yun'-wiya. At the start of this trip, however, he spoke a complete mishmash of languages none of which he pronounced exactly correctly. His sentence structure proved to be quite imaginative if not precisely comprehensible. I spent a week at a time speaking only one language to him. This helped considerably to unravel his vocabulary and by the end of the summer he was speaking several languages well, but with a limited vocabulary. He was a very bright boy. Cuauhtzin was absolutely no help at all with his endless Otomi curses, but once in a while he would surprise me by calling John by his name. John loved it when he called him and would answer as often as he was called, giggling particularly hard if the bird would keep calling him.

It was a wonderful summer and fall. We went from relative to relative letting all of the adults make a big fuss over John and all the children make a big fuss over Cuauhtzin. I never stayed more than a few days making sure never to wear out our welcome. I usually did some hunting to ensure we were no burden. Oddly, much as we

were welcomed and fussed over, I felt rather detached. It was as though I had no real connection to these people. Some of them were strangers to me, of course, but others I had met before. I was almost relieved when I reached Dsidsila'letc and Sealth and Kudeitsaakw, knowing they would be my last visit.

It had been five years since I had seen them. Their children were all gone from home. Paula had married a young Ka-i-gwu man few years before and was living in her husband's town. Taiwit was on campaign in the Green Mist and Skolaskin was training in the Salmon Ordu. They still lived in the same plank house in town although it was a little large for just the two of them. I asked particularly after Ganook, and Kudeitsaakw assured me he and his wife were still well and still living in Stikine. I told her to send him my best and tell him I was still grateful for the best six years of my life. I hoped to take John to the cabin when he was old enough, unless someone else was using it.

Sealth and Kudeitsaakw wanted me to stay all winter with them, but I pointed out that Cuauhtzin could not take the cold weather. So after a few days, I started south and west, and then along the coast. I wanted to find the Koryo River settlement where my father was born and where my grandfather had been happiest. It took almost three weeks to get there, but I found it easily enough. There was a small monument on which were written the names of all the family members who died there and below the others was written the name of my aunt Mathilde who had been brought there to be buried with the others after she died. There were no structures on the site of their settlement and very little sign remained of what they had built so long ago. It was a nice spot and I could see why they enjoyed it so much. I camped there that night, but had no special dreams.

We continued south after that, stopping at yams along the way since the nights were getting cool. There were a number of villages along the way and the people were very friendly. I could tell that I was passing through different tribes, but other than nuances in their looks and variation in their languages, it was difficult to distinguish them. There seemed to have been an amalgamation of the different tribes into a single culture with the same housing, dress, and customs. Mongol seemed to be the dominant language, also, although a few odd words from the local language survived. I was not sure if this was for the best or not. I did suspect it was to the distinct advantage of the Khakhanate.

It took another three weeks to reach Raven Bay. It was a very large bay with a narrow mouth to the sea. As we rode around it, the land became rather marshy along most of the northern and eastern shores. There were many settlements around the bay along the rivers that emptied into it. There was a remarkable abundance of waterfowl not unlike what one sees in the Great Bay and the Great Sound in the East.

I still thought it was a bit chilly here, however, so we continued south. At the southern end of the bay we stopped at a yam in a village called Posol-mi. The people of the village were called something like Tamien, but they were virtually indistinguishable from the Mongolized tribes of the north. The yam keeper told me that the tribes of this whole area had been devastated by the plagues that had descended on them from the north during my grandfather's exile and had lost much of their tribal cohesion. They all embraced their conquerors from the north. Actually "conquerors" rather overstates it, the Ordu had merely ridden into the area and the tribes had joined immediately. In any case, the only thing that still marked them was their language and that, he assured me, was being corrupted more each day. He also told me that the young men were almost all joining the Ordu or the navy at the nearby port on the bay, Khon Khereealikh (Raven City).

I could just see the port from the shore of the bay although it was some distance to the north on the western side of the bay below the opening to the sea. There were quite a few ships visible, among them one of the huge ships. The yam keeper told me that it was quite a large port with many piers and dry docks. I could not imagine why the Khakhan had all that naval power there. I supposed it was to check any incursions from the Choson, however unlikely that seemed.

At any rate in the early morning, just at dawn, Cuauhtzin awakened me with a very uncharacteristic shriek. Thinking a snake had gotten in the room, I jumped out of bed, grabbed my sword and lit the lamp. I looked everywhere in the room, but found nothing. Cuauhtzin had flown to my shoulder and seemed to be very agitated, babbling in Otomi. I put down the sword and comforted him a while, only to find John awake and staring at me with that troubled look of his. I put out the lamp since there was just enough light and decided to get ready to go since I was up anyway. Then, suddenly the ground began to shake violently. It was the worst

earthquake I had ever experienced, and we had many earthquakes in Anahuac. The yam houses were thatch, and except for things falling down off tables and benches, it held up quite well. Both John and Cuauhtzin were quiet during and after the quake, but as I gathered our things, the latter lectured me in Otomi.

The yam keeper looked in to see if we had been injured and thanked me for Cuauhtzin's warning. He told me he should have realized something was wrong since the horses had been very restless in the night. I asked him if such quakes were common here, but he assured me the more common ones were much milder. This one had been the worst he remembered. We had a cold breakfast and left early. As we traveled south, I noticed that the ground had been rather torn up in places, and the road had been dislocated to the north a short distance. Throughout the next few days there were many smaller earthquakes. I was glad when they finally stopped.

About midmorning the second day out of Posol-mi, we regained the coast on a bay shaped like the Latin letter C reversed. We spent the night near its midpoint at a village called Kalinta-ruk at the mouth of a river (the Kalinta). The yam keeper in the village told me something of the people before the plagues. He said that they often fought among themselves, and the village chief's main authority was in war. They never took prisoners, but there had been some ritual cannibalism. It seemed the parents of the man who slew the enemy would eat certain parts of the victim. Otherwise, the dead enemy were mutilated and dismembered with the head or the skin of the head carried about in triumph. All this nonsense ended when the Khanate took over. It took another day and a half to get out of their territory. The road led away from the coast after we crossed the Kalinta River, but eventually returned to it in the lands of the next tribe, the Welel, a small tribe concentrated in the rough country along that part of the coast.

The keeper at the yam along the road told me that the tribe had originally extended north to the large C-shaped bay, but that they had been squeezed out by the interlopers, currently occupying the area. He also mentioned that their subsequent isolation had protected them from the ravages of the plague, but had almost been their undoing since they at first resisted the Khanate. Fortunately after their army was surrounded and wiped out, the rest submitted quickly and quietly. He was also concerned that the young men were joining the Ordu or the navy and not returning. He suspected the tribe would eventually die out.

The next tribe along the coast did not seem to have a distinct name, but simply called themselves by the name of their villages. Only two of the yams were in their villages along the coast; the rest were isolated. These people had lost all of their distinctness and it seemed their language was so corrupted with Mongol and Yokut (their dominant inland neighbors) that it had to be considered gone. They had been severely affected by the plagues and their remnant had lost all tribal cohesion. Their village names were about all that was left of their language.

The road continued south through an unpopulated area, then entered the land of a people generally called Chumash, although it seemed that was really only the name of the part of the tribe that lived on a large island off the coast. As usual the yam keepers gave me some of the history of the people. They had been a mighty tribe before the plagues (weren't they all). They lived in peace with their neighbors engaging in some trading. The plagues had greatly reduced them, but they had maintained their cohesion and still seemed a bit distinct from their northern neighbors. Their houses were large dome-shaped structures made of poles driven into the ground, bent, and bound together at the top with sticks extended between the poles and reed mats or thatch fastened over them. Mats were also used to provide some privacy inside. Most of the yams in their territory were such houses. They also made fine basketry and carved implements and figures out of a soft stone. The keepers assured me that the tribe was coming back from its nadir because of the rich resources along their part of the coast.

The coast took a sharp turn to the east and I could see the offshore islands of the Chumash from the road. It took over a week to pass through their lands and all the villages along the road were large and buzzing with activity. I noticed the people used feathers for blankets and cloaks rather than the rabbit fur preferred by their northern neighbors. I also noticed how mild the winter was there. It seemed likely I would soon be able to turn east.

The next tribe I encountered was called the Kigzh. They spoke a variant of the language of the people called Nomo far to the north. At least that is what I was told by a yam keeper. Since I had no knowledge of either language, I couldn't say. The keeper who told me that was in a position to know, however, since he was a Nomo who had joined the Ordu and had been stationed nearby while a search was being made for another port in that area. He discovered similarities while talking to the locals and surmised that some of his people must

have migrated in the past, although he knew of no legends about such a migration. When he had finished his tour with the Ordu, he had settled down and married into a local family.

I asked about the port and he said a site was finally chosen some distance to the south on a large bay something like, but much smaller than Raven Bay. A people called the Ipai lived there and the bay had been named after them. The port was built on the site of one of their villages called Paulpa. I asked if the port had been named Paulpa, but it seemed the villagers took great umbrage at having their home appropriated and they had to be forcibly evicted. There had been some bloodshed before order was restored and the survivors left quietly. Unfortunately some of them resorted to sabotage and a jagun was sent after them. All the men were executed and the women and children were sent into the desert to survive or die.

It seems that the Ipai had not resisted the Khanate when they first swept in, but periodically there would be incidents and reprisals. More than one local commander wanted to wipe them all out, but such extreme measures required the approval of the Khakhan, and none of them wanted to admit to him that they couldn't control the locals. I decided it would be prudent to avoid the Ipai on our travels since my little band would be a fairly easy target for a group of bandits. My host strongly agreed and suggested I turn east along the road that goes to a pass through the mountains and into the desert. I would need to bring along plenty of water and horse fodder for passing through the desert although this was the best time of year to do so since there was often rain. Along this road I should only encounter tribes related to the Kigzh, all of whom would be friendly and helpful. Once across the desert, I would find the lands of the Hamakhava, a tribe of wanderers and warriors. They had embraced the Khanate in the time of Juchi. He had visited them on one of his journeys and had brought back a large contingent of them. My host assured me they would receive me well. However, there would be no yams along this route, or any other through the desert.

I secured several extra water bags and an extra horse for the desert passage and turned east along the road the yam keeper had indicated. It was easy to see. Just as the coast turned south again, the small road joined it from the east. The Kigzh seemed to have flourished under the Khanate, for there were many settlements along the way. We spent the night in a few of them along the way. Their houses were square and made of reed mats on a framework of poles. They had a sort of sweat lodge, although they didn't use steam—just dry heat. I gamely tried it, but frankly didn't really like it. They used ground acorn meal as their food of choice although some inroads had been made by centli. Their meat of choice seemed to be dog and snake, although there had been some acceptance of dried plains ox and deer. Meals among them were generally an adventure, but I found I could eat anything with sufficient ground chili seasoning. I explained to them that it was a sort of medicine I had to take, so that they wouldn't be offended.

The transition to the next tribe was hard to detect, but they told me they were called Takhtam. These people apparently had two clans: the westerners were generally the wildcat clan and the easterners were the coyotl clan. My host on the first night was a member of the first clan and he was pleased to tell me that I was named for the kinsman of the wildcat. I would not even attempt to figure that one out. The land they occupied was quite pleasant—oak-filled valleys and mountainsides. It was preferable to the rather dry grassland farther west and much nicer than the desert I was approaching in the east. The slope of the ground was generally uphill, but the weather did not appreciably change. It remained fairly mild. During my second day among the Takhtam, the oaks gave way to the aromatic brush so common in the drier plains to the north, just east of the mountains. That evening I discovered that the buzzard is a kinsman of the coyotl.

Although the coyotl clan covered a larger territory than the wildcats, their settlements were small and few along the road. As I approached the pass, I encountered yet another related tribe called the Kwawia. I came upon a few of their settlements on the first day. The largest was at a sort of oasis in the desert after I had descended from the pass. I noticed the sweat lodges were not used in the desert. I can confirm that they would be superfluous. The Kwawia had the same clans as their eastern neighbors although the coyotl were in the west and the wildcats were in the east. I filled all the water skins and loaded up with fodder at the oasis, since I was warned I would not likely find either to the east. I had to camp in the desert the last two of the four nights I was among them. Their houses were large and square with a nearly flat roof and all made of thatch. They ate a remarkable collection of vegetation gleaned from the desert. One meal they shared with me seemed to be of

boiled dried flowers. The flowers were rather fleshy, so the meal was not as insubstantial as one might think. Frankly, the meals I prepared for John looked better than their meals. Cuauhtzin enjoyed everything, however.

At some point I passed out of Kwawia land and into that of the Nuwu. I didn't encounter any village or even a small hunting party while in their area. For all the suggestion that it was the rainy season, I saw no rain or even clouds once I crossed over the pass into the desert. Toward the end of the second day, I was setting up camp when a lone man approached on foot from the north. He proved to be a very old man who seemed to have nothing with him—not even a water skin. When he drew near, I hailed him and invited him to join us for dinner. He smiled broadly and squatted down by our fire. He was wearing leather shirt and shoes and a cotton breechcloth. He wore his hair loose and long. He introduced himself as Wodziwob, a Nuwu shaman.

After our meal he began to sing in his own language. He had a pleasant voice although I had no idea what he was singing. When he finished he explained that he had a dream a few days ago and had been sent to meet me, a strange fair-skinned man with a baby and a bird. He was reasonably certain I must be he. I assured him there was most likely no such apparition as us anywhere else in Khakhanate.

“I am glad I have found you,” he said, “although I knew I would. The dream told me to warn you that there is danger ahead. Before you reach the Hamakhava, two men will ambush you. They will try to kill you and the child. A powerful, but very young ruler has sent them.”

I was shocked at first, then furious. That vile brat was only ten years old and already sending men into the Khakhanate to kill John and me. I could feel the fury raging through me and must have turned red. Wodziwob looked at me in wonder and then nodded his head in sympathy. He waited while I regained control of myself and thanked him for the warning.

“I regret that I had to bring you such unpleasant news, but I do not question the mandates of the god.”

“I thank you for the warning and am grateful to your god.”

“You must be very special to him.”

I was not too tired, so I quickly hatched a plan. I was sure they would have a campfire since no one would expect me to travel at night. I waited until John was asleep and asked Wodziwob if he would watch over him for me until I return. He agreed, but asked me to spare the men if possible as a token to the god. I was bewildered at his request, but in no position to refuse. I mounted my most-rested horse and rode carefully east making use of the nearly full moon to stay on the road. I had not ridden far when I saw the light of a campfire. I rode as close as I dared, then approached on foot using whatever cover the desert afforded.

There were two men huddled before the fire speaking in Nahuatl. One was probably a Mexica, but the other, who was older, looked familiar. I crept close enough to hear their words clearly and to check their weapons. They had foolishly left their bows with their horses that were some distance away tied to one of the small wiry trees that grow sparsely in the desert. They had also removed their swords and laid them next to where they had set their blankets. They would likely be able to reach them, but I would have the element of surprise on my side. They were talking about banalities, boasting about what great warriors they were as I drew to within six feet of them. I drew my sword quietly.

Suddenly I rose up and rushed them. Both froze in shock, but only for a moment before lunging for their swords. I kicked the older one into a rock which left him senseless long enough for me to face the younger one. This one landed on his sword, grabbed it, and rolled away from my well-aimed thrust. He jumped to his feet and we fought. He was strong but impetuous and not well trained. Before long he was disarmed and bleeding profusely from his side. I turned in time to meet the thrust of the older one who had regained his senses. He was better than the other, but also no match for me. His style was familiar, however, and before long it came to me. It was Huactli, a fellow student of mine at the calmecac where I had trained so long ago. I instantly remembered his weakness, a tendency to drop his guard when he hacked down. I seemed to falter and he took the bait giving me an opening as he swung back to hack down. Remembering my promise, I stabbed him through his upper arm and he dropped his sword and fell holding his arm.

I tied up his wound, then told him to see to his friend. He bound up the younger man while I broke both of their swords and confiscated their bows. Then I sat across the fire from the two sorry figures and covered them with one of their arrows.

“Well Huactli, I see you still can’t use the sword properly.”

“You remember me?” He looked shocked.

“It is hard for me to believe that a man from Alcolmiztli’s calmecac would become a lowly bandit.”

“I am no bandit. The Khan ordered us to kill you.”

“You accept orders like that? The Mexica, I can understand, but you? You are from Chalco.”

“You know as well as I do that one does not question the orders of the Khan.”

“And what of the regent? Did he approve this order?”

“No, of course not.”

“You accepted an order from a boy and didn’t get it approved by the regent?”

“He promised us great things.”

“Promises he could not deliver without the approval of the regent. Do you know what the regent would have done to you if he knew you had killed me?”

“We wouldn’t have told him—just the boy.”

“And if he found out? Do you think the boy could or would protect you? Are you aware that the Khakhan considers me his ambassador? Can you even conceive what he would do to you?”

“We did not know.” He turned ashen. “I know what happens to those who kill the Khakhan’s ambassador.”

“You are most fortunate you have failed.”

“Why didn’t you kill us?”

“The one who warned me about you asked me not to do so.”

“It would have been better if you did; we cannot return to Anahuac without your head.”

“I leave it to you then. Remain in the Blue Sky, join an Ordu, go on campaign in the Green Mist, come back and begin a new life, or return to Anahuac and die. As it is, I don’t think you will be in any condition to renew your assignment anytime soon.”

“We would not dare resume our assignment. We have heard about the Khakhan—we don’t want to incur his wrath. Still, you are leaving us wounded and unarmed in the desert. How can we survive?”

“I will leave you two of your horses. They will get you to the Hamakhava in a few hours. Don’t let me see you again, or I’ll assume the worse and consider the request to spare you fulfilled.”

“We better go now. I don’t think my associate here will survive the night.”

“The moon will light your way as well as it lit mine.”

They hobbled off to their horses and rode slowly toward the east. I took their spare horses and remounted my horse and turned back to my camp. When I arrived, Wodziwob was sitting quietly by the fire while Cuauhtzin watched over John from his perch stand. I told him what had happened and he thanked me for sparing them. He assured me that they would not bother me again. I didn’t ask how he knew that, but I did wonder. It was full morning when I awakened and Wodziwob had taken the liberty to fix a morning meal. When we finished, he asked me to accompany him northward for a few days. It was out of the way, but I agreed, once again feeling an obligation.

I asked if he could ride and he laughed before easily mounting one of the horses. We rode north along the eastern slopes of a range of hills and then into another small range that blocked our path. There was no road, but

he easily led the way. Along the way I asked him if he had any idea how the two ambushers had known I would be coming this way. He said simply that the god had not proffered that information and he had not thought to ask. I was sorry I hadn't thought to ask them myself. Toward nightfall we came to a cave where we dismounted and he led the way in. This proved to be his home.

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From the Desert to the Pelican Ordu, 109–10 K

(SE CA to SW LA, 1477–8)

The cave was not deep, only about twelve feet. It sloped upward, which would keep the rare rain from flooding it. The mouth was not high, I had to stoop to enter, but it was fairly wide. There was a small area closed in by the hills almost like a corral a little to the north of the cave where we could tether the horses. I gave them water and some fodder, then joined my host. On the way I checked my supplies and saw there would only be enough water and fodder for the horses for two more days.

"I'm so glad you could join me," Wodziwob said when I entered the cave again.

"It is the least I could do, under the circumstances. I must tell you, however, that our supplies will only allow us to stay until tomorrow. I think the Hopitu River is still a day away and I only have enough for the horses for two more days."

"Never fear. Tomorrow I will show you something remarkable and your horses will want for nothing."

I did not question him, but set about fixing our evening meal. After our meal, he again sang one of his songs. John seemed to like it, but eventually it put him to sleep. Cuauhtzin actually cooed along with it, something I never heard before. He fell silent, however, as soon as John was asleep. We sat in silence for some time after Wodziwob finished his song. Then he finally spoke.

"I think it is important that you give up your anger and resentment toward the one who tried to kill you."

"Those two fools? I have none to give up."

"I mean the one who sent them."

"That little viper! My wife and I showed him nothing but kindness and gave him the attention he never got from that disgusting mother of his. And just because the witch told him her fate was my fault, he turned on us and now is trying to kill not just me but my son who has done no harm to anyone."

"Your hate will nourish his and just breed more such attempts."

"How is that possible?"

"We are all intertwined. Whatever we think of another affects him and, ultimately, us."

"I thought the Nuwu were warriors. This does not sound like the advice of a warrior."

"I am a shaman, not a warrior. My advice is that of one who has spoken to the god."

"My cousin, Khan Henry, the grandfather of the little wretch, believed that God was love and it was only by loving that one could communicate with him. He was murdered by the wretch's father."

"The Khan was a very wise man. He must have spent much time in meditation and communion with the god."

"But look what happened to him."

"He is much happier now, and has no regrets."

"How can you know that? How could someone be happy that his own son murdered him?"

"Do you fear death?"

"No."

"Why?"

“Because when I die I will be with my Carlotta. I would welcome it if I didn’t have to see to the boy.”

“Do you resent the boy for keeping you from her?”

“No. He is a very sweet boy. There is much of her in him. And she has told me how much she loves him and how important he is to her, even now that she is gone.”

“It sounds like you have a keen understanding of love, so why would you waste time and drag yourself down with hate?”

“I have not even thought of the miscreant for years.”

“Your hostility is still quite fresh.”

“He just sent two fools to try to kill me and my son. Had it not been for your warning, they might have succeeded. For all I know, he has had me watched and there will be more attempts. My hostility isn’t still fresh; it has been renewed.”

“Did your wife have any hostility toward this boy?”

“No, she felt sorry for him.”

“Can you not share her compassion?”

“If she knew he was trying to kill me and John, she would no longer have any compassion for him.”

“Are you so sure?”

“No. She seemed to have compassion for even the least deserving. When she comes to me in my dreams again, I will ask her.”

“Do so. If the boy had not tried to have you killed, would you still hate him?”

“I don’t think I ever actually hated him. But when he turned on us, I could tell that Carlotta was hurt by it—even though she had foreseen it. I resented the ingrate for hurting her, who had been more of a mother to him than his own.”

“Were you hurt by his rejection?”

“To be honest, I was indifferent. Until John came along, I never gave children much thought.”

“But if she did not resent him, is it not presumptuous of you to resent him on her behalf?”

“Is it not natural to be protective of those you love and wish ill on those who hurt them?”

“It is typical. But why sully your love with resentments and hatreds?”

“I will try not to think of him with hostility. I will try not to think of him at all. However, if any harm comes to John because of him, I will hunt down the little wretch and kill him without mercy.”

“If I can assure you he will not harm your boy, can you then give up your hostility?”

“I suppose so. Are you a seer?”

“Sometimes I see the future if the god wants me to see it.”

“And you foresee no harm coming to John from the Khan of Anahuac?”

“He will not be harmed by anyone.”

“How is that possible? Is he to die a child?”

“No, he will reach his manhood. He is a special child. When he is about six years old, you will meet the man who will instruct him. At that time you will give him up and move on by yourself. In time you will see him again.”

“I cannot imagine Carlotta wanting me to turn our boy over to a stranger. Perhaps you have seen incorrectly?”

“No. It will be so. Your wife will approve when the time is right. It will not be easy for you, but you will see the necessity.”

“What sort of man will this be?”

“That was not given to me. But when the time comes, you will know.”

I did not like the sound of this at all and I was not at all convinced that he was right about John’s future. Only if one was to be a tribal shaman was he ever separated from his parents at such a young age. I could not imagine going along with such an idea. Of course, much had happened in my life that I could not previously imagine. After remaining in silent thought for a while, we both turned in for the night.

I awakened early and saw that John and Cuauhtzin were fine, but Wodziwob was missing. I stepped out of the cave and found him kneeling in quiet prayer, his eyes closed and his hands outstretched in front of him. I set about making breakfast as quietly as possible so as not to disturb him. I fed John and Cuauhtzin and tended the horses, but still he continued in his reverie. Finally he jumped up with far more agility than I would have expected from someone his age who had spent perhaps hours in an uncomfortable position, and said it was time to show me something special.

We got the horses, mounted up, and rode eastward toward another low mountain range, larger and running more or less parallel to the one with the cave. We reached the western edge and rode around to its far side. When we turned the corner, I was shocked still. Before me was a vast floral panorama in the middle of the desert. The horses immediately began to graze the fresh fodder, but I just looked on in awe. There were vibrant colors, especially reds and yellows, everywhere to the north and east, but in the west and south behind us was only desolation. When I regained my tongue and asked Wodziwob about it, he explained that when it rained enough, the desert bloomed. It had rained here a few days before. I mentioned that I had been told it was the rainy season in the desert, but I had not seen so much as a cloud. He agreed that it had been a rather dry rainy season so far, but it had rained in a few places and this was one of them.

There was no standing water anywhere that I could see, but with the horses taken care of, I told him we could probably stay another day if he wished. He told me he would like that. I asked him why he didn’t live in a village like most shamans do, so he can be available when needed. He replied that he always knew when he was needed in his village and would arrive in time to help. I decided not to ask how he managed that.

John very much enjoyed the riot of color after the rather austere landscape of the last week or so. He pointed and said the word flower and every color he recognized in each language he had learned without mixing them up. Cuauhtzin pranced about from my shoulder to my head to my other shoulder and lectured dramatically in Otomi. Wodziwob seemed to enjoy the spectacle. I finally remembered that he hadn’t eaten anything that morning, but he insisted he wasn’t hungry. In fact, he never did eat much in my presence and didn’t seem to have any food in his cave that I noticed. He did have a small water bag, but I had shaken it that morning and found it almost empty. Of course, this was none of my business.

We left the flowering valley in midafternoon and arrived at the cave not long before dusk. I prepared the evening meal. Once again he didn’t eat much, but afterward he sang again another long song in his language. Again both John and Cuauhtzin enjoyed it. It had a pleasant melody, I suppose, but I prefer songs I can understand. When he finished, John was asleep so I put him to bed and put Cuauhtzin on his stand watching over him. Then I returned to the fire and Wodziwob. We both sat quietly for a while; then he began to speak about many things.

He told me that his people had always lived in the rough dry mountain country. In ancient times they had migrated there for safety to be left in peace since it was the least desirable land. It had worked and they had flourished, eventually growing too large for their valleys in the northeast and migrating in all directions. Some went north to become the Nomo and the Newe; some went southwest to become the Kigzh, the Takhtam and the Kwawia. Some ventured a little to the south and became his people, the Nuwu. Some remained in place and became the Numu. He told me some of his people’s beliefs and how he had come to know which ones were true and which were correct. He explained that all beliefs are true but only in context. Some are also correct in any context. He was sure that if I examined my beliefs carefully, I would understand the distinction.

We finally turned in rather late. The next day was exactly the same. I awakened to find him praying, quietly fixed breakfast, we went back to the flowering desert, we returned, we dined, he sang, and we talked. This time he wanted to know about my people. I told him what I knew. When I had finished he told me that before I died, I would travel to places none of my relatives had seen. Knowing the vast wanderings of my brother and father, I suspected he was wrong there. Again, we turned in late.

The following morning, I knew we would have to leave, so I quickly fixed our meal and got everything loaded up on the horses. I thought to leave Wodziwob some food and water, but as I was about to place it in a niche in the back of his cave, he entered and told me there was no point in doing so. He said he needed to return to his village now and would accompany me part of the way. I asked where his village was and he told me it was to the northeast. I offered to accompany him there, but he assured me it was not necessary, I should continue to the lands of the Tzinama-a and the river. It seemed that Hamakhava was just the name of one of their larger settlements. In the west it had come to be used as the name of the tribe.

We returned again to the flowering desert, and about halfway through it, he bid me farewell and turned toward the north. He told me to continue due east and I would reach the river well before dark. With much difficulty I had convinced him to take one of the horses. I had extras from my attackers and he could always sell or trade or give it away in his village if he didn't want it. His eyes lit up when I said give, so I suppose I know what he was going to do with it. I watched him ride off for a few moments, then continued toward the east. The flowers gave out before too long and we returned to the dry desert. The ground began to slope downward, and not long after midday, I could see the river glinting in the sun before me. There had been an occasional tree in the desert, the odd-looking ones with green bark and no leaves, but I noticed that some of them were growing leaves as we got closer to the river. There was also a noticeable increase in shrubs and some flowers.

The river seemed to have limited bottomlands much as the upper reaches of the Mongol River. Here were the light wood trees one often found in the drier river valleys. As I drew nearer the river, I could see a lone house on my side of the river. It almost looked as though it was dug into a sand hill, but that was not possible. On closer examination, it proved to be made of logs covered with thatch and then covered with sand. The open door was facing south and as I passed by it was filled by a tall, slim but sturdy old man, with a dark brown complexion. He wore his hair long and loose and was dressed in a breechcloth and a short tunic of an indeterminable dark color. He greeted me in Mongol and invited me to visit. I turned aside and rode over to the house. I noticed there was a small corral with a single horse in it. I added my horses to the corral.

The house proved to be quite a large room inside, over twenty feet wide and almost as deep. In the center there were two transverse posts, and the logs that formed the roof of the house were arranged on these. The roof was banked to the floor except in the front. The floor was covered with sand. There were mats of woven bark that served as the door and as furniture. There were no tables, chairs or beds. There was a hearth near the door, but it was not lit. Near it were some pottery and a grinding stone. To the right were some larger pots and some baskets with stored food.

My host introduced himself as Ahalya'asma, a retired Tzinama-a warrior. He explained that his wife had died the year before and his children had long since married and moved away. He was delighted to have some company since it was quite rare for a traveler to pass this way. I asked why he lived in such an isolated spot and he said it was only half a day's ride from the nearest settlement to the north. He had centli, beans, and squash, and I provided the dried meat and the chili to make us a fine meal. We topped it off with some nuts from a local pine tree that were quite good. Cuauhtzin particularly liked them. After dinner we sat near the fire and chatted.

"I can see that you are also a warrior," he said.

"Well, I was some years ago."

"It stays with you, doesn't it? All of our young men go on campaign. It takes them away for at least five years, but most come back."

"You fought in the Green Mist?"

“Yes. We fought some good warriors, fine-looking people. Of course, they didn’t really have a chance. Did you fight there also?”

“No, I fought in the Clouds against the Inka and their neighbors.”

“I heard we lost many in those battles.”

“My tumen was virtually wiped out.”

“You served in the Maya tumen?”

“Yes. I didn’t know their reputation had reached the Green Mist.”

“We all heard about them. They were fierce warriors, disdaining Mongol tactics and closing with the enemy. They usually took more casualties than any other tumen.”

“Quite true. At the time we were wiped out, we were already down to half strength. Of course, that was the idea. The tumen was always put in position to sustain heavy casualties. That way the young Maya men were too thinned out to stage any sort of revolt back in Anahuac.”

“Really? I had no idea. Why were you with them?”

“The Khan of Anahuac sincerely hoped I would have the decency to share their fate. Fortunately, he was disappointed.”

“You have made far more powerful enemies than I ever did.”

“To be honest, his difficulty with me was my fault, although I do think he could have let it be. His brother and I were good friends.”

“You are the most distinguished guest I have ever had the honor to entertain.”

“Actually, it would be best if you never mentioned my being here. I still have some implacable enemies.”

We traded a few stories about funny things that happened on campaign and finally turned in for the night. His mat was in the corner to the west of the door and he set John and me up in the center of the room. Cuauhtzin was judiciously set near the door, which was set up over the doorway once the hearth was extinguished. He prevailed on me to stay an extra day so he could accompany me part of the way north. He felt I should travel north a little over a day, then turn east along a fine river valley that climbs into the mountains. Along this way I would find grassland that I could follow all the way to the prairie in the east. It would provide ample forage for the horses and would be an easier path than the rugged mountains to the north or the desert to the south. I thought that made eminent sense.

He showed me around his little place. He would plant centli, beans, squash, and melons as soon as the river flooded, then subsided. He showed me his little plot. He used to plant a larger area to feed his family, but that was no longer necessary. We went down to the riverbank. The river was still shallow enough that we could swim the horses across easily. I asked when the river would flood and he said it was usually in mid spring probably still a week or two away. After he showed me around, we spent the rest of the day sitting on the riverbank and fishing. He told me that when he was younger he could grab the fish with his hands, but he was no longer quick enough. I told him that I had never been that quick.

We chatted about our families and the places we had seen. He seemed to know this whole area quite well for he had wandered around it quite a bit. Otherwise he tended to be a bit sketchy. All he remembered about the east was that there was grassland and then forest and many great rivers. All he remembered about the Green Mist was that it took a long time to reach and was hot, damp and very green. I often noticed how many veterans of the campaigns had no idea or interest in just where they had been. Meanwhile, our efforts were rewarded and we had fresh fish for dinner.

The next morning we set out together after breakfast. The horses swam across the river without incident. We made our way northward along the bank and a little after midday came upon a rather scattered settlement of houses above the floodplain of the river. I could even see a few houses on the west bank. Ahalya’asma

prevailed on me to spend the night with him and his old warrior friend and his wife so we could swap some more stories. We spent the rest of the afternoon fishing and did not come to our hosts empty handed. I can't remember his friend's name, but it was even harder to pronounce than his. In any case, we had a good time talking into the night.

The next morning after breakfast, some final directions, and well wishes, we set off northward. The river seemed to be coming from the northeast along this part. About midafternoon we came to the river flowing into the Hopitu from the east. It looked like a very pleasant valley and I eagerly turned east. I noticed that it joined the Hopitu at a point where it turns from running southeast to southwest. This little valley reminded me of valleys in the east teeming with wildlife. I had been cautioned that it was a popular hunting ground for the Tzinama-a near the mouth and for their neighbors the Kuweveka paiya farther upstream. This latter tribe was much like the Tzinama-a although they tended to live in the higher valleys.

It was a beautiful valley. It gradually sloped upward to a sort of plateau where I found the promised grassland on the second day. I came across several hunting parties in the valley, but we ignored each other in the time-honored tradition of hunters. There were no settlements in the grassland, but I would occasionally pass a group of hunters or travelers along the way. There were no yams or even clear paths to follow, but, as directed, I held to a slightly south of east track. Occasionally I would have to turn north to avoid a patch of desert and occasionally I would have to skirt around a mountain range or ride through a pine or even oak wood, but generally there was grass for the horses all the way through to the prairie. It was often quite beautiful as well since it was still spring when I first reached it and there were yet some flowers blooming.

It took until well into summer to reach the prairie, and along the path, we finally encountered some yams, although they seemed almost random since they were on trade routes and I was going in a general direction. We passed from the lands of the Kuweveka paiya to those of the A'-a'tam, the A'shiwi, the Hopitu-shinumu, the K'eres, and the Ti'wan before reaching the prairie and eventually the Titskan Watitch. Our path went through the remoter edges of the lands of most of these people and we rarely saw any settlements and those were some distance off our path. I didn't really want to visit the towns along the way since I was really enjoying camping under the stars with John and Cuauhtzin. I suppose this was shortsighted of me since I understand the towns are quite remarkable and I never had the occasion to return there.

When we finally reached the prairie we still had some distance to go to reach the Pelican Ordu. In fact, it took until midsummer to reach the Ishak River and a few days along it until I found the Ordu. Mathilde and Aspenquid were relieved to see us. They had no idea where we were or if any ill had befallen us. I explained that I had to wait out winter in the warmer climate along the coast and it took all of spring and half of summer to get here from there. I did not tell them about the attempted ambush. They made a big fuss over John and how tall he had grown. I noticed how much Little Carlotta had grown. To my surprise, she recognized me immediately and insisted on being picked up and carried about. John did not seem to mind, but ran along beside us. Cuauhtzin was not pleased, however, and transferred to John, much to his delight.

They brought me up to date on their children. Aju had returned, but then had gone off again this spring. Paula was still awaiting her husband's return from campaign, and Bedagi had written that he should be home late in the winter. Sarah and her husband had transferred to the Alligator Ordu, but she wrote often, and her first child had been a boy and was a healthy one-year-old. My brother Theodore had breezed through late in the spring, but she had no idea where he was now. He had assured them that I was fine and on my way back. I wondered how he had known that. I found myself wondering which of the people I met along the way had been his informers.

Before dinner that evening, Aspenquid told me that there were some letters for me at headquarters. They were from a high-ranking official so I had to pick them up myself. I wandered over and presented myself to the aide-de-camp. He stood and saluted and handed me the packet. I thanked him and returned to the tent. They proved to be from Watomika and Luis. The former's letter just introduced the latter's and wished me well. Luis' letter was written in Euskera so it took me a while to read it. I remember wishing he had written in Latin. But it included a map of Europa with lands of the Eskualdunac, Bayern, the Black Forest, and Innsbruck marked in

red ink and all the other countries marked in black ink. The only problem with the map was that I could not figure out what the scale was. There was a note about legua, but I didn't know what that meant.

The letter mentioned that he had found the map and with a judicious bribe was allowed to copy it. He apologized that he was not a better draftsman, but assured me he had been quite careful. He thoughtfully asked after John and my relatives, then launched into the same report he had given the Khakhan. It seemed that the civil war in Gaztela was still raging, but the advantage had shifted to Queen Isabella after the defeat of Alfonso of Portugal at the Battle of Toro the previous year, ending Alfonso's intervention. Civil war continued in Ingalaterra, but Eduardo the Fourth seemed to have things well in hand. His one time ally, Carlos Ausarti of the Ardangori, was killed in battle against the Suizos. Carlos had recaptured the city of Granson on their frontier early the previous year and had hanged the entire Suizos garrison. Bent on revenge, the Suizos attacked his army near the city and routed them. Later in the year Carlos again moved against the Suizos at Morat, another of his cities occupied by them. Again his men were routed with heavy losses. Finally early this year, the Suizos advanced into Ardangori territory and Carlos met them at Nancy. Once more his army was totally defeated and he was killed covering their retreat. Poloinia and Hungaria were still fighting over Bohemia, although Poloinia also had repelled an invasion by the Ottoman Empire last year. Venezia, however, was definitely losing its war with the Ottomans. The people of Europa were certainly a contentious lot. At least we confined our wars to the far south. Of course, we had never really had a civil war—yet.

I answered Luis' letter and sent it off quickly in the hope that he would get it before he left for home. I thanked him for the map and for keeping me informed and asked him about the scale of the map. Whatever the scale, it looked like Euzkadi was a rather small area—smaller than the Black Forest. The Holy Roman Empire looked quite large, but seemed to have a number of entities within it. It was a little confusing. He indicated where Venezia had lost territory to the Ottomans. They seemed to have been driven from the east coast of the deep bay at the end of which was their city.

I decided to spend the winter with Mathilde and Aspenquid since it was a little late in the summer to go wandering around the countryside looking for relatives. So I settled down and helped Aspenquid lay in some meat for the winter. I also did some fishing in the river to add a little variety. I usually took John and Little Carlotta with me fishing. They were not much help, but they kept me from thinking too much. I was very much bothered by Wodziwob's version of John's future and it kept gnawing at me. Finally I decided to take a few days and see if I could confer with my spirit guide and perhaps even Carlotta.

I rode off alone toward the south down to the shore of the sea. Once I reached the sea, I rode a little toward the east and found a shady spot where I could tie up the horses. Then I moved off a little distance and sat down and stared at the sea. The gentle motion of the waves washing the shore soon placed me in my meadow with my guide. I sought the guidance I needed, but he deferred to Carlotta, who also finally appeared. She looked radiant, shining so brightly it was hard to look at her. She told me that Wodziwob had spoken truly and that I would have to give John up when he was six. Until then, I must teach him all I could to ensure that he would always have a part of me in him. She also assured me that she did not have any hostility toward Khan John and urged me to only think of him with compassion remembering the unfortunate fact of his parents. I told her I would try and urged her to stay close to me. She said she always was close to John and me and always would be. I thanked her and my guide and woke up at dusk. The next morning I returned home and concentrated on teaching John how to read and write, young as he was.

Reading came quickly to him, but writing was more of a challenge. Little Carlotta immediately joined in the task and was very helpful. He could not understand why everyone didn't use the same writing and felt that the Latin letters were easier than the Uighur script. I suppose he was right, but I had found them both easy once I had learned them. Of course, I had been a little older than he was. By the end of the winter, he was reading and writing very capably. I had him write a short letter in Mongol to each of the relatives we had visited the year before. He was quite excited when the replies arrived and immediately wrote back.

Bedagi and Theodore both arrived late in the winter within a few days of each other. Bedagi looked rather haggard from the long trip and had little to say. He rested a few days, then took off again to wander toward the west. Theodore also looked a bit the worse for wear when he arrived. He admitted that all the travel was finally

getting to him and he would no longer travel in the winter. He and Mahwissa had found a nice spot among the Pansfalaya where they would settle down more or less permanently. He had just come from there. His son John was now a fully qualified healer and was wandering around much like he had done in his youth. Sarah had had her second child, a girl, the year before and all were doing well the last time he saw them—last summer. Paula was still with Nizhevoss. He felt she should move on, but she preferred to stay with him.

I asked him what the Khakhan had wanted with him the last time we had spoken. He replied that he could only tell me that when we were alone. The next day while in a sweat bath he told me that the Khakhan had asked him which of his sons he thought should succeed him! I could not imagine him asking anyone, let alone Theodore, such a thing. Theodore was also taken aback by the question, but the Khakhan had insisted, assuring him that he respected his opinion above that of his advisors. Theodore told him that Juchi would be the best of the three. While he needed to mature a little, and he could not compare with his father, he was much better than the other two. Berke was basically a decent man but had so separated himself from things that he was out of touch. Toragana would have best been strangled in his crib.

“You really told him that?” I was shocked.

“Yes. He had to admit I had a point. He also agreed completely with my assessment of his sons. I’m glad he didn’t ask me about his late daughter.”

“The witch finally died?”

“Oh yes, she eventually threw herself off the cliffs of Amona. The people who had to bring her food found her body. They buried her on the island.”

“Were they certain it was her?”

“The birds had eaten their fill of her, but there was no one else on the island, and there has been no sighting of her anywhere. I’m sure it was she. I can’t imagine anyone saving her.”

“When did this happen?”

“In the summer about two years ago. There had been one of those hurakan storms and the supplies had been delayed several days. She probably thought she had been abandoned or she may have fallen accidentally. We’ll never know.”

I told him about the attempt on my life at the behest of her son, and how I had been warned and then advised by Wodziwob. He told me that the advice was sound; I should never hate my enemies or anyone else for that matter. I was a bit amazed at this coming from my deep-in-intrigue brother, but on reflection I don’t ever recall him expressing hate for anybody. I told him about Wodziwob’s prediction for John and Carlotta’s endorsement of it. He told me that he was not surprised; he always thought that John was a very special child and expected great things from him. I didn’t know what to say about that. I just hoped he lived a good, happy life. I then asked him if he had any idea how the assassins knew where to find me. He gave that some thought, but had to admit he didn’t know. He added that he would try and find out. Theodore left after a short stay.

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Egwani and Ayun’ini, 110 K

(SE LA to Shenandoah Valley, 1478)

I decided to take John to visit the much fewer eastern relatives that year and we set out about mid spring. I headed north first, thinking to end up in the south in the winter. I returned to my special meadow again and found that indeed someone had settled there, although not in my particular spot. I camped there for a few days again and told John all about his mother. He listened intently and added some things of which I hadn’t thought to tell him. I did not have to worry about him forgetting her.

We next moved on to Murenbalikh. As we crossed the bridge across the Missi Sipi River, I told John how, while I had been on Nanih Waiya, I had seen, in a vision, his mother and Hiacoomes crossing this very bridge. He told me he wanted to go back to Nanih Waiya. I promised we would, although I couldn’t believe he

remembered being there when he was only a year old. Murenbalikh had not changed much since the last time I was there. It was perhaps a little more spread out, but not much. We spent the night there and moved on east. John did not seem interested in the city, but spent his time looking at the people. Since he was riding on his own now, I found I had to keep an eye on him since he tended to wander off or fall back. As we left the city, he told me that there seemed to be a lot of unhappy people there.

“What makes you think that?” I asked.

“Can’t you see the dark clouds around them?”

“No. Do I have a dark cloud around me?”

“Oh no, Agidodah. Your cloud is bright blue, but a little thin.”

“Do you see these clouds around everyone?”

“Yes, unless they are dead.”

“When did you see a dead person?”

“At the Ordu, Carlotta showed me.”

“Does she see clouds around people also?”

“No. She got angry when I talked about it, so I told her I just had something in my eye.”

“What color is her cloud?”

“Usually red, but sometimes orange and yellow.”

“What about you? Do you have a cloud?”

“Yes, but mine is only white like the ones in the sky. At least that’s all I can see on my arms and legs.”

“Do only people have these clouds?”

“No, plants and animals also. The plants can be white, purple, blue and yellow, but usually not red. Animals tend to be more red, but they have other colors too. Cuauhtzin has mostly blue or red, but sometimes he is yellow and even green.”

“Do you know what these colors mean?”

“Not entirely, but blue is usually calm, red is busy or angry or loving. Many people are red around the heart. You are sometimes when you think of Agi’tsi-i. I’m sure I am too, but I can’t see it.”

“Doesn’t seeing all these colors make it difficult to see individuals?”

“In a crowd it can be, but I don’t mind. The colors can be so beautiful.”

I wasn’t sure what to make of this ability of his, but decided it should not be discouraged. Instead, I tried to help him understand what he was seeing since it seemed to be some sort of emanation that indicated a person’s frame of mind. I had no idea what it would mean in a plant or animal. I also suggested that he speak of this to no one but me, since it would likely elicit reactions just like that of his cousin. He agreed, but it seemed to make him a little sad.

We often camped out rather than use the yam system and I noticed that he would often be lost in thought. Still he was very attentive at his lessons and had a better ear than I did for languages. He picked up quite a bit of Wazhazhe in the few weeks we were among them and even learned one of the Mingue dialects and his mother’s native Wampanoag as we traveled east. Since we had so few relatives in the east, I decided to visit Yangzi and call on Watomika and perhaps, Luis. It was a week or so after the summer solstice that we arrived.

I presented myself at the governor’s palace and asked to see Watomika. We were ushered into the usual room and asked to wait. Eventually the officious assistant arrived to look us over. He had his usual expression as if he had been asked to inspect an overused latrine. Eventually he recognized me and asked me to wait a bit more. A few moments later, he exploded back into the room and bowed me into the presence of the governor.

“What a pleasant surprise!” Watomika greeted me. “I have already sent off your letter from your friend. I’m afraid he is back with his fellows fishing already. Is this your son?”

“Yes, Excellency. This is John.”

“A pleasure to meet you, my boy. How old are you?”

“I am four, Excellency,” he answered. “It is an honor to meet you.”

“Such a fine young man. Will you be a great soldier like your father?”

“I don’t think so, Excellency, but I’m not yet sure.”

“And so mature. You do let him play with other children, don’t you?” He fixed me with a perplexed look.

“Of course. He has always been allowed to be a child.”

“Good, one usually only finds such maturity in children who spend all their time with adults. That is not healthy, a childhood should have wonderful memories.”

“I agree, Excellency.”

“Anyway, I have noticed that our children seem to go their own way rather than follow ours. After all, your grandfather was a Khan and your father a healer. My grandfather was a warrior and my father a merchant. I suppose that is how it should be. Still, this child is remarkable.”

“Thank you, Excellency.”

He sat us down and gave a thumbnail sketch of Luis’ report. We then chatted about things in the Khanate and he informed me that he had just heard that the Khakhan’s youngest son Toragana had met an untimely end. It seemed that he was accidentally shot with a hail of arrows during a training exercise. Theodore was now the regent for his nephew. I acted surprised and expressed the appropriate regret for the dreadful occurrence. John was staring at me with a puzzled look, but Watomika didn’t notice. He also seemed to be reporting something that had surprised him. When we rose to leave, he asked if I wanted to be taken out to Luis’ ship, but I decided not to take John out on the open ocean like that. A little one like him could so easily slip overboard. Besides, I was sure I would see Luis another time. I was wrong there.

Once we left the governor’s residence, John asked me why I hid the fact that I already knew about Toragana’s death. I explained that I didn’t exactly know about it, but I did expect it. He wanted to know why. I told him that his uncle Theodore had suggested that it was likely the Khakhan would order some harm on his son. John was shocked and asked why. I lamely explained that rulers sometimes had to make difficult decisions for the good of their people. Sometimes that included getting rid of a potentially dangerous relative who could do much harm to the people. He expressed relief that I was not a Khan. I echoed that sentiment.

We moved south the next morning. I decided to take John to see his mother’s birthplace, Capawake. I explained my trip there the year he was born and how it was different from when she lived there. Even so, he was eager to visit it. A few days later, I found the same small path leading southeast from the trade road. The yam from where I originally had been directed to the path was just in sight to the west. We were still on the path when night fell and we had to camp. About midmorning we came upon the coastal trail and could see the remains of the little village that had been there four years before. It looked as though it had been abandoned shortly after my last visit. By nightfall we reached the other village across from Capawake. I was relieved to see it was still inhabited.

With some difficulty I found someone who was willing to take us to the island the next morning, and his wife was willing to watch the horses for me, both services for a fee, of course. We camped out on the beach, not wishing to impose on such grudging hospitality. The next morning just at daylight our villager presented himself and again I helped row us across while keeping a sharp eye on John. Cuauhtzin was not at all sure about the boat and only came with us reluctantly. He remained firmly clamped on my shoulder, and muttered vaguely in Otomi every so often. We were put ashore and the man promised to return for us after two days, but we would have to share the boat with his catch.

We set off down the beach toward the west until I found the trail at the western end of the island. We were on it when it got dark and we camped under the stars. The next day we came upon Carlotta's little village of Nashanekammuck a little after midday. It, too, had been abandoned. The few houses that had been there four years before were now in ruins. I showed John the site I had been told had been Hiacoomes' house and told him that this was where his mother had been born.

"No, she was born over here." He led me to another nearby site. "That was where her great-grandfather lived. She was born here. She grew up there."

I didn't ask how he knew and I didn't doubt it either. He pointed out the spots where she had been born and where her parents had been buried. He told me much more than the villagers had been able to tell me four years before. He spoke as though he was describing the Pelican Ordu where he had spent so much of his life. I was beginning to wonder about him. Was he to be a seer? If so, would he be happy? I hoped so. I have never found seers to be happy. Sometime knowing too much is worse than knowing nothing.

We didn't have time to tarry, and rather than try to find the path that had led me to the north coast of the island before, I decided to retrace our path. We left the site around midafternoon and reached our drop-off point late the next day. Our ride showed up and, as promised, we had to share the boat with his considerable catch. I congratulated him on his good fortune, and helped row back to the mainland. We arrived a little before dusk, I retrieved the horses, and we rode back until darkness overtook us, and we camped for the night. We returned to the trade road and followed it west all the way to Zheng He. I showed John around the bustling town and the busy port. Once again he focused on the people. This time he found them tense, busy, caught up in their thoughts. I was relieved that no strange person approached me with a message this time.

We left Zheng He the next day and crossed the Leni lenape River on the fairly new suspension bridge at the north end of the island. It was quite a long bridge, but seemed quite secure and stable. Once across, I decided to go inland toward and across the Kubilai River and then over the mountains to the valley that would lead us to Itsati. I had never gone this way before, but I had heard of the valley and wondered what it was like. The river in the lower or northern part of the valley had been named the North Ani' Yun'-wiya River, no doubt because the river that should have been named for the tribe, the West Tsoyaha, already had a name. Also, the South Ani' Yun'-wiya was not much of a river to be named for such a large tribe. It proved to be a prophetic naming since over the years the Ani' Yun'-wiya began moving north into the valley eventually reaching the headwaters of the river about twenty years before my visit.

It took twelve days to reach the mouth of the North Ani' Yun'-wiya. It emptied into the Potomac, which was easily fordable at this time of year. I noticed along the way that the Leni lenape had spread all along the Chingis River as well as most of the Kubilai, leaving the Kanastoge on the headwaters of the latter which at one time they had completely dominated. The Kanastoge had retained their identity and language even though they were limited to a few towns. All things considered, it was remarkable that there were any of them left from the accounts of the war a hundred years before.

The mouth of the Ani' Yun'-wiya was not inhabited, and frankly, it was not surprising since it had dreadfully rocky soil. The river was rather shallow so I suspected it flooded whenever there was a heavy rain. Still, it was pleasantly warm rather than hot and sticky as it would have been along the coast. We rode along the eastern edge of the valley. There was a strange long ridge that bisected both the valley and the river, and at the south end of it, there was a small Ani' Yun'-wiya village. We stopped there and visited with a friendly family. Their parents had come north from a village three days' ride down the valley. Originally their ancestors had been from Itsati, and they asked me to give their regards to some of their relatives when we got there.

The next day we were riding along late in the day when we heard a woman singing. The language of the song was Ani' Yun'-wiya, but was not any of the ritual songs I knew. It had a beautiful melody and she had a voice to match it. We followed the sound to a camp along the riverbank. The woman proved to be very young, not much more than a girl. She stood on the bank looking out over the river and sang her song oblivious to everything around her. She did not seem to hear our approach. We dismounted, tied up the horses, and sat down on the ground to listen. Her song was long and seemed to be an involved story about a family that had been banished from their village and had traveled far and wide. It poetically described the sights they had seen. I

remember how it called the Missi Sipi “flowing earth shining brilliantly in the sun, hiding all it washed before it under its turbid surface.” A bit overdone perhaps, but it did bring the river to mind for me.

When she finished, she knelt down on the bank and began one of the all-too-familiar washing rituals. Upon finishing she turned and saw us. She was both surprised and embarrassed but did not turn to leave. Instead she invited us to join her for the evening meal. I rose, praised her song and her voice, introduced us, and offered to add our food to the pot. She graciously accepted some dried meat and centli and added it to her stew. She silently tended it until it was ready; then she served it. We ate quietly, and when we finished, I asked her who she was and why she was here all alone. She explained that she was named Egwani because her parents wanted her to flow freely like a river always wandering, never staying in one place for long. She and her parents had done just that wandering all over the Khanate. Her parents had died in the far north when they were trapped for days by a blizzard and ran out of food. She had gone on to get help, but when she returned she found them dead. She had decided to go on alone.

“You are so young and a woman and many areas in the Khanate, especially in the far north are rough. How did you survive?” I asked.

“I know how to avoid being seen. Had I not been singing, you would never have found me.”

“I have never heard such singing. Where did you learn it?”

“My parents liked to sing and taught me. I made up the song you heard myself.”

“It was so beautiful!”

“It sounded like the sky music,” John commented.

“Sky music?” I asked. Egwani also looked puzzled.

“Yes,” John replied enthusiastically. “The music you hear in the sky.”

“You travel in the dream world?” she asked.

“Is that what it’s called? When I go to visit Agi’tsi-i, I hear the music. It is so beautiful that sometimes she has to come and get me.”

“His mother is dead?” she asked me.

“Yes, she died when he was born.”

“I also visit my parents in the dream world.” She turned to John. “My music is only a little like that. I could not possibly make that sound.”

“But it is like it,” John insisted.

She began to sing again without words, only sounds and John joined her. His clear bright voice was the equal to hers and I was shocked by the easy way they blended their voices to the unearthly music. Finally I was transported by it and lost in it. When they stopped I felt such a sense of longing to return to the song that my heart ached. They were both lost in their reverie so I got up and tended the fire. I noticed that Cuauhtzin was completely quiet and had flown over to sit on the ground next to them. As the night deepened I could see the reflection of animals’ eyes at the edge of the forest. I armed myself, but they made no move to advance and gradually moved away.

John and Egwani remained sitting and not moving, so I picked John up and laid him under his blanket, then put Egwani’s blanket over her shoulders and gently eased her into a more comfortable position. I put Cuauhtzin on his perch next to John, and after stirring up the fire a little more, I turned in.

The next morning I woke to find Egwani doing the purification rite in the river. She already had a pot on the fire warming up some centli mush. I got John up and we joined her in the rite. When we finished, she served up breakfast and we ate quietly for a while. John finally broke the silence.

“If you come with us,” he said, “we’ll take you to him.”

“You know him?” she asked.

“In a way,” he replied. “Agi’ tsi-i brought me to meet him in the dream world. He told me where he was. It is not far from here.”

“Oh, that would be wonderful! My heart told me he was here, but I didn’t know where and was going to wander all over the valley until I found him.”

“About whom are you talking?” I interjected.

“Ayun’ini,” John answered cheerfully. “I can’t wait to meet him on the earth.”

“Is that his name?” Egwani asked. “I never knew. How soon will we reach him?”

“Tomorrow,” John answered eagerly. “He’s only that far away and he’s waiting for us.”

“Who is this Ayun’ini?” I asked wearily.

“A wonderful teacher!” they both answered together, then laughed.

“And you both met him in this ‘dream world’ of yours?”

“I never met him, but my parents told me about him,” Egwani said.

“I met him when Agi’ tsi-i introduced us. He goes there to learn like I do.”

“And he is on our way to Itsati?”

“Yes, as long as we stay on this side of the valley, we’ll find him tomorrow evening.”

Egwani agreed to come along with us. Since she didn’t have a horse, I let her use one of mine. As we rode south, she and John chatted enthusiastically about what they had “seen” in their “dream world” while I rode along quietly. It all made me feel a bit awkward, much like a fresh recruit would feel among veterans, I suppose. But I was determined to let John be what he would be without my interference. I wanted him to be happy and this certainly seemed to make him happy. I tried to listen to their conversation, but I had no idea what they were talking about. Cuauhtzin remained with me, occasionally muttering something.

Early the next day we left the North Ani’ Yun’-wiya near its source and around midday came upon another river flowing southwest. Most of the towns and villages were west of our path in the central part of the valley, but we did pass along the fields of some of them and occasionally came upon a hunting party. At Egwani’s request we did not stop to talk to anyone and other than some cheerful waves no one bothered us. Late in the day we came upon a small camp where another river joined the one we were following from the northwest. When I saw the other river, I realized that we were on the upper reaches of the Powhatan River.

The camp was in a small clearing a little nearer to the other river. There was a fire with a pot on it and a lone man tending the fire. As we drew near, I could see that he was younger than I and almost as tall. He was thin and bearded and wore his hair long and loose. He was clothed in unadorned white cotton shirt and loincloth and wore no shoes. I could see no horse anywhere. As we pulled up and dismounted, he rose and turned to greet us.

“At last we meet, honored guests,” he said.

“You are Ayun’ini?” I asked.

“I am,” he replied.

“It seems both this young lady and my son have been looking forward to meeting you.”

“And I, them. Welcome friends, it is a joy to see you.”

Egwani and John both ran over to him and embraced him. This was a very untypical thing to do among our people. The odd clap on the back, grasp of the arm, or pat on the shoulder was the most one would do to a stranger. Embracing was limited to husband and wife and child and parent or grandparent. I tied up the horses and approached warily as the three clung to each other like drowning men to a lifeline. Suddenly in the fading light, I saw a glow around them as if they shone like the moon. When they parted, I saw that the glow remained

with all three, but it faded gradually. I did not know what to make of this at all. Cuauhtzin clung tightly to my shoulder and did not make a sound. Ayun'ini asked us all to sit and served us a bowl of centli soup fortified with some sort of roots and herbs giving it an interesting taste and making it quite filling.

“You are wondering about me, Crow.” He turned to me after dinner. “Let me tell you about myself. My father was Ani' Yun'-wiya and my mother was Dzitsiista. She was a cousin of your brother's wife. She met my father when he returned from campaign and wandered around the Khanate. He was originally from the town of Tunessee. I'm sure you know it. My parents stayed among the Dzitsiista until I was about five years old; then they began to wander first the North Country, then the southwest. They died when I was about ten years old. We were crossing the Hopitu River below the great bend when a flash flood caught us in midstream and swept us downriver. I managed to cling to a branch and finally was rescued by some Tzinama-a who pulled my battered body from the water and nursed me back to health. My parents and younger sisters were never found. When I was twelve, I left the Tzinama-a and walked eastward to follow a strange urging I had. It led me to a place in the Hopitu-shinumu lands. It was different from any other place I had ever been. There were creeks, pine forests, canyons, and, towering over all, tall red rocks in majestic shapes. During the day they changed colors from violet to red to orange to rust. I stayed, knowing I was where I belonged. I remained there until two years ago when I began wandering again, eventually reaching here.”

“You remained in that place all those years alone?”

“There were some ruins, but no one else lived there until about a year after I arrived. At that time a man came upon me while I was meditating along the side of a creek. He waited until I finished, then told me he had been sent to teach me. I studied with him for three years; then he left and returned to his people.”

“Who was he?”

“His name was Sintana; he belonged to a tribe called Tairona.”

“Tairona? They live in the Khanate of the Clouds. I never heard of them wandering around. What was he doing there?”

“He told me that Gualchovang sent him to teach me.”

“Who is that?”

“She is their goddess. She is a sort of earth mother not unlike our Selu, I suppose, although they see her as more like our Asga-Ya-Galun-lati.”

“They have a female creator?”

“They revere the earth and consider themselves guardians of it. I suppose it is only natural that they would consider the earth female. Most of the people in the Khanate call the earth ‘mother.’ ”

“But the earth is not usually considered the creator, only the nurturer. Usually the sun or the sky or some sort of spirit is considered the creator.”

“That is true. He didn't try to convert me to his beliefs; he only spoke of them when I asked. He didn't think it mattered what we believe, since an omnipotent god could not be offended by his creations.”

“Most belief systems hold that gods can be offended. In the Valley of Anahuac most of the people felt they had to feed the gods human hearts or they would die and the world would end.”

“Well, we Ani' Yun'-wiya know better than that, don't we?”

“If this man didn't teach you his beliefs, what did he teach you?”

“He taught me how to visit the dream world and guided me through it so I could learn the truth.”

“The truth?”

“Perhaps it is better to call it, the real.”

“And that is?”

“It is a long story, probably more than you want to hear now.”

“Is that what you propose to teach my son when I turn him over to you?”

“He already knows that, although he would likely find it hard to explain it. I will simply guide him while he teaches himself. In reality, he doesn’t need me, but I can help. I will be honored to do so when the time is right.”

“And Egwani? What can you do for her?”

“The same for as long as she wants me to do so. It is an honor to help her as well.”

“To be honest with you, if his mother had not assured me it was the best thing for him, I would never turn him over to you.”

“No, of course not. I am not a shaman and he is not to be one. But be assured when he does come to stay with me, I will only help, I will not try to change him.”

“Is there anything he should be learning over the next couple of years?”

“Whatever you think he should know.”

“Where will you be two years from now?”

“I will come to you at the right time. As it is, my heart will be with John, so I will easily find you.”

Ayun’ini invited us to join him in meditation. John and Egwani eagerly agreed and I politely joined them. From their faces I could see that they were in another world, but I was distracted by my thoughts. I wondered at the practicality of turning my son over to this wandering holy man with no weapons or visible means of support. While one could live off the land much of the year—what about the winter? I wondered about the safety of the girl, Egwani, for whom I had begun to feel responsible. Even if they met no evil people, there were wild animals that could attack them, nature could turn on them, or some disease could overcome them. The lifestyle seemed not just impractical, but reckless. I decided I needed a good deal more reassurance from Carlotta. I gave up on the meditation and walked over to the river and sat on the bank absently watching its sluggish flow in the silvery moonlight.

After a while I rose and walked around the perimeter of the camp for a time. On my third circuit I heard an unmistakable huffing and the noisy shambling of a bear nearby. I moved quietly to the horses and drew my bow. The sound drew closer along the river. I moved over to intercept it, notching an arrow as I went. The bear shuffled into view on our side of the river. I kept the arrow trained on him should he make a move toward the meditators or the horses, but he was more interested in the river, leading me to think he was perhaps fishing in the moonlight. Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder.

“He means no harm, Crow,” Ayun’ini whispered.

He walked over to the bear and it turned toward him at his approach. They seemed to be staring at each other for a few minutes, and then the bear crossed the river and moved off downstream at a good pace. Ayun’ini returned to me.

“I told him where there was a large berry patch,” he told me with a broad smile. “Bears can’t resist a temptation like that.”

“I didn’t hear a sound.”

“Animals talk in images. I just projected an image of the berry patch and the path there to him.”

“You can talk to animals?”

“Anyone can if they take the time.”

“Perhaps you can ask Cuauhtzin why he only speaks in Otomi.”

“I’ll ask him tomorrow. He’s sleeping.”

“Good idea, I think I’ll join him.”

We turned in for the night, although John and Egwani had to be put to bed since they were still lost in their meditation. It took me a while to fall asleep since I was still wondering about Ayun'ini. He seemed to have some control over wild animals, but what about nature? Could he talk to the wind or the floodwaters or the wildfire? Somehow, I didn't think so.

The next morning I awakened to find Ayun'ini shaking me. He told me that we had to move our camp. He knew of a cave nearby which we could reach before the rain began. I looked up at the cloudless dawn sky, rose up, and smelled the air. I could detect no hint that it would rain. There was no breeze and it was already rather humid. Still I decided to keep my misgivings to myself and see if he was right.

We ate quickly and crossed the river moving first south along its bank, then east up into the mountains. Along about midmorning, the wind picked up and I could smell the rain. Dark clouds were beginning to pile up in the west and move toward us. By midday Ayun'ini led us in a scramble up over a hill and on its far side led us to a cave. It was large enough for the horses, so we all went in just as the first large drops began to fall.

"How did you know it was going to rain? None of the signs were there until midmorning?" I asked.

"It is a skill Sintana taught me. This rain will last until nightfall and will flood all the streams. We should stay here until tomorrow."

"Can you detect wildfires in time to avoid them, also?"

"Yes."

"What about disease?"

"I have never been ill since I met Sintana."

"You know where you might encounter the sick and avoid them?"

"No, I always do what I can for the sick, but I do not catch their sickness."

"Even my father would occasionally come down with the illnesses he was treating. How do you avoid it?"

"I have complete control over my body, nothing enters it without my leave."

"And you can teach these skills to Egwani and John?"

"Of course."

"What about evil people? Do you know to avoid them?"

"There are very few truly evil people and they tend to avoid me."

"You never met my cousins George and George, or Chabi and Toragana, for that matter."

"Selfish, self-absorbed people may seem to be evil, but they are really just confused. They are in a beautiful forest, but all they can see is a blade of grass and that's all they focus on. They are more to be pitied than condemned. The condition is compounded when such people have power since they surround themselves with equally misguided people who worship power rather than God and do everything to reinforce the selfishness and self-absorption."

"You are most kind. Perhaps you would be less so had you ever met them. Three of them have tried to kill me."

"But you do not fear death, do you?"

"No."

"Then why should you care if they try to kill you?"

"Chabi intended harm to my wife as well as me."

"But she was not successful and suffered greatly for the attempt. You need not waste any more animosity on her."

"She managed to turn her son against me also. His feeble attempts against me remind me of her perfidy."

“You have been told he will not harm John. I can assure you that he will not harm anyone else dear to you. So now you can forget about him also.”

“You are a seer?”

“Sometimes. The boy Khan is very conflicted. He feels a perverse loyalty to his mother and father, but he loves his uncle who has been both mother and father to him most of his life. Eventually the uncle will lead him to the truth. Especially now that the uncle is also regent.”

“My cousin Theodore is a good man.”

“Yes, he is. By the way, Cuauhtzin speaks Otomi because he likes the sound of the language. He doesn't like Nahual or Ani' Yun'-wiya.”

“Does he know what he is saying?”

“No, the words are like toys for him; he plays with them.”

I decided not to pursue that. Just as Ayun'ini had predicted, it rained heavily, but stopped at dusk. Looking out of the cave, I could see that the nearby streams had turned into rivers. By the next morning, things had settled down a bit, and I suggested we should be on our way since we had some distance to travel before winter and it was already late summer. I took Egwani aside and made sure she wanted to stay with Ayun'ini. She did. I then took Ayun'ini aside and asked if he wanted two of my horses and some supplies to ease his travel. He didn't. He promised to find us in a couple of years and wished me inner peace. John and I rode westward back into the valley and then turned south.

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More Wandering with John, 110 K

(W. VA to N. C. MS, 1478)

South of the Powhatan, the intermountain area was hard to call a valley—it looked more like a plateau. As we continued south, the plateau constricted into parallel gorges of varying breadth. At decent intervals all along our path, we encountered Ani' Yun'-wiya villages and towns. Finally just as fall was in the air, we arrived at Itsati. Iskagua and Ghigooie made a big fuss over John, and Gatagewi and his family also came over to visit. Iskagua had all but retired as shaman leaving most of the work to Gatagewi. I was surprised at how old he and Ghigooie looked. It is amazing how people seem to age so dramatically when you don't see them for a few years. Cinnashote had returned to Itsati for a while, but then had wandered off again toward the south. Ghigooie hoped I would run into him and talk him into settling down. I hoped I would find him, also, but no one could ever talk him into anything. It had been so long since I had seen him I wondered if I would recognize him. I was sure he would recognize me since I do tend to stick out.

We stayed until a week or so after the Great New Moon Festival, and then we rode southeast so I could take John to the falls of Tallulah where I had cast Carlotta's ashes. It was a somber ride for me reliving the journey of four years before. John seemed instinctively to respect my quiet introspection. When we got to the granite cliffs, I tied the horses where they could graze, then carried John up the trail to the top of the cliff. Once on top I securely held his hand as we walked along the cliffs to the spot where I had built my little memorial cairn. We sat silently for a while by the cairn watching the water flow over the falls. It was still a beautiful spot. I told John how I had thrown in Carlotta's ashes here and then followed them to the sea. I asked him if he wanted to do that also.

“Agi'tsi-i isn't really here anymore, Agidodah. She won't be in the sea either. She is in the dream world. But she does like this place and I'm glad you showed it to me.”

He was right, of course, and remembering that trip to the sea, I really didn't want to repeat it either. We spent the rest of the day and camped overnight at the site. The next morning, I fussed over the cairn a bit; then we climbed back down to the horses. We returned to the Cusabo and got a ride across the Tallulah, then turned southwest. To my surprise we continued to come across small Ani' Yun'-wiya villages for quite some distance. I learned at one of them, where we waited out a particularly violent storm, that they had spread quite far south

and west over the years filling the vacuum left by the imploded Southeastern Cities. We were well out of the mountains before we came upon any of the latter's settlements. These proved to be of the Coosa, who told me that most of the other cities had concentrated to the south where they were now thriving. The Coosa had been expanding back into their old territory which somehow the Ani' Yun'-wiya had missed.

Before long we were in Pansfalaya country. They had also expanded eastward into the vacuum. It was in this area I would find my brother Theodore. I asked an elder at the first town in our path and was directed to the town where he was now settled. The man added that he was expecting me. Some things never change. The town where he had settled was on the east bank of the East Union River. Since that river used to be the border of the Pansfalaya, it was obviously a fairly new town. It proved to be of moderate size, with a bustling market. I approached an elder to ask for directions to Theodore's house.

"The second house on the right on the road leading north from the market," he said as soon as he caught sight of me. "He's been expecting you for a while now."

I thanked the man and ambled through the market toward the north road. There were many things for sale, mostly food and ornaments, but it was only a pale reflection of the market in Tlatelolco. We cleared the market and approached the house. It was a typical Pansfalaya house, but there was a line of people waiting around the door. As we drew near, one of them told us to go around back, we were expected. We led the horses around to the coral in back and took off their packs. We gave them some fodder and water, then turned toward the house. It was only then that I noticed a smaller house behind the main house. As I looked at it, a door opened and an older woman came out.

"Karl-crow and Little John, welcome, come in," she said.

I did not recognize her at all, but had to assume she was Mahwissa. I had not seen her since I was a child and remembered her as a beautiful young woman. She ushered us into the small house and insisted on feeding us. She told me that Theodore would join us when he finished seeing the sick. I told her that I had noticed the line and mentioned that I thought he was retiring. She smiled and told me he would never retire. She brought me up to date on their children. John was in the northeast, Sarah and her children were fine, and Paula had finally left Nizhevoss and was now in the northwest studying with another healer. It was late in the day before Theodore joined us. He invited me to join him in a sweat bath. I suggested we bring along John and he agreed.

"I'll wager you didn't recognize Mahwissa," he chuckled.

"Well, no," I admitted.

"When I told her you'd be visiting us, she reminded me that she hadn't seen you since I brought her to Cuauhnahuac to meet the family. That was a long time ago, about thirty years."

"She didn't travel with you, so I'd see you, but never her. You know, I've never met your children at all."

"You haven't? I suppose that's right. Well, I've met all my nieces and nephews. It's odd that in your wanderings you never ran into any of my children. Of course, now that I stay in one place, I probably won't see any of the relatives unless they come here."

"Have you seen Cinnashote? Ghigooie said he was wandering around in this area."

"He is on his way here now, but he was in the Timacua Peninsula visiting some friends at the Alligator Ordu. If you stay a while, he'll catch up to you."

"Ghigooie thinks I can talk him into settling down."

"I think he'll try to talk you into going back on campaign with him."

"What?"

"He's a warrior. He'll always be a warrior. He greatly admires your success as a warrior and would love to serve with you."

"My success as a warrior was mostly luck."

“Nonsense. You have the skill and the courage, and you know what to do. You are a fine warrior. However, there is not much reason to go on campaign at the moment. Both southern Khanates are trying to conquer the jungle. Should the Khanate of the Clouds ever turn south again, they will find a real foe waiting for them.”

“Really?”

“Yes, I’ve heard that the tribe south of the Kakan people are not just fierce, but they are clever and have already adopted some of our tactics.”

“If we haven’t taken them on yet, how could they use our tactics?”

“They were in contact with the Kakan. Perhaps you never heard about them, but they fought us to the death and were all but wiped out in a brutal campaign. But they didn’t have horses or cannon or our tactics and never really had a chance. Some of their survivors made it to the other tribe, who call themselves the Re Che. The latter tribe sent spies in to look us over and was very impressed. Next they sent a contingent of volunteers who could speak the Kakan language to pose as deserters ready to join the conquerors. They were duly trained and after taking part in a few campaigns mysteriously disappeared while on a routine patrol. They were presumed to have succumbed to some freak accident, but the bodies were never found. When we sent spies into their land to check them out a few years later, they reported back that the Re Che were all mounted warriors armed with our compound bows and had cannon and knew how to use them. The spies also found out about the patrol that had disappeared. They had returned to their fellows to teach them all they had learned from us.”

“Amazing. Didn’t George immediately attack them?”

“George died a few years ago, his son Henry is now Khan. Henry was more intrigued than hostile and decided to wait a while and then try to approach them with a delegation and get them to join rather than be conquered.”

“That was definitely not George. But it really doesn’t sound much like Henry either. Is Dehahuit still around?”

“He suffered a mysterious fatal accident shortly after Khan George died. He was buried with much honor. His son was sent on an ill-fated campaign into the jungle shortly afterward. Oddly the son’s family accompanied him.”

“Now that sounds more like George.”

“Henry had a deep-seated hatred of Dehahuit. Extending the vindictiveness to his family, however, is hard to justify. Perhaps he thought them to be enemies also.”

“What has become of Ignace?”

“He is not smart enough to kill off his brother, so he remains, for the moment in charge of the jungle campaigns.”

“Is Henry trying to kill him off too?”

“Perhaps, but he stays in Cuzco and merely dispatches the tumen into the jungle.”

“Are they getting anywhere?”

“Not really. They, of course, brush aside any organized resistance, but then the men tend to die from disease and ambush with poison darts. Our losses on these campaigns are quite heavy.”

“When do you think he will move against the Re Che?”

“Not for a few years, I’d guess.”

We got out of the sweat bath and plunged into the river, then dried off and returned to the small house. I asked why he lived behind his house instead of in it; he said the smaller house was large enough for the two of them and less trouble to keep clean. Besides, the larger house was full of all his medicines and could arguably be said to have an unpleasant odor. After John had gone to bed, I talked to Theodore about Ayun’ini and the future that seemed to be laid out for John. I told him about his strange ability to see “clouds” around people that indicated their state of mind and around animals and plants that indicated who knew what. And the facile way he

wandered around the “dream world” meeting spirits who could communicate with him their whereabouts in the real world.

“Well, I have seen what might be called ‘clouds’ around certain plants from time to time, if the light is right, but not animals or people. Of course, I never thought to look for them. As to communicating with spirits we’ve done that most of our lives with our spirit guides. Obviously, they don’t tell us where to meet them in the flesh, since they don’t exist in the flesh. In any case, it is the way with children, we teach them what we can, but in the end they must find their own way and we must let them.”

“It is just that he seems to spend too much time in this ‘dream world’ of his. He is able to tell me things about Carlotta that I never knew. He was able to point out the very spot where she was born on Capawake and where her parents were buried. I worry that he does not remain aware enough in this world. After all, this is where he lives and dies, not there.”

“Actually we live in both places, but some of us are more aware of one than the other. At least that is what Mahwissa tells me.”

“She wanders about the ‘dream world’?”

“She is a Dzitsiista. It is their way. They are very mystical.”

“Do you think it is a good thing to be mystical?”

“It is the best way to be. I wish I were more so.”

“Perhaps she can help him with it then.”

“She will be honored to do so.”

“You know, Ayun’ini mentioned that his mother was her cousin. Have you ever met him?”

“No. He must have moved away when he was young.”

“Yes, he mentioned that his parents wandered quite a bit.”

We moved on to other topics. I mentioned that I had heard that Toragana had met an unpleasant end as he had predicted. He shrugged and said that Kujujuk cared more for the Khakhanate than his own family. That was one way to look at it. Frankly, I thought it was more akin to cutting off a moribund limb from an otherwise healthy tree. I wondered if Berke would also meet an untimely end, but Theodore was certain he would not be bothered since he had no ambition and was not a threat to anyone.

The next day while Theodore was treating his patients, John and I went for a walk along the river. I found a likely spot and decided to do a little fishing to contribute to our upkeep. John seemed very introspective and I was rethinking my lone campaign and wondering if I had it in me to go back to that again. I wondered why anyone went back to that again and indeed why some never left it. Theodore had indicated that Cimnashote was such a person, but it was hard to imagine that he would not be turned off by it.

“He thinks it is all he knows how to do, Agidodah,” John broke into my thoughts.

“How can you know what I am thinking about?”

“You seemed troubled, so I listened to you.”

“How is it you know what Cimnashote thinks? You’ve never met him.”

“When Agilisi Ghigooie told me about him, I visited him in the dream world. He is very sad and lonely.”

“He was wandering around in your ‘dream world’?”

“No, but I went to see him while I was there so I could get to know him.”

“You can go and see perfect strangers and get to know them without them being aware?”

“Yes. He didn’t know I was there.”

“What was he doing?”

“He was sitting along a river near an Ordu fishing by himself and thinking about a lot of things.”

“I’m not sure you should tune in on people’s thoughts without their permission.”

“I’m sorry, Agidodah, I didn’t know it was wrong.”

“I’m not sure it’s wrong, I just don’t think you should. Ask your mother the next time you talk to her.”

“Well, Agidu’tsi Theodore was right, Cinnashote is coming to ask you to go on campaign with him.”

“I will have to disappoint him, then. I am staying with you until you have to join Ayun’ini. And then only if your mother still thinks you should.”

“You can go after I join Ayun’ini.”

“I’m not sure I ever want to go on campaign again.”

“Everyone says you are a great warrior, Agidodah.”

“All it takes to be a great warrior is a lot of luck and being too stupid or too stubborn or even too frightened to run away from danger.”

“I think there is more to it than that.”

We had some luck and I cleaned our catch and brought it back to Mahwissa. She was happy to have something different from deer meat for a change and set off to prepare it for our evening meal. Theodore emerged from his clinic and again suggested a sweat bath. I asked if he did it every day and he admitted he did, since he felt that it cleaned all the sickness off of him. I decided not to explore that concept. However, John had also joined us, and he commented,

“You are right Agidu’tsi, your cloud is full of dark things until you clean them off.”

“What color is it after I wash off the dark things?” he asked.

“It is a bright purple around your head, white on your chest and green around your arms,” John replied.

“Thank you, I hope those are good colors.”

“I only see such colors on good people, Agidu’tsi.”

“I hate to think what you would have seen around our cousins, George and George or Toragana for that matter.”

After we finished our sweat bath and washed off in the river, Theodore turned to John for “cloud inspection” and was assured that all the dark things were gone. Fortunately we discussed other matters at dinner. I felt we should stay a few days so I could catch and smoke enough fish to give them some variety for the winter and they were very grateful. I promised John we would visit Nanih Waiya next before going on to the Pelican Ordu for the winter. He was glad and wanted me to teach him how to fish so he could help. I agreed.

The next day I showed John the basics of fishing. He wondered if it was really a good thing to kill fish in order to eat. I explained that I had had a similar problem when I was a boy, but came to realize that we really didn’t have much choice. We needed the meat for food and eating carrion was not really safe, although there were tribes that would do that. I explained how we honored and thanked the fish spirit for helping us to survive by feeding us. He found my reasoning a bit lame and decided to consult the dream world for further enlightenment. I suppose I should have been insulted, but the truth was I could only hunt and fish because it was necessary not because I wanted to do so. After a while John returned from the dream world and told me that Carlotta had told him that killing and eating animals to survive was part of the balance of life and neither right nor wrong. He sighed heavily and tried to help me fish, but his heart wasn’t in it.

The next day I suggested he spend the day with Mahwissa instead of fishing with me. He felt torn about it since he thought he should be with me, but I explained that she was familiar with the dream world and could help him with it. He reluctantly agreed and I was free to fish without having to think about it. I got quite a good catch and had them smoking when Theodore finished for the day. John watched the fish while Theodore and I repaired to

the sweat lodge. He expressed surprise that John had not gone fishing with me. I explained his problem with fishing and he laughed heartily and told me I richly deserved the problem. Remembering how much trouble I had been to the family as a boy, I had to agree. I did, however, point out that I had probably done a good deal more hunting and fishing than he had over the years given his profession and the way people were always happy to feed him or pay him with food. He admitted that I was probably right about that.

“Cimnashote will arrive tomorrow evening,” he mentioned after we had both been silent a while.

“Should I ask how you know that?”

“The same way I knew you were coming, people tell me.”

“What is the point of this vast network of spies of yours if you’re not involved in some sort of conspiracy?”

“I just like to be informed.”

“But how do you motivate all these people to act as your spies?”

“They aren’t spies, they are just friends who are happy to pass on information they think might be of interest to me.”

“Is that really all there is to it?”

“I’m afraid so. Of course, I’m sure your suspicions are a lot more interesting than the facts.”

I gave up, as usual, but I was still not even slightly convinced. I presumed he was just protecting me from whatever he was up to on the side. We finished up and enjoyed some of the fish I had caught for dinner. I noticed John didn’t eat very much fish, but filled up on centli and beans. I let it pass. The next day passed much the same, although John brought me my midday meal while I was fishing and took back my catch to help Mahwissa start smoking it. As I returned at the end of the day with the afternoon’s catch, I saw a man, who looked about my age, lead his horses into Theodore’s coral, feed and water them, then turn and approach my smoking racks.

“Koga!” Cimnashote called out, “I see you are still the best fisherman in the family.”

“Cimnashote”—I barely recognized him—“is it really you?”

“When I heard my brothers were nearby at last, I had to visit you. This must be the wondrous John I have heard so much about and this must be my sister Mahwissa. An honor to meet you both.”

“You never met Mahwissa before?”

“No. The only time Theodore took her to Itsati, I was away. He was probably afraid she’d run off with me.”

That got a particularly good laugh from Mahwissa, but John was clearly puzzled by the comment. Soon Theodore joined us and all but Mahwissa went to the sweat lodge. We didn’t talk much in the lodge, but just enjoyed each other’s company. After our plunge in the river, we returned to the house and Cimnashote regaled us with the tales of his adventures over the years since last I had seen him when we were little more than boys.

It seems he left for campaign about a year after I left Itsati. He trained with the Panther Ordu, then was sent to the Green Mist. Like me, he first stopped in the capital of the Khanate. It was the new capital, Kaidubalikh, named after the first Khan of the Green Mist, not the founder of Khakhanate. It proved to be a very long trip by ship to the new city. At the time, the city was still under construction and not very impressive, but there was a nice bay and beautiful beaches. The local tribe was called Tamoyo. They had been conquered a few years before and had submitted to the new regime with enthusiasm. Apparently most of the tribes along the coast spoke a similar language but were always fighting among themselves since they practiced cannibalism and raided their neighbors for victims. Once we outlawed the practice, the young men became willing recruits in our wars of conquest.

Cimnashote took part in two five-year campaigns both inland and down the coast from the new capital. He saw most of his first campaign action inland against the Meritong, the Borum, the Mashacali and their allies, and finally elements of the Cayapo. He could only tell us that the Meritong were naked, heavily tattooed, and fought

bravely up to a point with long, ineffective bows. The Borum were naked except for a sheath with which they covered their manhood, wore large cylindrical wooden plugs in their ears and lower lips, painted their faces red and their bodies black for battle, and also fought bravely using a long bow. The Mashacali and their perhaps allies, the Patasho and Macuni, also were naked except for tying their foreskins with a vine and also wore thin sticks in their lower lip. They did not really resist, but readily joined us to fight the Borum. They used very long bows also. The Cayapo were naked except for the sheath like the Borum, but they also used a wide variety of labrets in their lower lip, wore sashes, cords, feathers, tassels, shells, armlets, and even small mats on their backs. They too used the red and black paint though more sparingly than the Borum. They also used very long bows as well as either round or flat clubs, lances, and occasionally stone axes. They were very brave, but very divided. He admitted that he really didn't pay much attention to them otherwise.

The second campaign was also at first inland against more of the Cayapo and then along the coast farther south against the Guayana. The latter were naked except for a cord belt to which some of them tied their manhood, and also used labrets, necklaces of seeds, animal teeth, bird bones and claws slung around their shoulders, feather head ornaments, and charcoal body paint in shapes of dots, lines, circles and bars. They fought with long bows, spears, and clubs and used traps and caltrops to cover their retreat. They were brave, but did not resist for long. They were not a well-organized people, but they did mount a fairly unified resistance for the better part of a year before capitulating. The Cayapo campaign seemed to be endless through worsening terrain. He understood that we were still fighting elements of them.

He left after the second campaign to wander around the Khakhanate for a few years, but in the end decided to return for another campaign. He had missed the fight against the Guarani, Minuan, and Charrua farther south along the coast, but had gotten in on the fight against the Genakin. They controlled a large grassland south of wide tidal river that was really more of a bay. The Genakin were like some of the tribes in the Blue Sky. They wore only a small skin apron and a fur robe. They used no adornments or paints. They fought with bows, spears, slings, and the stones attached by leather cords, like I had seen in the Khanate of the Clouds. They used the last weapon very effectively against our horses if we got near enough. They fought tenaciously until their war leader was killed; then they would withdraw and elect another before returning to the war. We nearly had to wipe them out before they surrendered. After that campaign, he returned home again about two years ago.

I brought him up to date on my activities since we last saw each other. He was particularly interested in my single campaign and felt I had fought much more interesting opponents in the Chimu and the Inka than he had. He also marveled that I had gone from arban to minghan commander in four years. I pointed out that I had only been an arban commander because I had seen through the rebel ruse in Anahuac and had only been further promoted because of the great attrition in the Maya tumen. He said that the Maya were legendary for their bravery and any of their officers who moved to the Green Mist were immediately promoted one level. He was embarrassed to admit that he had only reached the rank of jagun commander after fifteen years of campaign, but he had been promised a promotion if he returned.

“So”—he look resolutely at me—“when do we go on campaign together?”

“Why would you want to return to campaign? Are you not weary after fifteen years of fighting?”

“You forget that almost half of that time was spent in traveling and training. Besides, it's all I know how to do. I grow weary of wandering aimlessly around the Khakhanate bothering old friends.”

“Why not return to Itsati, find a good woman, and settle down to raise a family.”

“I found a good woman while I was on campaign. She died. I am not much inclined to look for another. Are you?”

“I doubt if I could find another Carlotta.”

“I doubt if I could find another Ghigao.”

“Ghigao? You found an Ani' Yun'-wiya woman of great rank on campaign?”

“Hardly. It is the name I gave her. I never knew her real name. She was a Tamoyo girl who I met shortly after I arrived in Kaidubalikh. We could barely communicate, but fell deeply in love. She loved the name Ghigao and desperately tried to learn my language. She came with me on campaign and was killed during my second campaign when the Guayana made a surprise attack on our camp while we were chasing down their decoy army. She died fighting, so I named her well.”

“I am so sorry. I didn’t know.”

“I am terrible at writing, so I never told the family. There was nothing to tell since she died and we had no children. But, I’m sure you understand why I cannot settle down in Itsati.”

“I will not mention it again. But I do think you should tell your family what happened. It would help them understand.”

“Not really. You and I are aberrations. When most people lose their spouse, they just remarry. My family would expect the same from me. I’m surprised they haven’t suggested it to you.”

“They met Carlotta and they saw and understood the depth of our attachment. They know it would be unthinkable.”

“They probably expect you to come around in another year or two.”

“Anyway, Theodore tells me that both Khanates are trying to conquer the jungle now, so it’s hardly worth returning to campaign.”

“How would you know that?” he asked Theodore.

“I have my sources,” he replied. “If you wait two more years, you can get into a real campaign in the Clouds against the Re Che.”

“The Re Che?”

Theodore then explained to him about the Re Che and he became intrigued, although he wondered if they would simply make peace with Henry and join the Khanate. Theodore was sure they would never join without a fight and was certain it would be a hard one. Cimmashote became excited about the prospect of a “good” fight and told me I had to come with him. I explained that I would stay with John until he no longer needed me. He asked how long that would be and I had to admit it could be as little as two years.

“Then it is settled. I will return here in two years and if all goes well, we will go on campaign together in the Clouds.”

I don’t know why, but I agreed, and we pledged to meet at Theodore’s house two years later. He left the next day traveling north. John and I went west to Nanih Waiya. We arrived in the afternoon of the third day. We stopped by the yam to leave the horses, then walked over to and climbed up the mound. On the top I made a little fire and threw some nawak’osis on it. The smoke made John cough so I moved him upwind. I told him to see what he would see while I contacted my spirit guide.

Suddenly I was transported to my special field and there was Carlotta and my spirit guide. To my surprise, John was beside me. Carlotta embraced us both; then we all sat down and talked a long time. She reassured me that it was best for John to join Ayun’ini in two years and it would be fine if I went back on campaign. She and my guide would watch over me so I would not be harmed. She knew I didn’t really want to go, but felt Cimmashote needed me and would likely not come back if I didn’t go with him, and I would lose a true friend as well as a brother. John also assured me that he would watch over me on campaign and not let any harm come to me. I told him that if Ayun’ini was instructing him, he should pay attention to that instruction and not worry about me. He told me he could do both. As we got up to “leave” the field dissolved into a brilliant white light and suddenly my father and grandfather appeared, both as young men, and they told me that they were proud of me and John and then they told me something else for my information only. Then everything faded and I found myself in the dark with John still in trance. I carried him down the hill and turned in for the night at the yam.

John's Trip, 110–1 K

(N. C. MS to SW LA to Sedona, AZ to SW LA, 1478–9)

The next morning John wanted to return to the hill again after breakfast. We did and he was soon lost in his dream world. I did not want to bother Carlotta or my spirit guide again so I just wandered around the top of the hill and kept an eye on John. Cuauhtzin sat on the ground next to John, keeping uncharacteristically quiet. Near midday I saw an old Pansfalaya working his way up the hill. When he reached me, we solemnly greeted each other, and he looked at John for a moment, then returned his steady gaze to me. It was amazing how old a Pansfalaya can get to be or at least look without becoming weak or feebleminded. His eyes were as clear and steady as those of a young warrior. I met his gaze. Finally he nodded approvingly and squatted down indicating I should do the same.

“It isn't easy being the father of such a child, is it?”

“It can be bewildering at times, but it is hardly a burden.”

“It would appear you are a worthy father then.”

“Thank you. Do you have any advice for me?”

“Simply that you not stand in his way. I had such a son, but I resisted it mightily and in the end drove him away.”

“I'm sorry.”

“No need for pity. I deserved to lose him. If I had let him go, I would never have lost him.”

“Did you also find him bewildering?”

“No, I understood completely. I was jealous. Why should my son have powers I could only dream about? Such was my stupidity. I should have been honored and privileged to know him let alone be his father.”

“Jealous? Then you were hampered by understanding. I just have no idea what he is talking about sometimes.”

“Well, I am a shaman, so I clearly understood. But what little abilities I have were only developed with great effort and sacrifice, he just had them, much like your boy.”

“But are they such good things to have? Such people are forever marked as different. They see too much and know too much. It seems to me to be a very difficult way of life.”

“Perhaps for a warrior. But for a shaman it is everything I could have wanted. I was so jealous of my boy that it consumed me. The village saw this and drove me out. I have been wandering the countryside a dismal failure ever since.”

“Why not return? If your son has reached his potential, he will surely forgive you and welcome you back.”

“I'm sure he has long ago forgiven me. But I have not forgiven myself and I'm not sure I ever can.”

“If the offended party has forgiven you, is it not arrogance to hold on to the guilt as if to say his forgiveness is not as important as your guilt?”

“You are wise beyond your years, especially for a warrior. What is more you are right, but my ‘arrogance’ is all I have left. It defines me. If I let it go, I will be an empty shell.”

“But if you empty yourself of it you will be open to be filled up again with something better, perhaps.”

“Like what?”

“My learned cousin said that God was love. Perhaps he could fill you with his love if you were open to it.”

“God is love? What does that mean?”

“He felt that God was a being of love; his only relation to us was that he loved us just as we were with no conditions.”

“You mean we could live lives either filled with evil or good and he wouldn’t care?”

“I don’t think he meant that. My understanding was that he loved us and constantly inclined us toward him with his love. The degree to which we were open to his love is the degree to which we became like him, beings of love.”

“And if we fail miserably?”

“We have to return and try again.”

“Reborn? As a child? I have heard of such a belief among the Pantch, but not the Mongols. Where did your cousin get such an idea?”

“Not from the Pantch, I’m sure. It is really not from the Mongols either. My people worship a God named Deus, rather than Tengri, but I think my cousin arrived at his beliefs through his own meditation.”

“Interesting. To our detriment, I’m afraid, we Pansfalaya do not give much thought to such philosophical concepts. My son, of course, was an exception, and he has led many others to follow his lead. But are you not really a Mongol, then?”

“The Mongols are not actually a tribe. They are a group culled from many tribes, mostly from the grasslands north of the Middle Kingdom of the Hanjen. They accept anyone into their fold, no matter what his origin or beliefs. So it was that my ancestors joined them long ago.”

“Who was this cousin of yours? Was he a great shaman?”

“No, actually it was Khan Henry of Anahuac.”

“The one who was rumored to have been killed by his own son?”

“Yes, that’s the one.”

“It would seem his beliefs have been put to the test. Still, I will meditate on your advice and your cousin’s thoughts.”

“And I will strongly consider your sage advice.”

He set a little fire and threw some nawak’osis on it and began a ritualized chant. I rose and withdrew a polite distance and sat down again looking out all around from my vantage point. The oaks and hickories had shed their leaves, but the occasional pine tree and the many shrubs kept the view mostly green in every direction. The sky was blue with only a few wispy clouds. The day was warm and pleasant with the most gentle of breezes wafting by occasionally. My thoughts began to drift and I was suddenly in the presence of my spirit guide. He gave me some advice and a lot of reassurance. When I came out of my reverie, it was midafternoon. I looked around and both John and the old shaman were still in other worlds. I stood up and stretched and walked around a bit to loosen up. When I returned to John, he opened his eyes and stood up.

“Thank you, Agidodah. I am ready to go on now.”

“Very well, we will start out in the morning.”

“Isn’t that Holahta?” He stopped in front of the old shaman.

“I don’t know. He didn’t tell me his name.”

“Do you know me, child?” the old man asked as he opened his eyes and studied John intently.

“Yes, I have seen you in the dream world. Tonhome wants you to come back home so he can care for you and you can meet your grandchildren.”

“He told you this?”

“Yes. I have learned much from him. You can also if you will only be open to it.”

“I will try, child. Thank you.”

We left the old shaman with tears streaming down his face and returned back down the hill to the yam. I did not want to ask about any of that exchange. The next morning after breakfast, we mounted up and turned toward the west. At the juncture with the north-south road, we came upon the old shaman, Holahta. He had been waiting for us, apparently, and when we drew near, I could see he wore a serene smile and seemed to be at peace.

“Thank you, both for all your help. I will now die a happy man.”

He then turned toward the south and walked on with a spring in his step that belied his age. Cuauhtzin muttered something in Otomi, but neither John nor I made any comment, we just rode on. We arrived at the Missi Sipi around midmorning on the sixth day. As we crossed the pontoon bridge, I told John how I had been arrested when I crossed the other way with Carlotta and Hiacoomes and eventually had been exiled. I told him about the exile and how wonderful it had been in the north. He wanted to see it sometime, but I explained that it would be too hard on Cuauhtzin. Eight days later we reached the Ishak River and early the next day found the Pelican Ordu.

As usual Mathilde and Little Carlotta warmly greeted us. Mathilde looked tired, but Little Carlotta was clearly a handful, so it was no wonder. While the children played together, Mathilde asked about Theodore and told me about her other children. Aju had married and moved to the Alligator Ordu. Paula’s husband had finally returned, but had been a little distant on his return, which had upset her quite a bit. Bedagi was still somewhere in the west. He wrote irregularly. Sarah’s husband had gone back on campaign, but she decided to stay with the Alligator Ordu since Aju and his wife were moving there. Once we were caught up on family, I went to headquarters to get my dispatches. There proved to be three of them—one from Watomika, one from Luis, and one from Nezahualpili.

Watomika’s letter, as usual, merely greeted me and presented Luis’ letter. Luis’ letter was in Euskera again, so I had to get my notes to translate it. I really needed to find a way to better keep up with that language. In his letter he explained that the legua was almost ten li, as he understood li. I wasn’t sure how accurate that was, but I presumed someone had marked off a li for him. He also mentioned that the year was 1478 in their calendar and wondered how we measured years. He added that years were calculated from the birth of Christo, the Son of God, from whom Christians take their name. I wasn’t at all sure what any of that meant at the time, but it sounded vaguely familiar. I remembered that there was something about God having a son and a holy spirit, but no one had ever explained that to me. Of course, I had never asked either.

As to what was going on in Europa, the war in Gaztela was still plodding along although it was looking more hopeless for the cause of Juana. Things were quiet elsewhere, except that the Suizos were now at war with Milano (Milan), another city-state in Italia, Venezia was still fighting a losing war with the Ottomans, and Poloinia and Hungaria were still fighting over Bohemia, although there was rumor that a settlement was near. Since there was no hurry to answer these two letters, I set them aside and turned to Nezahualpili’s letter.

I did some quick calculating and realized he was fourteen years old at that time. He began by telling me about the death of Toragana. It seems that, in imitation of a practice in the old land, a group of archers had been trained to fire arrows a certain distance in a certain direction according to a signal. While they were practicing their skill, Toragana happened to ride into the path of their arrows. Nezahualpili thought it was all rather odd, but admitted he would not miss Toragana and was very happy Theodore was now the regent. He was sorry that Theodore no longer had time to train him, but he had sent over his best man to take over that task. He added that John, the young Khan, was still fixated on the idea that I was to blame for his mother’s death and could not be disabused of that fixation. He then asked me if it was wrong to be unmoved at the death of Toragana and that of the infamous Chabi, for that matter. He finished up by telling me he would be going on campaign in two years and wondered if there was any way I could be induced to go along.

I answered his letter right away. I told him that it was not good to rejoice in another’s misfortune, no matter how richly deserved it was in our opinion, but at the same time we could not be expected to mourn over the loss of a seemingly evil person. In fact that would be hypocritical. It was best to remain indifferent to the fate of those who have done much damage, although we could certainly rejoice that no more such damage is being done. I also told him there was a good chance I would return to campaign in two years and would be honored to

serve with him, although we would have to rendezvous in the Khanate of the Clouds since I was still not welcome in Anahuac. I sent this letter out right away.

Later in the winter I answered the other two letters. I thanked Luis for his information and tried to explain the Hanjen calendar. I told him it was the 34th year of the 69th cycle, or the year ding-you in the Hanjen language. I explained that the count began the year the calendar was invented by the Emperor Huangdi. It consisted of sixty-year cycles divided into repeating twelve-year increments each named for animals. I added that the current year was that of the rooster. I also explained that it was a lunar calendar with each new moon being the first day of the month. Anticipating his questioning the accuracy of such a calendar I explained that as necessary an intercalary month was added to bring the lunar calendar into agreement with the solar calendar. I finished up by mentioning that there was some talk of switching formally to our unofficial calendar based on the founding of the Khanate or perhaps enumerating the years as years of the reign of the Khakhan. That would make it the year 110 K or the 21st year of the reign of Kujujuk. I expected that would thoroughly confuse him. Actually very few people used or even understood the Hanjen calendar, but it was nominally the official calendar. To most people it was the 21st year of the reign of Kujujuk. Under the circumstances that was less complicated. Additionally, to add to the confusion, most people considered the winter solstice to be the first day of the year, but the Hanjen calendar begins the year on the second new moon after the winter solstice. I found out later that the people of Europa begin the year about ten days after the winter solstice. I didn't have the heart to even attempt to explain to Luis the Nahuatl and Maya calendars still used by some in Anahuac.

My letter to Watomika was short with the usual banalities, although I did thank him again for his kind words about John when we visited him. I took these two letters to the commander's tent to be sent with the dispatch riders on their next trip. The commander's aide assured me they would be sent within a few days. I figured that would get them there long before Luis arrived.

The winter was uneventful. I did some hunting and fishing with Aspenquid. He looked a bit tired also. I wondered if he was well. It would not have been proper to ask about his health, so I asked about Mathilde. He admitted that he was worried about her. He thought that Little Carlotta was taking a lot out of her and would be relieved when it was time for her to stay with relatives in a couple of years. I suggested my taking the two children on camping trips during the winter as long as I had no pressing duties and he thanked me profusely for the offer. He seemed genuinely relieved. I was beginning to wonder and got off a letter to Theodore asking if he could make his way here for a visit and check them both out.

True to my word, I took the two children on camping trips whenever the weather was decent enough, and if it wasn't, we went on yam visiting trips. Little Carlotta was full of energy and into everything, but John helped me keep an eye on her. Still we did have a few trying times. I had to rescue her from a river, a few bramble bushes, several falls from her horse, and several encounters with animals including even a panther. It was easy to see why she was running her parents ragged. By the end of winter, both Aspenquid and Mathilde were looking a little better. I suspect I was not.

While I was on one of my trips, Theodore's son, John, had dropped by to visit and surreptitiously check out Aspenquid and Mathilde. He left them a note for me. It said that "the mission had been accomplished and everything was under control." I suppose that sort of vagueness was in case Mathilde read the note. Either that or he had been hanging around his father too long. I was sorry I missed him. I wondered what he was like. Mathilde assured me that he was very nice, much like his father only quieter.

When at last it was spring, I took John aside and asked him what he would like to do this last year we would be together. He surprised me by saying he wanted to visit the place that Ayun'ini had described the year before, where Sintana had come to teach him. I told him that it was very unlikely that either one of them was there now. He assured me that he knew that, but he wanted to see if the place was as magical as it appeared in the dream world. I agreed that we could try and find it.

So, a few weeks after the spring solstice, we set off a little north of west the exact reverse of our trip some two years before. It proved to be a beautiful time to travel this way. After about a week, we reached the prairie. During the next three weeks, the grasslands were blooming with tiny wildflowers, the air was alive with buzzing insects, the sky was clear and mostly mild. There would be storms, but they would not last long, which

was fortunate since there was almost no cover, especially during the last week. The prairie changed as we rode west. At first it was dominated by both the large and the small varieties of the grass that is bluish in the spring, then turns various shades of brown, red or green in the summer, along with the straight grass with the long bristles. Next the shorter bluish grass dominated, but there were occasional oaks and junipers dotting the prairie. Then the oaks and junipers gave way to the small, hard, thorny trees or bushes with light yellow, fragrant blossoms and the short gray-green grass with the little white flowers took over from the bluish grass. Then the trees gave way and a ribbonlike grass with a feathery head joined the gray-green grass. Next the gray-green grass gave way to the short wiry grass with the tiny spiky white flower clusters and the pungent bushes with the twisted yellow flowers. Finally the bushes gave out and the last two grasses dominated the rest of the way. Sprinkled sparingly among the dominant grasses we would see red, yellow, blue, and white wildflowers of varying shapes and sizes. We would also occasionally pass through a pine and juniper forest, but generally stuck to the grassland for the horses. We also noticed a huge herd of the plains oxen off to the north and came across a few hunting bands of Titskan Watitch and even a band of Chahiksichahiks along the way.

Even though it was spring throughout the trip, it proved rather cold once we were in the mountains. I was surprised how much that bothered me now. It was hard to believe I had spent six years in the far north. I supposed that I had become accustomed to the milder weather I had been enjoying these last few years “for Cuauhtzin’s sake.” Anyway we had run out of grassland and into another pine forest that had given way to a juniper and pine forest when we reached Ayun’ini’s special place. It was, indeed, much as he described it, although the nights were a little cold for Cuauhtzin and me. John was fascinated and insisted on wandering all over the place and pointing out all the sites that were significant to Ayun’ini. Needless to say, I really wasn’t interested, but did not want to dampen his enthusiasm.

It was nearly midsummer before I could persuade him to go visit the huge canyon of the Hopitu River the Immortal Juchi had explored a century before. We went northwest so we could catch a patch of grassland for most of the way and in about four days found ourselves at the rim. We had encountered a smaller canyon leading toward the main canyon early on the fourth day and followed its east rim the rest of the day finally reaching the great canyon at dusk.

The canyon had to be several li wide at this point. The next morning we followed the canyon upstream. It switched sharply south, west, and south again before turning generally east once more. We continued to travel along the rim for a few days stopping frequently to look. I told John that my brother Ignace had once insisted that there was a group of canyons in Anahuac a little northwest of Ralamari country that were deeper and longer but not as wide as this canyon. My brother Theodore had always insisted that this one was more impressive. One morning while eating breakfast we were looking over the rim to the river far below.

“I think the best view of the canyon would either be from the river or from the sky,” John said pensively.

“Well,” I ventured, “if one were riding down that river one would be too busy trying to avoid hitting rocks or foundering in the rough water to see much and one would have to be able to fly to see it from the air.”

“Usually that would be true,” he nodded. “But in the dream world one can float down the river without concern or fly over it without wings.”

“You have me at a disadvantage there, I’m afraid.”

“You’ve been to the dream world. Agidodah. You just didn’t realize it.”

“Do you mean when I visit my spirit guide and Carlotta?”

“Yes. Ask Agi’tsi-i to show you the next time you visit her.”

“She can take me flying over this canyon?”

“Yes. And anywhere else you want to go.”

“Have you done this?”

“Yes, many times.”

“You had already seen Ayun’ini’s place before we got there?”

“Yes. But I wanted to experience it in the body also. It is a very special place. Can’t you feel it?”

“Well, it is an attractive place, but I prefer Itsati or even Cuauhnhuac.”

“Cuauhnhuac is a beautiful place. I love the trees with the big red flowers on them.”

“You have visited there in the dream world?”

“Yes. Agi’tsi-i took me there. She said it was the magical place where I began my life.”

“You were conceived there, but you were born in Itsati.”

“I know, Agidodah. I like Itsati also. But you were born in Cuauhnhuac.”

“So I was. But we can’t go back there as long as our cousin means us harm.”

“One day I will visit there.”

I hoped he would. Meanwhile he convinced me to try contacting Carlotta so we could “fly” together. I leaned up against a large pine and drew my thoughts within. Soon I was in my field with my spirit guide and Carlotta. I asked them about John’s claim that we could fly over the canyon and they assured me we could. Next John appeared in our midst and took our hands. Suddenly the ground disappeared and we were above the canyon flying upstream very fast until the width of the canyon narrowed and the depth rose to more ordinary parameters. Then we descended to just above the water and followed it downstream twisting and turning with the river and stopping occasionally for a breathtaking view. Then we were back at our starting place again, but we continued downriver all the way to the southward bend in the land of the Tzinama-a where the canyon flattens. Then we rose up again and flew above the canyon all the way back to our starting point. Then Carlotta gave us each a kiss and we were back at the rim. I was flabbergasted by that experience and just looked in wonder at John who was smiling.

Around noon we started back to Ayun’ini’s valley once again following the grassland most of the way back. I could not understand what I had experienced back there so I decided to just enjoy the memory. When we regained the valley, John revisited a few “power places” and then was ready to return to the Pelican Ordu. It was late summer when we started back. Different wildflowers were blooming at this time of year and the short bluish grass had turned yellow and was now flowering. The tall bluish grass had turned its various colors, brown, gray, green, and red and was also flowering. It was hard to say if the prairie was more beautiful at this time of year or in the spring. We arrived back at the Pelican Ordu in early fall.

Once again I was distressed to see that both Mathilde and Aspenquid looked very wan. Once again I took over Little Carlotta. I tried to teach the children hunting, but it was no use. Carlotta would not keep still and John couldn’t bring himself to hurt the animals. Fishing was equally hopeless. John still didn’t like hurting fish and Carlotta had no patience for it at all. So we went camping again. They both seemed to like that well enough and Aspenquid assured me that was far more helpful than hunting and fishing for them. So we passed the winter again. I was truly grateful when Bedagi finally showed up in late fall and took over the children long enough for me to catch up on my dispatches. This time there were four. The extra one was from Theodore.

I opened his first. He told me to encourage Mathilde and Aspenquid to send Little Carlotta off to relatives in the spring. Perhaps I could see that she gets to where they want to send her. He went on to say that they both seemed to be in failing health and the little one was exacerbating the situation. I was puzzled since I had gotten the impression from his son’s message to me the year before that they were well. I wrote back that I would do as he suggested and asked if he had mentioned anything to Mathilde about her health.

Nezahualpili thanked me for my advice and said that he would be in the Khanate of the Clouds in the early fall of next year. He would be looking for me. I wrote back that I would get there as soon as I could around that time and was looking forward to serving with him.

Luis found my explanation of the Hanjen calendar bewildering and suggested that we should switch to his Christian calendar instead. He failed to give any compelling reason for such a move, however, other than

convenience for him. The news from Europa included the death of Juan II of Aragon and the crowning of his son, Ferdinando. It seemed that because Gaztela was larger and more powerful than Aragon, he was considered the joint ruler with Isabella of Gaztela and Aragon. The civil war was almost over with the pretender Juana's allies crushed. The Suizos had defeated Milano at Giornico and were finally at peace. Venezia had made peace with the Ottomans by acknowledging the latter's sovereignty over the lands they had conquered and ceding to them Scutari, whose garrison had held out against repeated attacks. He explained that Scutari was near the old Eastern Empire capital, Constantinople. The Ottomans had conquered the Eastern Empire in 1453 and had been slowly conquering their way into Europa ever since. Poloinia and Hungaria had settled their war over Bohemia in a treaty giving the crown of Bohemia to the son of the king of Poloinia and three provinces to Hungaria. Meanwhile, Mateo, the king of Hungaria was making raids on the Holy Roman Empire and had even besieged the emperor's capital. Word had also reached him that the king of Russia had conquered Novgorod, a related people west of them. He mentioned that this king claimed to be the successor of the Eastern Empire since he married the only niece of the last emperor. Taking out my copy of the map he had sent me, I was puzzled and asked him how the much smaller Hungaria, which had just finished a long struggle with another larger kingdom, could hard press an empire as large as the Holy Roman Empire. I also asked why the people of Europa didn't unite against the increasing threat posed by the Ottomans. These both seemed like reasonable questions to me. Finally I told him I would likely be going on campaign the following year so he should not be alarmed if he didn't hear from me. I would try to write even if I didn't get his letter.

I also told Watomika about going on campaign the following year, although I expected I would be able to get and answer next spring's letters before I left in the summer. I thanked him for all his kindness in passing on the letters and asked if there was anyone he wanted me to look up while I was in the Khanate of the Clouds. I sent off the letters before the winter solstice.

Not surprisingly, Bedagi had enough of the children after a few days and quickly renewed his travels. I returned to my charge. By the end of the winter I could see that Mathilde was only a little stronger so I spoke to her and Aspenquid about sending Little Carlotta off to relatives in the spring. I even offered to take her if it would be toward the east. They thought about it for a few days and finally agreed with me. Aspenquid wanted Carlotta to stay with his relatives and Mathilde agreed that would be best. He gave me detailed directions to his band's likely location and the name of his nephew, Wzokhilain, who had a daughter just about Carlotta's age, and whose wife was young and vigorous. It was a good plan, but I suspected Little Carlotta would not be happy about it. When it was time to go, I was shocked to find that she was all excited and couldn't wait to visit her cousin especially since John and I were taking her there. I had a feeling it would be a long trip.

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Pelican Ordu to Sabino to Tonggye 111 K

(SE LA to NE ME to Mobile, AL 1479)

Once I knew what my itinerary would be, I sent Watomika a note asking him to hold Luis' letter to me since I should be in Yangzi late in the spring or early in the summer. We waited until the spring solstice, and then set off to the northeast. I wanted to visit my meadow one more time, just in case I would not return from campaign. Little Carlotta was very excited about the trip and took quite a while to settle into the routine of a long trip. It was almost impossible to keep her on the trail. She was always wandering off after a "pretty flower," a "cute animal," a big rock, whatever. As a result we rarely reached a yam by nightfall and usually had to camp along the trail. She really preferred camping and I suspect most of the yam guests would also prefer that we camp. The few nights we did stay in yams she was constantly running all over poking her nose into everyone else's rooms and belongings. It was fortunate for her that children were so indulged by most of the people in the Khakhanate. I received more than a few disgusted looks, however, since her behavior was obviously my fault.

We finally reached my meadow about four weeks after starting out. The people who had settled there had several children and I was able to leave John, Little Carlotta, and Cuauhtzin with them for a little time so I could be alone in our special spot. I sat down on the ground and let the memories wash over me. Suddenly Carlotta was with me and we clung to each other not saying a word, just holding on. I don't know how long we remained like that, but finally we parted, and I thanked her for blessing my reverie. She assured me that she was

always that close to me. I then asked her if she was sure I should turn John over to Ayun'ini this summer. She said it was best for him. She also warned me that I would desperately miss him if I didn't keep myself very busy. I reminded her that I would be going on campaign. She assured me she remembered and that she would be watching over me so that no harm would come to me.

It was nearly dusk when I came back to myself. I went to the house and gathered up the children and Cuahtzin and we camped on my spot that night. My dreams were wonderful. The next morning we set out again, this time turning more to the east. We crossed the Missi Sipi well north of Murenbalikh a few days later. We passed through Hotcangara country and into Wazhazhe territory within a week. We stopped to visit our few relatives while we were there. This trip was taking a lot longer than I anticipated and it was late spring when we arrived at the Panther Ordu. It was then situated about fifty li north of Zheng He on the Leni lenape River.

I looked up some friends and got a better fix on where Aspenquid's village was from some of his fellow Alnanbai in the Ordu. His village was called Sabino and it was then near the mouth of the Alnanbai River. That was about ten days' ride to the northeast from the Ordu in normal circumstances. As it turned out, Little Carlotta had begun to weary of all the travel and we actually made it in eleven days. The village was small, perhaps a hundred or so people. They lived in the conical tents covered with bark instead of hides like in the west. They called them wigwams. The bark was sewn into mats and tied to the pole frame. The wigwams were clustered around an open space and there were cultivated fields on the periphery. Since they were near the coast, they gathered shellfish and fished more than hunted.

Finding Wzokhilain was no problem at all. He introduced us to his wife, Baeshkwae, an Anishinabe, and his daughter, Omeemee. The latter was exactly Little Carlotta's age and they hit it off immediately. I urged the couple to teach her their languages and insist that she write home at least once a season. They promised they would. Both of them were young and vigorous and I was sure they would be able to handle the girl, but I warned them about her anyway. They just laughed and said they welcomed such a child.

The next day, John and I started south along the coast to Yangzi. I was pleased to see that while Little Carlotta and Omeemee waved vigorously as we left; there were no tears and no running after us. I did notice how rough the coast was near the village and wondered if she would injure herself. So I mentally asked Carlotta to keep an eye on her namesake so no serious harm would come to her.

We arrived at Yangzi on the fifth day after leaving Sabino. I went straight to Watomika's residence. As usual I was ushered into the waiting room. This time a very pleasant young man came in to greet us and bring us to the governor. He introduced himself as Chicali from the town of Kasihta, one of the Southeastern Cities. I asked about his town and he said that it was flourishing although it was not yet a large as it had been before the plagues.

Watomika was delighted to see us and insisted we join him for midday meal. His new secretary, Chicali, also joined us. He wanted to know what I had been doing since he had last seen me and I told him about our travels about the Khakhanate. I asked how things were going in his province and he was quite pleased to report that all was well. There was still a little construction going on, but basically the town was built as were the port facilities and all was functioning smoothly. After our meal we withdrew to his office and he gave me Luis' letter. Then he asked what my plans were for John. I explained that he would be staying with and trained by Ayun'ini, a very mystical shaman.

"Do you wish to become a mystic?" he asked John.

"Oh, yes, sir." John brightened up.

"Well. We never know what our children will become. I know my father was aghast when I told him my intentions. Are you aghast, Crow?"

"No. I'm at peace with his wishes."

"Good. That's always best. Did I ever tell you what my son became?"

"No, I don't think you did."

“He is a mapmaker. He is responsible for mapping the southern end of the southern landmass. Imagine! A Leni lenape mapmaker.”

“Well, you already broke the mold.”

“True. Anyway, I’m very proud of him.”

“He must be very brave, many of the early mappers were killed.”

“He is closer to foolhardy, actually. So far, he has gotten away with it. Anyway, you may benefit from some of his handiwork while you are on campaign. I don’t think you will run into him, but if you do, give him my best.”

“I will. What is his name?”

“Sacook.”

He urged me to take a ship to Longjiang, instead of riding all the way to Itsati. I gave it some thought and realized that we could ride up the Powhatan River from Longjiang to find Ayun’ini, since John assured me he was still in that area. I also felt that John was old enough to travel by sea and it might be the only chance he ever got to do so. I thanked Watomika for his hospitality and his suggestion and he had Chicali take me down to the docks to find a ship heading for Longjiang. As it happened there were three ships that would be going there. One of them was leaving with the morning tide, so I chose that one. It was one of the fuchuan type ships.

We were welcomed aboard by the captain who explained that it was a training ship so the crewmen were still learning their jobs. I suppose I was supposed to think the journey would be rather rough, but it turned out to be very smooth. I found the crew very professional and very competent. It did take six days to get to Longjiang, but we ran into some contrary winds. This gave me enough time to read Luis’ letter in that difficult language of his.

Luis explained that the Holy Roman Empire I had asked about was not really an empire. He added that it was not holy or Roman either. It seemed that it was a very loose confederation of fully independent principalities that gave little more than a nod of deference to whichever of them was elected emperor. Most recently the emperors had all belonged to the Hapsburg dynasty of Austria, a principality in the southeastern corner of the empire. Therefore the “emperor” could only call on the resources of Austria to defend himself and as I could see from his map, Hungaria was bigger than Austria. Of course, Austria also had some other possessions, but the emperor only controlled a few of them, the rest belonged to minors under his protection. One of the minors, Ladislaus, was supposed to be king of Bohemia and Hungaria, but the local princes had deposed him in favor of the current rulers whose war against each other had recently been settled. In a further complication, the son of the emperor, Maximiliano, had married Maria, the daughter of the late Carlos Ausarti of Ardangori and was now its ruler. In that capacity he defeated an army from Frantzia, which had invaded his northern territory. This left me puzzled as to why Frantzia had been defeated by the smaller Ardangori, who had earlier been defeated by the even smaller Suizos. But I suspected better generalship. As to my question about the Ottoman Empire, Luis told me that while it was scandalous, the Christian kingdoms of Europa would rather fight each other than unite against the heathen Ottomans. Only when their own interests were threatened did they fight them. He didn’t know why this was so, but he suspected that each country was jealous of the other’s power and rather hoped the Ottomans would destroy their enemies and weaken themselves enough so that they could then defeat them.

Elsewhere in Europa, the war in Gaztela was over and the pretender, Juana, had been banished to a convent. He explained that a convent was a place where women lived together in a community and spent their lives in prayer, or at least were supposed to so spend their lives. He did not elaborate. He did say he expected Ferdinando and Isabella to move against the heathens in the southern part of the peninsula. He added that the new united kingdom was often referred to as Hispania now. He explained that Hispania had been the name of the entire peninsula when it was a part of the Roman Empire. Meanwhile the Ottomans had seized the Italian city of Otranto, near the southeastern tip of that peninsula. Also, the king of Russia had defeated an attempt by the Tatars to reassert their domination of his kingdom. Apparently, the Tatars were what was left of the old Khanate of Batu or Khanate of Qipchaq as it was referred to in the old Yuan days. It had lasted over two

hundred years, so far, but was obviously weakening. He finished his letter by wishing me well on campaign and he hoped to hear from me soon.

I wrote Luis a brief note thanking him for his answers to my questions and explaining roughly where I would be on campaign. I also asked if the Roman Empire he mentioned owning Hispania at one time was anything like the Holy Roman Empire, since I really didn't know much about the history of Europa. I also wrote Watomika a note thanking him again for his hospitality and promising to keep an eye out for his son. Finally, I wrote a letter to Mathilde and Aspenquid telling them about the safe delivery of Little Carlotta to Wzokhilain and Baeshkwae and how she had hit it off with their daughter. I told them how nice Sabino was and how happy their relatives were to have Little Carlotta with them. Finally, I lied about how good she had been on the trip. I also mentioned that she would be writing them at least once a season.

When we reached Longjiang, I counted thirty-two ships in the harbor and two in the docks undergoing repairs. The town had grown quite large and was full of green-uniformed sailors. I secured some horses and we rode east looking for Neconis' yam. We found it still standing, although the city had grown much closer to it than I recalled.

He was delighted to see me. I was shocked that he remembered me. I introduced him to John and he and his wife made a big fuss over him. They were even happy to see Cuauhtzin again. I thought he and his wife looked a little frail to be running a yam, but I also noticed they didn't have much business. There was only one other person, a Leni lenape merchant, besides us. Neconis insisted we all join him for dinner and regaled us with tales of all the activity in the harbor. The merchant then blathered endlessly about his travels. John and I said little, but encouraged the others to talk. Neconis told us that ships were going in and out of the harbor all the time. The navy was quite large now consisting of at least a hundred ships. All the ships were equipped with cannon. He was certain that one or two of the ships had been lost at sea. I was amazed that he got all this information, since he seemed rather isolated.

The merchant had been trading between the coast and the Missi Sipi River. He confided that the Ani Yun'-wiya were very shrewd traders as were the Taunika and the Tsoyaha. The Hotcangara were rather brash, however, much too quick to make a trade, and the Pansfalaya did not appreciate the value of their goods. He also mentioned that the Timacua were a stingy people and the Southeastern Cities were recovering nicely and starting to buy as were the Iyehyeh. The Great Sound Tribes and the local tribes were very hard to get to buy anything. That was a good deal more information than I needed and I suspected about as accurate as most generalizations tended to be. We turned in as soon as we could politely break away.

The next morning we rode southwest along the outskirts of the town toward the encampment south of it. I presented myself to the jagun commander, Daganawida, a Wendat. I asked after Hadebah and he told me he had gone on campaign. He added that he expected to also do so later this year. I mentioned I would as well. I gave him my letters to Luis, Watomika, and my sister, and he assured me they would be sent very soon. I thanked him and wished him well on campaign. He wished me the same.

As we left the encampment, I noticed that there was now a bridge over the north branch of the Chesapeake River. It was well south of the mouth where the port was but only a little south of the encampment. We crossed there and continued west. To my surprise all the larger rivers were now bridged along this road and the smaller ones were no problem to ford this time of year. There was even a bridge across the Powhatan River about a day's ride from Longjiang, but we stayed on the south bank. Some six days later we were climbing over the mountain passes near the source of the river. It was now that John directed me toward Ayun'ini. He first led south then west again, then a little south once more. Finally we arrived at a little encampment toward evening. Ayun'ini and Ekwani were standing by the fire waiting for us as we rode up.

"Welcome, welcome," they greeted us.

I was surprised to note that Ekwani was neither pregnant nor holding a child. I thought surely she would have married Ayun'ini, but, of course, I said nothing. After all, perhaps she could not have children. They both seemed very happy and familiar as though they were a couple, but I could hardly ask about such a thing.

Anyway, they had ready a strange stew, which while oddly tasty, did not seem to have any meat or fish in it. After dinner we chatted a bit about what we had done since last we met.

It seemed they had stayed in this relatively uninhabited area and “learned from each other.” John waxed eloquently about his visit to Ayun’ini’s special place in the west, and all of its power places. Ayun’ini seemed to listen indulgently, but did not appear to be particularly interested in his old haunt. He was more concerned with what John had learned in the dream world over the past years. They soon lost me during that conversation, but he was apparently pleased with John’s progress. Before turning in, John and Egwani again did their “song” of the dream world. It was so beautiful it almost brought me to tears. I can’t really explain that either. Although I am quite familiar with the songs and chants of the Ani’ Yun’-wiya and to some extent those of the various Nahuatl-speaking people of Anahuac, I have never heard such hauntingly beautiful music. I slept well that night and did not remember any dreams the next morning.

After breakfast I asked Ayun’ini what he planned to do the next few years. He told me that he rarely planned; he just went as his guides suggested. I asked what they had suggested for the next few years. He replied that they only suggested a change or a movement when it was warranted.

“So, you will remain here until it is ‘suggested’ that you move?”

“It has already been suggested that we move. Apparently an assassin has followed you. It seems this is not the first time either, is it?”

“No. Where is the miscreant?”

“Do you mean to harm him?”

“I was thinking of sending him to meet his ancestors and explain his behavior to them.”

“There is no need for that. You may safely go your way today. I can deal with the poor misguided soul.”

“You can’t expect me to wander blithely on my way while someone is threatening my son.”

“Of course.” He sighed. “Very well. Go about a li to the north and you will find him. You will also see why you need not worry about your son’s safety while he is with me.”

“I will be back shortly.”

I mounted up and rode north the short distance. There in a small clearing I came upon a man curled up against a tree, quivering in terror. His weapons were lying uselessly about him and he seemed to be looking at something in front of him. He did not appear to be aware of me at all. I asked him what was bothering him, but he didn’t hear me. I didn’t recognize him, but from his appearance and dress, I could see that he was from Anahuac. I tried speaking to him in Nahuatl, but he did not acknowledge me at all. I returned to Ayun’ini’s camp.

“You found him?” he asked.

“Yes. What is wrong with him?”

“He thinks a huge bear has cornered him and is eyeing him hungrily.”

“How long will he remain like that?”

“Until it is too dark to travel this evening. I suspect by morning he will return whence he came. If he continues on his mission, he will again find the bear.”

“Can’t he tell it isn’t real since it isn’t attacking him?”

“He is paralyzed by his fear. Did you not notice that he neither saw nor heard you?”

“Yes, I even spoke to him in Nahuatl and he did not respond.”

“His mind is completely given over to terror. Did you not see such behavior when you were in battle?”

“You mean when the enemy throws down their arms and run blindly from the field?”

“Yes.”

“I have seen that, but I can’t say that I ever experienced it. I was always too busy to think to be afraid.”

“I see. Well, my weapons would probably not work on you. But I think you will find most men are like him rather than like you.”

“Really?”

“Yes. Put another way he is simply more self-aware than you are.”

“What do you mean?”

“He is more sensitive to his own danger than to that of others around him. Even men who seem to be brave in battle are so because they fear being disgraced more than they fear death.”

“You seem rather cynical about warriors.”

“Many of them have told me this. Believe me you are the exception.”

“I went through several battles with the Maya Ordu, and even though they were virtually wiped out, they never faltered or showed any fear. They only balked at killing the enemy from afar in safety rather than closing with them at their peril.”

“The Maya are a warrior people. From childhood they are taught it is better to die than to flee. Their disgrace would taint all their family and even their village. I assure you, you are the exception.”

“Somehow I’m not sure you mean that as a compliment.”

“Well, consider, how brave is it to face death when you don’t fear it?”

“I’ve never thought of myself as being particularly brave.”

“You are wrong. You are actually very brave—but not because you do not flee from battle. You are brave because you are willing to accept what you don’t understand out of love for one you cannot see or feel except in the dream world.”

“You think loving another is courageous?”

“It is like being surrounded by an army with no weapons at hand.”

“It was nothing like that. It was the most wonderful thing in my life. I never felt so alive and happy. I go back to that time in my mind whenever I can. I have no regrets at all.”

“Perhaps you are far more advanced spiritually than you think.”

“I can’t say that I’ve given it any thought.”

“But you have lived it.”

After that strange conversation, I took John aside and asked him once again if he was certain he wanted to stay with Ayun’ini. He assured me that he did. I then told him to learn what he needed to learn and if anything should happen, his uncle Theodore would always be nearby to help him, just as he always seemed to appear when I needed help. He smiled and said he knew about Theodore—Mahwissa had already explained it to him. I wondered about that, but I told him to keep in touch with me in my dreams and know that I would return for him when I got back from campaign. I urged him to take good care of Cuauhtzin and reminded him of his needs. We hugged each other tightly; then I mounted my horse, urged Ayun’ini and Egwani to keep John safe for me, and I rode off to the southwest. As I rode away, Cuauhtzin sent me off with an ear-ringing shriek, but remained firmly attached to John’s shoulder.

I had decided to visit Theodore once more before setting sail for the Khanate of the Clouds. There was no hurry, so I eschewed the roads and trails and just wandered through the mountains. I would occasionally come upon an Ani’ Yun’-wiya village or town, but I would bypass it avoiding contact with anybody. For some reason, I very much wanted to be alone. Carlotta was right about my missing John—I missed him more than I thought possible. I also very much missed Cuauhtzin, and again found myself reaching absently up to my shoulder to give him a scratch and finding only air.

Because of the Ani' Yun'-wiya custom of burning the underbrush on the mountains in the spring and fall, the passage was quite easy and game was plentiful. I did not hunt, however, although I did stop to fish once. It took just about three weeks to reach Theodore's town. I arrived near dusk, just in time to join him in the sweat lodge. He did not intrude on my thoughts, but we quietly sweated together, then washed off in the river. Once we had dried off, we walked back toward his house.

"So, the boy is with the mystic now?"

"Yes."

"And the bird also?"

"Yes. He has transferred his allegiance to John, I think."

"You still intend to go on campaign?"

"Yes."

"Cimnashote is waiting for you in Tonggye."

"I'll join him soon."

"I'm glad you came here first."

"I just wanted to make sure you transferred your surveillance from me to John."

"Of course. Interesting what the mystic did to that assassin, eh?"

"You know about that?"

"Yes. The poor wretch ran wildly for several days toward the north, then the east, and almost drowned himself when he fell into a river. He ended up in the Snake Ordu where he has volunteered to go on campaign in the Green Mist, I understand."

"How could you possibly know all that already?"

"I have my sources."

"Never mind. Do I need to fish for you before I go."

"No. We always have more food than we can possibly eat. Just relax for a few days. Do nothing."

"Very well."

The next day I rose late to find Theodore already at his clinic. I went for a long walk along the river. It was a warm day, insects were buzzing around, and the air was damp and heavy, smelling of rain. The sky was overcast, but it did not look as though rain was imminent. I meandered back to the house arriving a little after midday just as the wind picked up. The clouds began to darken and flashes of lightning were visible in the south. Mahwissa offered me a light meal as I entered the house. I sat and ate it quietly looking out at the rain for a while, and then I decided to ask her something.

"When I said good-bye to John, I told him that Theodore would look after him the way he had always looked after me. Then he said you had already explained it to him. What did he mean by that?"

"Did you really think Theodore had a network of spies watching out for you all these years?"

"Of course."

"Oh." She shook her head. "I didn't know you believed that."

"How else would he always seem to know what was going on in my life?"

"Well, he does have a network of friends who do keep him informed about things, but as the years have gone by he has increasingly made use of another source of information."

"What other source might that be?"

“Me.”

“You?”

“Yes. I look for you in the dream world every evening and tell him if you’re in any danger. He didn’t rely on me at first, but as his sources continuously confirmed what I told him, he slowly came to trust me more and more. Now he trusts me completely.”

“So, you also wander about freely in the dream world the way John does?”

“I’m not sure it’s freely. I only go where I have reason to go. Otherwise it would not be right.”

“Did you have this ability from the time you were a child, the way he does, or did you have to develop it?”

“I gradually became aware of the ability when I was a child, but I was kept too busy to spend much time there. As I grew older I began to understand the possibilities and the advantages of it. It was especially useful when Theodore was away. I could satisfy myself that he was safe.”

“Did you find it distracting from the real world?”

“As everything else in life, one needs to have balance. But it, too, is part of the real world. You should know that. After all, you have also been there.”

“So John has told me. But it doesn’t seem real to me.”

“Yet you go there for advice and guidance for your life in the ‘real’ world. How do you reconcile that?”

“I see your point. I suppose I just worry that John will miss life by spending too much time in the dream world.”

“Actually, the opposite is true. He is learning to integrate the two worlds so that he can live in both simultaneously.”

“That is possible?”

“Yes. It is difficult, but possible.”

“Do you think he will succeed?”

“Yes. I do.”

“And this mystic, Ayun’ini, can teach him that skill?”

“He has mastered it; he should be able to teach it.”

“He seems like an odd sort. I thought he and Egwani would already have a child by now, but I’m not sure that is their relationship.”

“And you wouldn’t dream of asking them?”

“Of course not. It isn’t proper.”

“But you are hinting that I might know?”

“You are right.” I blanched. “Never mind, it isn’t any of my business.”

“Indeed.”

I walked out since the rain had stopped and breathed in the fresh smells of the newly dampened soil. I had decided to trust that John was safe and pry no more into the matter. Sometimes one had to know when to let go of something. I found myself sighing heavily and decided to get the sweat lodge ready and spend a little extra time in there myself. As it turned out, Theodore must have run out of patients early for he soon joined me. We enjoyed the heat in silence again, not speaking until after we had dried off from our plunge in the river.

“I suppose I might as well go join Cimmashote tomorrow.”

“The troop ship will be leaving in ten days. You can reach Tonggye in about six, but perhaps it would be best if you went so you can keep him out of trouble before you go.”

“Is he acting up?”

“No, but he is rather morose. People can do strange things in that frame of mind.”

“He is still mourning his lost love. I can understand that.”

“Your love was at least as strong, but you do not mope about.”

“But Carlotta is with me all the time.”

“And his love is with him. He just doesn’t realize it. Perhaps you can help him find her again.”

“I’ll try.”

The next morning I mounted up after a good breakfast, bade Theodore and Mahwissa farewell, and headed south to Tonggye. It did indeed take over six days to reach there. It was still morning on the seventh day when I arrived. The town was much larger than I remembered it. There was a new suspension bridge across the river and a full complement of wet and dry docks. There were many ships in the port, mostly merchant ships, but there were three of the huge ships and quite a few of the fuchuan type also. The town was surrounded with troop encampments and the streets were filled with warriors and sailors milling around making purchases, getting in fights, trading things, showing off their skills, and the like. I had to wonder how I would ever find Cimmashote in this mob.

I needn’t have worried. I was barely checked into an inn when he presented himself at my door. He had seen me ride across the bridge and had been trying to catch up with me for a while. He had been camping alone on the far side of the river in a spot where he could fish and still keep an eye on the bridge. I urged him to join me—and he agreed. I asked about our ship. He said that one of the fuchuan type ships would be going to the Khanate of the Clouds with the handful of volunteers for that campaign. All the rest were leaving for the Green Mist. He confirmed that our ship would leave in three days.

We spent the days wandering around the town and its outskirts oblivious of all the activity around us talking about our loves. I urged him to ask his spirit guide to bring his wife to him as mine had brought mine to me. He finally agreed to try, and we found a rare quiet spot for him, and I made sure he was not disturbed. When he was finished, he confirmed that he had been successful and seemed to be more at peace although still a little wistful. I could understand that well enough.

At dawn on the third day, we were rowed out to our boat and climbed aboard. At high tide we moved out of the harbor under half sail and turned south toward the mouth of the bay and into the sea. It was the last time I saw the mainland of the Blue Sky.

47

Tonggye to Tamalameque 111 K

(Mobile AL to NC Colombia, 1479)

The first leg of the trip, to Xaymaca, was uneventful. There were perhaps a hundred passengers aboard. About a dozen were merchants, the rest warriors. Most of the latter were grizzled veterans looking for a change of scenery. I supposed Cimmashote would have to be placed in that category. A handful was fresh-faced boys off to their first campaign, but for whatever reason wanting to serve in the Clouds instead of the Mist. From the look of them I could see that most of the veterans were from the northeast, Mingue, with a few from the northeast bands. The rest were from the southeast, Pansfalaya, Timacua, Chikasha, Tsoyaha, and Taunika. There was one Dinne. The youngsters were all from the northwest, Siksika, Nomo, Ka-i-gwu, Nimipu, Salst, Numakiki and even a Kusa. There were no relatives of mine among them, but we chatted amiably during the trip. Everyone treated me with more deference than I felt was warranted.

We pulled into the same port on the northwestern coast of the island that I had visited on the way to my first campaign. There were, of course, many more ships in the port and only one was one of the old Koryo merchant ships that dominated back then. The others were all fuchuan ships like ours. We were told to stay on the ship unless we had business on the island. Only a few merchants debarked. I noticed that the town was still rather

small and there was no pier or docks of any kind. All loading and unloading had to be done from small boats. A handful of passengers joined us. Most were merchants but there were a few warriors and one odd-looking individual. The warriors were all from Anahuac and immediately knew who I was and made a big fuss over me. The odd-looking fellow was also from Anahuac, but wandered apart and made every effort to be inconspicuous. I had to assume my dear cousin had sent another hapless assassin after me. He was so obvious, however, that I began to have some doubts, and began looking at the others more critically. There were six warriors from Anahuac. Two were Maya on their first campaign. They knew me by reputation among the Maya, where I am revered. The others were all veterans, one was a Totonaca, one a Huasteca, one an Otomi, and one was from Texcalla. I was sure the Maya were genuine. Of the others it was too easy to suspect the Texcalla, but I had to anyway. The Huasteca was unlikely as was the Otomi. The Totonaca was the most suspicious. Of course, the Totonaca were always hard to figure out since they seemed to have very shifting loyalties. Still I couldn't be sure.

We set sail with tide that evening, and I was no closer to figuring out who was the likely assassin. I decided not to say anything to Cimmashote since his newly won serenity had been so long in coming. Instead I made a point of chatting with the new arrivals about their homes and some of their fellow tribesmen I knew. I was hoping to draw out a fraud among them. It didn't work; all seemed to be what they said they were. I wondered if one of them had been subverted by promises of reward and began to probe for ambition among them. This was inconclusive although Cimmashote finally took me aside and asked what I was up to. I told him I was just trying to get a feel for what was going on in Anahuac, but he gave me a rather suspicious look, and went off muttering something under his breath.

At evening meal I continued my scrutiny of the new arrivals, this time focusing on the one who had remained apart and the merchants. I couldn't be sure, but I thought the odd one was from Chalco. Once I heard him speak, I was sure of it. I went over to him, much to his consternation, and asked how things were in Chalco. He stammered that he didn't know since he was from Cholula. I assured him that his speech gave him away, he was from Chalco, and while he may have passed through Cholula, he certainly hadn't spent enough time there to adopt their accent. He looked at me with alarm, then turned aside, and beckoned me to follow him. Once we were a little apart, I kept a close look on his hands to see if he would draw a weapon, but he dropped his voice to a barely audible whisper.

"Yes, I am from Chalco. I am fleeing the wrath of your cousin, the Khan. I had heard that you are also no friend of his, so perhaps you won't betray me?"

"No, I won't betray you. Of course, you seem quite good at betraying yourself. How did you ever get this far?"

"I dressed like the warriors and joined them. No one ever stops warriors on their way to campaign."

"I see. What did you do to incur the little wretch's wrath?"

"I am an artist. I painted a picture of his mother. He took exception to it when it was presented to him and ordered me executed. Fortunately, a friend of mine at the palace got word to me in time and I escaped."

"What was wrong with your picture?"

"I don't know. I didn't know what she looked like, but my father had seen her and described her to me. He assured me the likeness was perfect when I was finished, but apparently the Khan did not agree."

"He was about six years old when he last saw her. She was, I suppose, an attractive woman, but her vile spirit seeped through the veneer of her looks making her rather evil looking, I would say."

"My father thought she looked more like a tart."

"Yes, she could look like that also. You painted her looking like a tart?"

"I didn't think so. I tried to soften her looks enough to limit that look to no more than a hint. My father called the portrait flattering."

"Well, the boy has a very fictional view of his mother, which only he could adequately portray if he had any such talent. Was his wrath confined to you or did he also go after your family?"

“There is only my father and he left on a journey before I sent the portrait to the Khan.”

“Good. If you can get word to him, tell him not to return, but to settle elsewhere and perhaps change his name.”

“I never thought he would go after my father.”

“He’s tried to kill my son as well as me, so why not your father?”

“He is so young to be so evil.”

“I guess you didn’t know his parents, did you?”

“Only by reputation. I see your point.”

“Anyway, I suspect one of those who got aboard with you is another of the brat’s assassins. It would probably be best if you stayed near me until I deal with him. Once we get to the Khanate of the Clouds, however, it would be better if you go your way and give no one on shore the least impression that you know me.”

“I will do what you say. Do you really think one of them is an assassin? They seemed like fine warriors to me.”

“It could be one of the merchants. I will now turn my attention to them. Do you know anything about them?”

“They didn’t come here with us, and they didn’t stay in the same inn where we were. I don’t know anything about them, I’m afraid.”

“No matter. I’ll look them over.”

While the artist, whose name turned out to be Citlalatonac, made friends with the bemused Cinnashote, I made the rounds of the merchants. Two were from Chalca and knew my sister Sarah and her husband. They had heard that they had died and mentioned seeing my nephew, Chipilotl, who apparently was traveling around the east coast Anahuac and into the Blue Sky. Another of the merchants was from Alcolhua. He explained that he had retired after several campaigns in the Clouds and now traded the fabled quetzalitzli stones from the Muisca at great profit. Two more of the merchants were from Tlatelolco. They dealt in feathers mostly and proudly displayed some of their wares. Three of the merchants were from Coatzacoalcos and dealt in chocolatl, cuauhmecaezotl, and oli. They showed me a kind of chili they had found on Xaymaca. They assured me it was much hotter than anything I had ever had in Anahuac. I popped one of the fresh ones in my mouth and found they were right, but it had the most wonderful flavor. I bought a bag of the ones that had been dried.

As usual it had taken a while to talk to each merchant and it was too late to talk to the other seven. Just looking at them, and watching them blather to each other certainly gave the impression that they were what they appeared to be. But I would have to wait until morning and hope they didn’t make their move that night. Nothing happened that night.

The next morning I started working my way through the rest of the merchants. One was an old Purepecha who had known my old friend, Yquingare of Tuxpan. He had traveled with him before he settled down there. He reminisced about him rather than bragged about his merchandise. That was different, but he was too old to be an assassin. The next one was from Cholula. He was determined to sell me something since he had seen me buy the chilies the night before, so after extensive haggling I bought a nice dagger from him. It seemed that Cholula had become something of a center for metal workers in the last several years. I had no idea why. The next two merchants were Putun Maya who lived in Tuxla, the port in the Khanate of the Clouds from which I had departed after my first campaign. I did not mention Theodore’s friend Juchi. They were on their way home with a large shipment of chocolatl beans. I bought a bag from them. The next one was from Cuauhnahuac. He was very cordial and we reminisced about my birthplace. He claimed to be a feather merchant, but said he was going to the Clouds to buy rather than sell. He became my prime suspect since the most valuable feathers were in the eastern Maya lands not the Khanate of the Clouds. I expressed my surprise at his seeming waste of time, but he assured me that there was a large parrot in the jungles southeast of Cuzco that had incredible blue feathers. The last two merchants claimed to be Tya Nuu. One of them did have a Tya Nuu accent but the other sounded and looked like a Ben Zah. I was immediately suspicious of them also. After all, the Tya Nuu and Ben Zah were long enemies and the former had been almost wiped out during the conquest. The latter had profited greatly from being the people of the wives of my uncles, George and Theodore, and were generally resented in

Anahuac. On the other hand, the Ben Zah was clearly a real merchant and showed me the silk he had for sale at too high a price. The Tya Nuu seemed rather taciturn and did not show me anything or even talk much. It was clear that one of these last three was not what he pretended to be. I wasn't sure, however, which one it was.

I kept an eye and ear on them for the rest of the day, but by evening I still could not be certain, although I was leaning toward the man from Cuauhnhuac, since I had never heard of a large completely blue parrot. Toward midafternoon I moved away from everyone and stood at the rail on the port side of the ship looking out at the water. The sun was shining and light sparkled off the water drawing my attention. My eyes shifted out of focus and rising off the water was the image of Carlotta. She came toward me above the surface of the water. When she was within an arm's length of me, she opened her hands and showed me the image of a huge parrot with azure blue feathers and a very large beak.

"It is the Tya Nuu." Her voice sounded in my head. "The Ben Zah was forced to take him along. He is not at fault. Try not to kill either man."

I could not understand the desire on her part and on Ayun'ini's part earlier and on Wodziwob's part even earlier, to spare these assassins. As far as I was concerned, the world was a better place without them. Still, I gave it some thought and came up with a plan. There was a trapdoor out of which the refuse from the ship was thrown. It was just large enough for a man to fit through it and it was not readily visible unless one was right in front of it. I secured a plank of wood and some rope and placed them near the door. That evening after dinner I got up as if to relieve myself and noticed with satisfaction that the Tya Nuu got up and followed me. I quickly turned a corner and dropped down out of sight behind some water barrels. He came on, just visible in the moonlight. I could see him looking for me. Finally he crouched down just in front of where I was hiding to wait for me. I waited a short while to make sure no one else was coming, then brought down the handle of my sword on his head, knocking him unconscious. I then tied him loosely to the plank, gagged him and lowered him out of the trapdoor into the sea. I then blithely returned to the others and sat down as if nothing had happened. I did notice that the Ben Zah was looking after me for a while and then got up to retrace my steps. When he returned, he sat down and said nothing.

I suppose, to be fair, I really didn't give the wretch much of a chance. Still, he did, technically, have a possibility of survival. We were only a day or so from Xaymaca, and he should have been able to free himself, and with the plank he might have been able to float back to the island. After all, that was the best I could do. Oddly enough, no one said anything about the missing man. The Ben Zah did keep looking at me nervously and made a point never to be out of the company of others. I felt sorry for him, but not enough to reassure him that I bore him no ill will. To be honest, I did bear him some ill will, but felt constrained to suppress it.

The rest of the trip was pleasant and I spent most of it talking to Cimmashote, although we did chat occasionally with the others. In about five days we reached the port of Yumabalikh. This port had been much improved over the years. It was much larger than before and had piers but no shipbuilding facilities. The ship pulled up to a pier and we were able to disembark on a gangplank. An official from the Khanate was on the pier to greet us and welcome us to our service. He recognized me immediately and asked me if I remembered the way to Tamalameque. I assured him I did and he led us to a large house where we were given a good meal; then he led us to a coral just south of town where we were assigned horses. We mounted up and I led the small force south along the Yuma River toward the capital.

As before, the road began on the western bank, then crossed over to the eastern bank over a suspension bridge. The road was even better than I remembered it. It seemed to be paved with dressed stone. I thought that was rather ill advised for the horses, but it served the foot and cart traffic quite well. The yams along the way were quite large and pleasant and the food excellent. As before, we reached the capital in six days. There was a guard post at the entrance to the capital and I presented myself there and asked where we should go. He gave me directions to the barracks in the city where we were to spend the night.

The barracks proved to be on the southern outskirts of the city and the city had grown so large it took quite a while to get there. I noticed we had been directed away from the Khan's palace (which was on the main road) onto a road that ran in a large semicircle through the eastern part of the city. We reached the barracks at dusk and were welcomed and fed and given a place to sleep. The commander of the barracks welcomed me

effusively and told me that my veterans and me would not have to train, but the youngsters would. Tumen would be forming at the old training camp in a few days and we should go on there to get our assignments.

The next day we left after breakfast. The camp had, of course, been moved. It was a few hours' ride from the barracks. We arrived late in the morning and were waved through the gate. The camp was huge. There must have been fifty thousand men encamped there. We rode up the central road to what looked like a huge parade ground. On the far side of it was the headquarters. I dismounted in front of it and walked toward the entrance. Seeing my rank sash, I was saluted and waved through the door. Inside were some staff officers who all rose and saluted me. I asked to see the commander and one of them entered a room off to the side, then returned to usher me through that door. Inside was none other than Sikopitai, who had been with me on the boat that had brought me here the first time and had trained with me.

"You have aged well, Sikopitai," I greeted him.

"Not as well as you," he replied.

"How long have you been commander here?"

"Two years. It is a kind of honorable retirement."

"Do you model yourself after the memorable Cuauhpopoca?"

"No." He laughed heartily. "There was only one of him. I am hard on the new recruits, but it's for their own good."

"True. That was the best training I ever had."

"As a returning minghan commander, you will likely be given a tumen to command, you know."

"It isn't necessary. I'll take what is available."

"Well, of course, it isn't up to me. The Khan's illustrious brother is in charge of the campaign, but he is already in Cuzco. The Khan's son, Theodore is slated to lead the five tumen at hand south to join the campaign. The tumen commanders are up to him."

"Of course."

"He is your cousin, isn't he?"

"Yes. Is Nezahualpili here yet?"

"He arrived a while ago and has been training with the other new men. He is still with his unit. He is a fine boy and a good warrior. Is he a friend of yours?"

"Yes, very much so. What shall I do with the men who came with me?"

"Give their names and ranks to the staff, then take them to the barracks behind this building. It is for unassigned officers. Do you have any nonveterans?"

"Yes, a few."

"I'll have one of the staff lead them to the training tumen. You can stay with me if you wish."

"I'd like that. Do you mind if my brother stays also?"

"Theodore is here?"

"No, it is my Ani' Yun'-wiya brother, Cimmashote."

"Oh. Of course, he is welcome."

Sikopitai went out the door and detailed one of his staff to follow me. I went back out and directed the veterans to the barracks and told the new men to follow the staff officer to their new assignment. I beckoned Cimmashote to join me. Sikopitai showed us to a room on the second floor next to his quarters and we stowed our gear, then walked out to look around. I got directions to Nezahualpili's unit from one of Sikopitai's staff. He was at the

southern end of the camp. We wandered over there. Hot as it was, there was a bustle of activity with units riding, marching, and training in full battle gear all around us. We were both frequently saluted as we walked along. Nezahualpili's unit looked lean, strong, and confident. They had obviously been trained very well. I found him watching a training exercise with a keen eye. He wore the sash of a jagun commander. I was surprised his rank had not given him a tumen. I also noticed his unit consisted exclusively of Maya. I waited until he dismissed the jagun.

"Nezahualpili, you have grown."

"Cacalot! I'd know you anywhere. Welcome, welcome. It is so good to see you again at last."

"And good to see you again. This is my brother, Cinnashote."

"It is an honor to meet you, sir."

"How is it you are only a jagun commander?"

"I insisted on beginning training with no rank. My commanders insist I earned the two promotions, but I wonder."

"You looked every bit the commander a moment ago."

"Thank you. Praise from you is an honor indeed."

"How is it that you are with the Maya tumen?"

"I insisted on it."

"Why?"

"Because you will be given command of it."

"How do you know that?"

"When I arrived a few weeks ago, I mentioned to Khan Henry that you would be coming and he said that was perfect since a new Maya tumen would be trained and you'd be the ideal commander for it."

"Does he know you are a part of it?"

"Yes. I told him I would only serve under your command."

"If I command the Maya tumen, I will not lead them to slaughter in the long-standing tradition. I will see to it that they are given as much chance of survival as any other tumen."

"I know. I told him you would and he accepted that."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"Interesting. How are you getting along with the men?"

"Very well. They are excellent warriors and I'm very proud of them."

"We are staying with the camp commander until we are assigned. If you are right, I'll be back in a few days. I'll leave you now to see to your troops."

"Yes, sir."

As we strolled back to headquarters, Cinnashote asked how old Nezahualpili was and was shocked to hear he was only fifteen. He had thought he was much older. Sikopitai joined us for dinner and we caught up on what we had been doing all these years. It seemed he had returned shortly after I did and wandered around for a while. Then he had gone back on campaign, but in the Green Mist for five years. He returned home again and married a girl from his village. After a few years, however, he felt compelled to go back on campaign again, this time returning to the Clouds. He had been here ever since. His wife had joined him five years earlier, but left last year because she couldn't stand the weather here. He was sure he would go on home to stay next year.

The next day Khan Henry's son Theodore came into camp. The five tumen he would be taking south were mounted and rode past him in review. I rode over to the reviewing area with Sikopitai and remained a little behind and off to the side of Theodore where I could look him over. He was a young man of sixteen and rather looked it. He was short and slim, almost slight. He had fine features and a medium complexion. I understood his mother was a Ben Zah, like his great-grandmother had been. He tried to put on a good front, but I could see he was terrified and completely unsure of himself. It was obvious his father was testing him with this relatively easy task of leading us south. I was surprised that he had come alone, with no advisors or entourage. He was able to sit up straight in the saddle and look stern as the warriors passed.

When they had been dismissed, he turned to Sikopitai and rode apart with him for a short distance away from the rest of us. Then after they conferred a short time, he rode with him to headquarters. The rest of us followed at a polite distance. Once there they dismounted and went inside. We also dismounted and waited in front of the building. After a short time, four of the others were called into the building, and they emerged a little while later with the black sash of tumen commanders. Then Sikopitai motioned me to enter. He led me to his office. When I entered the room, Theodore rose to his feet to greet me. Sikopitai left us alone.

"I understand that you are my cousin." He smiled nervously.

"Yes. Your great-grandfather and namesake was my uncle."

"Amazing. One would expect you to be ancient. He died long before I was born. It is odd we haven't met until now, although I just met my other cousin, Khan John, last year. He is a strange boy and seems to very much want you dead."

"Yes, I know. His choice of assassins leaves much to be desired."

"Apparently word of his attempts on your life have reached the Khakhan. He has sent word to him and to my father advising us that you hold a gerege from him. Do you still have it?"

"Yes, of course." I pulled it out and presented it to him. "Does the Khakhan finally want it back?"

"No. He very much wants you to hold it until you die. Do you know what that means?"

"That it would be very unwise for my dear cousin to have me killed?"

"Oh, that's only part of it. Even if you are killed in action, the commander of the Ordu will be duty bound to avenge you. If an assassin kills you, he would face a horrible death and whoever sent him would face the same even if he holds the rank of Khan, and happens to be the grandson of the Khakhan. It would seem the Khakhan holds you in great esteem."

"Well, I have been of some service to him on occasion. I have always found him to be a fair man who holds the interests of the Khakhanate above all others including his own."

"I hope that can be said about me someday."

"It is always hard to tell which path we'll take when we are young."

"In any case, my father says that you are to lead the Maya tumen. Do you accept the charge?"

"I will, as long as they are not to be lead to the slaughter as has been the long-standing tradition."

"We stopped doing that a few years ago. They are brave warriors. It was stupid to waste them like that."

"And unnecessary. They are inclined to take risks as it is."

"I would be honored, as would my father, if you would take command of the Maya tumen," he formally said, handing me the black sash.

"I will do so." I took the sash and replaced my green one with it.

"Thank you. I wonder if I could ask you a personal favor?"

"What is it?"

“Would you mind if your tumen led the way on the march? I would very much appreciate your advice along the way.”

“They would be honored. I will be glad to help you, but it has been some time since I have marched this path, I am sure there are more experienced men around.”

“Perhaps there are. But they are not my cousins. I feel that if I make a fool of myself, you will not make it generally known. Am I correct to think that?”

“You are very young, Theodore. It is your right to make mistakes. Of course, it is also your duty to learn from them. I will be glad to help you. I don’t think you will have much trouble. In a few days, you will be into the routine and will need no help. After all it is only a march—a very long march to be sure—but still, only a march. Will you be in charge of the campaign at the end of our march?”

“I might be. That is in the hands of my uncle, Ignace. My father said it was unlikely he would stir himself to lead the campaign unless he is ordered to do so. He was thinking about doing just that when I spoke to him last night.”

“If you are to lead the campaign, I will make sure you lead it well. You can count on me. If your uncle leads the campaign, I won’t be able to help you.”

“I understand. Perhaps we can discuss tactics and what you have learned over the years along the way.”

“By all means. You should also encourage the other tumen commanders to discuss their experiences. You can learn much from them if they are honest.”

“How can you tell if they are honest?”

“Notice the reaction of the others. If they are rolling their eyes, clearing their throats excessively, or just appear very uncomfortable, then the speaker is making it up. If they nod, smile, laugh, or shrug comfortably, you are hearing the truth.”

“I see. Thank you, cousin. We are to leave the day after tomorrow. That gives you a whole day to get to know your commanders and fill in any vacancies among your officers. You have full discretion in all promotions, although it is customary to raise the rank of all returning veterans wherever possible.”

“Of course. I will go to them now and I will see you on the march.”

“Please join me for supper tomorrow night.”

“I will be honored.”

I left the room, nodded to Sikopitai and his staff and went out the door. I gathered up Cinnashote and we went over to the Maya tumen. The men were milling around, tending the horses, and getting out of their formal uniforms. When they saw me approach wearing the black sash, an undercurrent of murmuring went through them quickly replaced with a very flattering, spontaneous cheering, and an inappropriate beating of swords against shields. I waved them quiet, hopefully before the whole camp noticed the salute reserved only for Khans had been given to a mere tumen commander. I called them together and in their own language thanked them for their confidence in me and promised to lead them with the respect they deserved, as the bravest warriors in the Ordu to the glory they would surely earn. That set off another loud cheer, but fortunately no more shield beating. I then dismissed them and called for the minghan and jagun commanders to confer with me.

There were only nine minghan commanders since one had been elevated to tumen command, but I had a full complement of one hundred jagun commanders. I told them it would be my policy to promote from the ranks, so the jagun commanders of the minghan that was missing its commander, would elect one of their number to take the position. Once I got to know them better, I would have to approve any future promotions. The ten jagun commanders got together, selected a commander, and presented him to me. I then dismissed the jagun commanders and met with the minghan commanders. I told them when we would commence our march south and that we would be first in line for the whole march. They puffed out a bit when I told them that. I then introduced Cinnashote to them, explained his background and relation to me, and told them that he would be

my one and only staff member, with the rank of minghan commander. Should any of them need to be replaced temporarily, he would do so. I then asked them all to join me for evening meal and dismissed them.

Once they were gone, Cinnashote asked me what the likelihood was that he would take over one of the minghans. I assured him it was quite high, there would be quite a few incapacitations along the way, and some of those were likely to be minghan commanders. Meanwhile, I would just as soon he stayed with me so he would be familiar with tumen command in case he had to replace me. He said he couldn't imagine my ever becoming incapacitated. As we walked over to the command tent, it began to sink in that I was actually in command of a whole tumen. I never would have thought I would be.

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Tamalameque to Limari River 112 K

(NC Colombia to N Chile, 1480)

That evening I got to know my minghan commanders over dinner. They were all Maya who had risen through the ranks. Two of them, Ah Uk and Na Chi, had been warriors in the tumen with me so long ago. From the prefix names I could tell that the former had never married. They told me that as far as they knew there were only two others of the hundred survivors of that debacle still alive besides us. They were safely retired back home. The other commanders were Na Te, Na Mo', Na Ha Witz, Na Sak Tun, Na Ich' Ak, Ah K'uy Nik, Na Tok', and Na Kin Balam. Two of them sounded like they might be names of the old chieftain families, but it would have been rude to ask. I explained to them that I had been assured they would no longer be sent to the slaughter, but would fight like any other tumen with an eye toward maximum survival while inflicting maximum casualties on the enemy. They confirmed that it had been so during the last campaign and they were relieved to hear that it would remain so. I told them to feel free to bring any potential or actual problems to my attention and be assured that I wanted to hear from them. They were very pleased and assured me that the tumen would be ready and in place by dawn on the day of the march.

I spent the next day looking over the men's exercises. I was relieved to notice that the Maya were much better with the bow than I remembered them being in my earlier tumen. As usual they excelled with the sword and were quite good with the spear. The officers seemed to all be quite capable. I exchanged a few words with Nezahualpili while looking over his jagun. He had done a fine job with them. That evening I went to headquarters to dine with Theodore and the other tumen commanders.

The other commanders were an impressive group of veterans. Two were from the Blue Sky and two were from Anahuac. The former were Cheokas, a Hainai, and Sose, a Mingue of the tribe called Kaniengehaga. The latter were Miquiztli, a Matlatzinca, and Chachapa from Huexotzinco. All had served for four or five campaigns and had come up through the ranks. I had the least experience of all of them and yet they treated me as at least an equal. They were very impressed that I had risen so far in only one campaign. Theodore gave us the order of march and told us that for the sake of simplicity we would stick with the order for the entire march to Cuzco. Although it was the custom to vary the order of march daily, it was also a nuisance requiring a lot of time wasted sorting out tumen each morning. I think we were all relieved.

The next morning my tumen were up before dawn and lined up and ready when the sun came up. Theodore assumed his position in front of my tumen and gave the signal to start. It was early winter when we started and the weather was still quite mild in the Yuma Valley. As the days wore on, we began to ascend into the mountains and the nights, at least, were cooler and a little drier. Once we reached the high mountain valleys, it was considerably cooler. Of course at some point along the way, we went from what was winter in the north to what was summer in the south. I should also mention how improved the road was. It had been widened considerably and all rivers and streams along the way were crossed with stone bridges. It took us about eighty-five days to reach Cuzco.

Along the way I got to know my cousin Theodore quite well. He was woefully inexperienced and utterly unsure of himself, but he was bright and very willing to learn. He learned much on the march. By the time we reached Cuzco, he was very relaxed in command and had an air of quiet competence. Of course, I hated to think what would happen if he had to lead us in battle. Along the way I also found time to teach Cinnashote a smattering

of Maya so he could follow along on our tumen meetings. He was no linguist, in fact his Mongol was still heavily accented, but he enjoyed learning Maya and felt it was a “good” language. He felt that it was impossible to speak Nahuatl without getting your tongue-tied. Also, as I had expected, one of the minghan commanders, Na Tok’, died suddenly along the march and Cinnashote led his minghan for a few days until we could stop long enough to pick a successor from among his jagun commanders. This proved to be Na Itzam Bak, another one with the name of a chieftain.

I also learned along the way that Theodore and I had something in common. He also had a parrot. His was one of the smaller green ones that are common around Tamalameque. He had given it the unwieldy name of Q’omer-inti-tuso’h, the Quechua words for “green sun dancer.” But he told me that if I saw her feathers in sunlight I would see that they were like a shimmering green liquid. It would make your eyes go out of focus so you could no longer see the individual feathers. He said the feathers were many different shades of green on the upper surface. On the underside they were deep blue, black, red, and blue green. He assured me that they were very hard to see in the jungle. We had a good time exchanging bird stories. He insisted that Q’omer could sing beautifully and played tirelessly. I could never accuse Cuauhtzin of either. I hesitate to even think of that voice of his raised in song and he has always been much too dignified to play.

As we neared Cuzco, we passed Sacsahuaman, the old fortress that had once protected the city. Theodore asked me about that battle and I promised to bring him out to the ruin once we were camped and tell him all about the battle. It wouldn’t be hard; it was all too fresh in my memory still. As we neared the city, which I noticed had spread out quite a bit to the east and southwest since my previous visit, we were met by sentries who diverted us around the city to a huge encampment to the south. There must have been ten tumen encamped on either side of the road in a huge tent city that rivaled Cuzco in size. We were directed to set up our camp at the southern end of the camp.

Once we got our camp under way, Theodore felt that he should call on his uncle, but he wanted me to come along. I suggested that we first determine who was commander of the encampment and pay our respects to him. He agreed. I rode over to the nearest of the tumen and found their commander who in turn directed me to the commander of the encampment, Buzun, a Mongol name! I gathered up Theodore and we rode to Buzun’s tent. We were ushered in to meet him at once. He was older than me and his hair was gray and his face wrinkled, but he greeted us with a warm smile. He wore the white Ordu commander sash, but otherwise was unadorned. He looked like he might actually have some Mongol in him, but not much. He looked more like the tribes around Tamalameque, medium height and slender, but muscular. He was very pleased that we had presented ourselves to him first and pressed us to take midday meal with him.

He told us that the plan was to start the march south in five days. The tumen would leave a day apart and reform in the lands, which had once belonged to the Kakan people just north of the Re Che. We would march through the mountain valleys, then cross over to the western slopes of the mountains skirting the desert along the coast, and arrive at the staging area near the coast south of the desert. The march would take each tumen about sixty days, so we should all be in position before the end of winter. The tumen would move out starting from the farthest north so we would be the last to leave the area. When he finished briefing us, he wanted to take us to meet Ignace and we agreed. As we rode through the camp, I asked him if Ignace would be going on the campaign. He said that he doubted it, but he really didn’t know. All he knew for certain was that he was responsible for getting all fifteen tumen to the staging area.

We rode through the streets of Cuzco toward the palace. The city was very clean and a bevy of activity. The market, in an open space southeast of the city called Rimac Pampa, was huge, although still not as large as that in Tlatelolco, but very close to as large as the market in Tamalameque. The locals were as expressionless as ever but they seemed to be pleased—at least as close to being pleased as they could be. We finally reached the palace, built on the site of the palace of Pachacutec, the last Inka, on the north side of the Haucaypata, the huge ceremonial plaza open to the southwest. The palace had the massive stone walls and high thatched roof favored by the Inka. We were ushered inside, but then made to wait in a pleasant open space within the palace compound. There was a pond in the middle and plants and flowers were everywhere. We were even served refreshments while we waited.

Around dusk we were ushered into the main building and into an audience chamber. There was an ornate chair upon a dais but no chair or bench for anyone else to sit. We stood for a while; then a curtain parted behind the chair and Ignace lurched in leaning warily on a thick staff, and dropped heavily into the lone chair. He was about seven years older than me, but he looked much older. His overall look could only be described as dissipated. He was rather overweight, but it didn't look like normal fat deposition; it was all in his belly. His complexion wasn't just sallow; it was dark yellow. His eyes were droopy and unfocused, with dark rings around them. He barely had enough energy to sit, let alone hold an audience. In a barely audible whisper he bid us all welcome and wished us much success on the campaign. He then banged the staff twice on the floor and three young men came through the curtain and gingerly guided him to his feet and dragged him back through the curtain.

We all three stood in silence for a while uncertain of what to do next. Then the curtain parted again and a lovely young lady of marriageable age came out and bowing to us led us into a room on the right of the audience chamber. She introduced herself as Paula, the daughter of Ignace, and sat us down at a small table for evening meal. She remained with us chatting amiably and eating almost nothing. She seemed to be very poised and confident giving me the distinct impression that she was in control of things in the palace, but I couldn't help but notice that she never really made eye contact with us. She made no mention of her father's condition and none of us felt it polite to bring it up. But what was really puzzling was that she didn't seem to know or acknowledge her cousin. It was not at all surprising that she didn't know me, but Theodore was her first cousin. Even stranger, he did not make any attempt to refer to their kinship. I had to assume there was some trouble between them, but neither seemed hostile only detached.

After dinner, Paula led us out to the courtyard again, and wishing us well on our campaign, left us. I was about to say something when a guard came up and led us again to the door where our horses were waiting for us along with another guard carrying a torch to lead us back to camp. We rode back in silence to Buzun's camp. Once there we dismissed the guard with the torch and entered Buzun's tent. He showed us to some chairs and served us a little strong drink.

"Well"—he shook his head—"I strongly suspect that Ignace will not be joining us on campaign. In fact, it looks like he will be joining his ancestors instead."

"He does look terrible," Theodore agreed. "What's wrong with him?"

"I don't know," Buzun shrugged. "I haven't seen him in a long time. He looks much worse now than he did then."

"So," I asked, "will you be leading the campaign, Buzun?"

"I doubt it. I suspect Khan Henry will appoint you, young Theodore."

"Oh, no." He seemed genuinely uncomfortable. "Everyone else has much more experience than I do. He couldn't entrust such a task to me. He wouldn't."

"Why don't you think you will be asked to command?" I pressed Buzun.

"I am not related to the Khan in any way. Important campaigns are always led by relatives of the Khan."

"But you will take part in the campaign?"

"Oh, of course. I wouldn't miss it."

We chatted a bit more on less important subjects, then excused ourselves after inviting Buzun to join us for an evening meal before he left for the south. He promised to do so. We mounted up and headed back to our encampment. The light from the campfires made it easy to find our way. When we reached Theodore's tent, he asked me to join him for a little while. I followed him in.

"Do you think it's really possible that my father would put me in charge of this campaign?"

"Yes, very possible. But don't concern yourself. You'll have good advisors to guide you. Buzun seems quite competent. Besides, your father had the smothering guidance of the execrable Dehahuit."

“I suppose you remember him from your first campaign. Father hated him so much.”

“I’m not surprised. He treated your father with ill-disguised contempt. Of course, he treated everyone else the same way.”

“You will help me also?”

“If you need me, I’ll be near. But tell me something, do you and your cousin, Paula, not know each other?”

“I haven’t seen her since I was a baby. Uncle Ignace moved his family to Cuzco after he was put in command here, and I have always lived in Tamalameque. If she hadn’t introduced herself, I wouldn’t have known who she was. I’m sure she didn’t know who I was.”

“Why didn’t you make yourself known to her?”

“She has enough on her mind. Did you see the brave way she kept chattering about nothing so we couldn’t ask about her father? I am impressed by her. I hope she marries well.”

The next day we spent settling into the camp routine and making sure everything was as it should be. The following day I took Theodore and Cinnashote to Sacsahuaman and showed and told them all about the battle. They were amazed at the fortress and wondered how they ever got the huge stones in place. Cinnashote asked the sort of questions that showed he understood what battle was all about. Theodore asked the questions of a child. I answered both as best I could. I was developing a fondness for Theodore and could see that he had much to learn. I tried to explain the strategy of the battle and use it as a teaching experience, posing various problems and asking him what he would do. He had no idea what to do. With Cinnashote’s help we followed through the possible scenarios and helped him see the larger picture. Slowly it began to dawn on him what we were talking about. We left in the afternoon.

The next morning we left early to visit the market. We were buying some fresh produce to augment our usual fare when we were surprised to see Paula, Ignace’s daughter, followed by an entourage of servants, buying things just like we were. I told Cinnashote who she was and we watched her in action for a while. It was interesting. She bargained like a merchant and picked through the goods like an expert. Except for all the servants carrying her purchases one would never know she had any particular rank. Her dress was silk, but just raw silk and unadorned and she wore a woolen shawl of the type common in the mountains with the hole for the head in the middle, leaving the arms free. She suddenly noticed us and stopped, looking for once, nonplused.

“Lady Paula,” I said. “It is good to see you again. This is my brother, Cinnashote.”

“Lady Paula,” he bowed slightly.

“Oh, sirs,” she said with a very becoming flush in her cheeks as she finally made eye contact with me. “It is good to see you again and to meet you Cinnashote. I must say you and your brother look nothing alike. In fact, your brother looks like...Are you related to me, sir?”

“Yes. Your great-grandfather was my uncle. My name is Karl. This is your cousin, Theodore.”

“Oh!” Her flush deepened considerably. “I had no idea. I should have recognized you the other day. I am so sorry. Father never mentioned that you’d be coming. You must stay at the palace.”

“No, Paula,” Theodore said. “I must stay with my men. Don’t feel badly, I didn’t recognize you either until you identified yourself. You have your hands full taking care of Uncle Ignace. Don’t worry about us. We’ll be going on campaign soon anyway.”

“Please. You must come back to the palace for a day before you go. I won’t forgive myself if I can’t receive my cousins properly.”

“If you wish. Send us word and we’ll be there.”

“Oh, thank you. I’ll prepare a proper banquet.”

“That won’t be necessary.”

“But I want you to taste all the local delicacies.”

“As you wish.”

“Thank you. I’ll send word soon.”

“Poor thing,” Theodore said after she had gone. “She was so upset about not recognizing me. Perhaps you shouldn’t have told her who I was even if she did finally realize you had to be a relative.”

“She’s probably still trying to figure out who Cimmashote is,” I laughed.

“You should stop calling me your brother,” Cimmashote chimed in. “It is very confusing to people outside of Itsati.”

“You have always been my brother and you always will be.”

“Yes, of course, but the poor girl looked so perplexed. When she invites you to your banquet, I’ll stay in camp and you can explain to her what our relation actually is.”

“Let’s see, you are the son of my father’s first wife’s nephew. That makes us—not really related. You are my half brothers’ and sisters’ cousin and my father is your granduncle, but we are not related.”

“We are cousins, you fool.”

“What are you two talking about?” Theodore interjected. “Some tribes consider cousins brothers. I’m sure you are as related to me as Karl is, and when she invites us, you will come also.”

“If you insist.”

“I do.”

With that exchange we took our purchases and left the market, returning to camp. I was rather surprised that Theodore had so accepted Cimmashote as a relative. I think he was the first member of his family to actually be something like his great-grandfather. I know my father had thought highly of Uncle Theodore or he would never have named my brother after him. We got our summons to the palace four days later. Paula asked us to come in the morning. This proved to be rather difficult because the tumen had already started moving south and we had to ride around the camp to stay out of their way. We arrived in the middle of the morning. Paula was at the door to the palace mounted on her horse, waiting for us. She greeted us all warmly and led us on a tour around the city.

She took us first to the north just below Sacsahuaman to show us the storehouses that had been built by the Inka and were still in use by her father. Next we went to the eastern edge of the city where the Inka’s favorite flower was cultivated. It was a medium-sized pink flower with many small thin petals radiating out from the center. It was still cultivated since Ignace also liked it. To the south of the flower district there was the area where the Inka had kept lions, or pumas as they were called locally, as tame pets. It was now a residential area with many new houses. South of this area were two more residential areas and then the market. Crossing the Tullumayo River over a stone bridge we reached the Pumapchupan or Puma’s tail part of the city. According to legend the city had the rough form of a puma with Sacsahuaman in the north as its head and this narrow area where the two rivers join as its tail.

It this area was the Temple of the Sun, or Inti Cancha in Quechua. It had been left as it was after Henry had removed all the gold when the city was conquered. It had four small shrines in pairs, on opposite sides of a court. A larger temple was on the court and opened on to three sides of it. There were niches in the walls of the shrines, which had once contained cult objects, or the mummified remains of past Inkas. Apparently there had once been many objects of gold and silver and even plates of gold and silver covered the walls. Paula said that she had been told that there had been a gold band set into the masonry on the temple like a cornice. Also there had been gold thread woven into designs on the thatch roof of the temple. Although not used, the temple was kept clean and the thatch roof replaced as necessary by the locals. Near the temple was the Inti Pampa where, Paula said, there had been a golden garden with golden clods of soil, golden centli cobs with silver stems and leaves and even golden llamas. There was also an enclosure for sacrificial animals. She mentioned that there

had been an even more elaborate gold and silver garden in the palace but that had been looted by the auxiliaries before any of our people got a chance to see it. She had been told there were representations of many different animals in their appropriate settings all in gold and silver.

Across the Huatanay River from the Pumapchupan was what had been a town called Cayaucachi, but it had now been absorbed by the city. North of that, the area was heavily cultivated all the way to the hills. We recrossed the Huatanay River into the large Huacaypata plaza in front of the Palace. We dismounted and entered the palace. Paula led us to the courtyard garden and we had midday meal there. During the meal she and Theodore exchanged descriptions of their childhoods and tried to see if they had any acquaintances in common. They didn't. Cinnashote and I listened to all this quietly.

After midday meal, Paula showed us around the palace. Toward the entrance on the right was a map room with a large map of the southern landmass. I was the only one interested in it so we couldn't linger there. To the left of the entrance was a modest library. It had a few copies of the books I had seen in Tlatelolco, but most of the books were written in Quechua and apparently contained the local lore compiled by educated survivors who had learned the Uighur script and had tried to bend it around their language. I didn't know enough of the language to read them. Again I was once more the only one interested in that room, so we couldn't linger there either.

To the left of the central courtyard was a sort of treasure room where Ignace had on display gifts he had been given. These were mostly elaborate textiles of wool and cotton, complicated ceramics and gold, silver and copper ornaments. I suspected that he should have sent these on to his brother, but it was none of my business. Paula was very taken by the textiles and ceramics and went into great detail why they were special. It is possible that Cinnashote was less interested in this than I was, but I doubt it. Unfortunately, Theodore was fascinated and encouraged her to elaborate painfully. Finally it grew dark and we were ushered into the dining area for dinner. It proved to be as she promised a banquet of all the local delicacies. She graciously explained them all, probably giving us more information that we needed unless we planned to prepare them ourselves—a very unlikely prospect.

When we finally escaped it was quite late. Paula had offered to have a torch-bearing guard go with us, but there was a full moon and it really wasn't necessary. All the way back to camp, Theodore kept waxing eloquently about our host. It was too dark to see, but Cinnashote and I were exchanging long-suffering glances. When we dropped Theodore off at his tent, he wanted to prattle on, but we pointed out that it was late and we needed to see to the troops early the next morning. We really didn't, we just wanted to get away. When we regained our tent, Cinnashote muttered that I should remind Theodore that Paula is his cousin and that if we were invited back he would volunteer to lead an expedition into the jungle. I assured him I would do everything in my power to prevent another such day. Actually if they had left me alone in the map room or the library, I would have had a wonderful time.

The next evening Buzun came over for evening meal. He would be leaving the next morning and wanted to make certain we were aware of the march route. He brought a rough map with him, which made sense to me at least, if not Theodore. I later had copies of it made for the other tumen commanders who had come with us and went over it with them to make sure they understood it. I was not familiar with the area of the march so I asked Buzun about it. He explained that the terrain would be the rough puna type much of the way. The road led southeast to the great lake called Titicaca in the lands of the Aymara. It followed the western shore of the lake for a while before turning south and continuing in that direction the rest of the way. The road would eventually lead to a pass out of the mountains and run east and above the large coastal desert of the Atacames people. He did warn us that the land was harsh and recommended that we give the men the coca leaves to chew until they descended from the high plain around the lake.

During the seven days before our five tumen started leaving, Theodore managed to visit his cousin three times. Cinnashote and I insisted that we had pressing camp business to attend. Finally it was time for us to start. I had decided it was best if my tumen went first of our group, but suggested that the others follow at half-day intervals. I realized that Buzun's plan was to keep us from ravaging the land as we marched, but I didn't like the idea of being a full day's march away from reinforcements. The other tumen commanders liked my plan also.

Theodore reluctantly came with me forfeiting another evening visiting Paula. I decided not to say anything about her since I was sure he would have his hands and mind full of other things soon enough.

Early on the ninth day of our march, we caught sight of Lake Titicaca. It was not as large as the lakes in the Anishinabe area of the Khakhanate, but still it was quite large and it remained in sight for four days of our march. It was rather a strange sight. The deep blue lake surrounded by the brownish rolling hills of puna surrounded by the high snow-covered mountains. Buzun had been right about the coca leaves; without them it was hard to breathe at this altitude. Just riding along the slightly hilly puna felt like climbing a tall mountain. I was glad I wasn't in on the conquest of this area—it must have been exhausting. As I recall, there had been some resistance among the local tribes.

Some four days later we crossed over a pass to the western side of the mountain range and gained the road that skirted the coastal desert by hugging the slopes of the mountains. We could see the sea in the distance most of the time, but the road did wind in order to avoid the often deep gulches made by the intermittent streams, which were generally dry. After what seemed like an endless march, we arrived at a guard post on the road. The guards directed us to turn off the mountain road and proceed down toward the coast to the staging area on the north bank of the Limari River. It took us two days to reach the camp. Buzun had spread the men out along the river in camps of three tumen each about half a day's ride apart. We were assigned to the easternmost edge of the line causing us to march back up the river valley to our camp. We were told that all tumen commanders should report to Buzun the morning after the last tumen was in place.

I decided to march my tumen to the easternmost position to make it a little easier on those behind. That took us another two days, but it meant that everyone was in position on the third day. Our campsite was in very difficult terrain; basically it was on the side of a mountain in a scrub forest. On the fourth morning after we arrived, Theodore, the other tumen commanders, and I rode toward the main camp in the middle. It took about a day and a half to reach the camp. Finally we all reached the main camp. Buzun was surprised that we had all got into place so quickly, but pleased about it. He told us that word had reached him that Khan Henry wanted his son, Theodore, to command the Ordu. He then ceremoniously turned his white sash over to Theodore. He asked if Theodore would mind if he stayed on to help and, of course, he was assured he was most welcome. In fact, Theodore asked him to tell us what the situation was.

“The Re Che have been invited to join the Khanate in peace by an official delegation. The delegation was allowed to return disarmed and on foot. The invasion will commence as soon as our new commander determines the path of that invasion.”

“I did not expect to be placed in command,” Theodore began. “Therefore I would like to confer with my advisors before I draw up a plan for our invasion. We will meet again here tomorrow morning.”

The meeting was adjourned and Theodore asked Buzun and me to meet with him as soon as the others left. He admitted that he had no idea what to do and asked for advice. Buzun felt that we should invade across the border in groups of three tumen in roughly the position they were now camped and just run down the length of the land destroying them in place. I said that was possibly a good plan, but I wanted to see a map of the terrain if that was available. He told me it was not since our mappers had not been allowed in and those who had gone in anyway had not returned. I asked if any spies had been dispatched. He said they had, but the few that returned had given only sketchy reports. I asked to speak to them and they were brought in to speak to us.

The spies said that the land ahead was hilly and not well watered. The Re Che were organized into tumen like we were and were camped about two days' ride south in three large camps in a line from east to west. They had at least as many tumen as we did, although all were not so well armed. The best-armed tumen were in the forward camps and the rest were in reserve. The men of the forward tumen only had one horse apiece, so they were not as mobile as we were. Their cannon were few and were not in evidence among the forward camps. They had sentries posted all along the border to watch our every move, and they fully expected us to attack across the river and expected to intercept us while we were crossing to take us at advantage and secure horses and weapons for the rest of their tumen.

I looked at Buzun in puzzlement. This was hardly a sketchy report and his advice seemed suicidal. Still I held my counsel and told them I needed a little time to formulate a plan, which I would then propose to them. We adjourned and I sought out the most astute-sounding of the spies, a Kakan who called himself Silpitocle, and asked him a few more questions. I ascertained that the eastern extreme of the Re Che lands were only sparingly patrolled, because it was not thought that we could get through the mountains. That was how the spy had managed to get in and out in one piece. He assured me that the way was very difficult, but possible for a small enough force, perhaps two tumen at the most. I began to formulate a plan.

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The Re Che Campaign 112 K

(Northern Chile. 1480)

I had to bear in mind that Silpitocle's people had been conquered and virtually wiped out a few years before. Indeed, we had seen scant evidence of their existence along the way. It was possible that he would lead us into a trap and perhaps that was why Buzun had given so little weight to his information. Still, I felt that a surprise attack would give us the best chance for success against this obviously well prepared and led enemy. Before I presented my plan to Theodore and Buzun I needed a little more information.

I called back Silpitocle and asked him about the Re Che. He told me that they used to be very loosely organized into small bands of relatives, which were even more loosely organized into subtribes, Picunche, Mapuche, Wiyiche, and Chilote, from north to south. They spoke completely mutually intelligible dialects of the same language but did tend to fight among themselves with little provocation. When they saw what happened to the Kakan, however, they changed radically. They elected a war chief, Waikiyaf, who was given almost supreme power. He organized them into tumen in imitation of us and rigorously trained the men into a formidable force. They had even tried to rouse both the Chono, the people who lived to their south, and the Chango, the fishing people who live along the coast, to join them, but were not successful. It was obvious he admired them, so I couldn't be sure if I could trust him.

There was another source I needed to consult. I told Cinnashote to see that I was not disturbed and sat down in my tent. I closed off everything else and went within. Carlotta came to me when I called her. I asked her if I could trust Silpitocle. She told me that he spoke the truth. While he admired the Re Che for their ability to rise to the challenge presented by the Mongols, unlike his people, who did not adapt and paid a very heavy price, he knew that what little future his people had was tied now to the Mongols and he would not betray their interests for anything. She asked if I wanted to fly above the enemy and reconnoiter. It was tempting and I still wonder if I did the right thing, but somehow it did not fit the warrior spirit to take such unfair advantage. She asked me to spare as many of the Re Che as I could and assured me she would watch out for me. There it was again, the request that I spare people who very much wanted me dead. I was perplexed by the great value she seemed to put on the lives of my enemies. Still, I had the information I needed and resolved to respect her wishes and kill no one who didn't absolutely need to be killed.

I returned to meet with Theodore and Buzun. I explained that I felt confident that we could trust Silpitocle, so I had based my plan on his information. Buzun rolled his eyes, but said nothing. I suggested that all the tumen except the easternmost three should be concentrated between our present position and the coast, along the large open area where the river split into several branches, but in three groups of four tumen about three li apart. They should take a lot of time, perhaps four or five days, getting organized into their new positions, and then each group should start building their pontoon bridges, very slowly across the branches of the river. It should take them at least three days to build them. When all were built, they should make a show of crossing the bridges late in the afternoon and setting up camp right on the bank without sending out any sentries. Then as soon as it got dark, all the men should return across the bridge leaving the camps looking occupied. Meanwhile all our cannon should be massed along the north shore of the river. In all likelihood the Re Che would attack at first light, perhaps under cover of the inevitable fog. When they got in range tear them up with the cannon, then we would attack across the bridges when they fell back in confusion.

Meanwhile I would lead the three easternmost tumen on a surprise attack on their rear. We would appear to withdraw toward the north, but would then turn east into the mountains along a path known to Silpitocle. We would then get well south of the fully armed and mounted forces and fall on their reserves. We would then turn to the north to crush the main force between us. In order for my attack to be successful it was imperative that the rest of the Ordu keep the enemy's attention by constant activity and once the enemy was engaged across the river, contact with them must be maintained.

Buzun was silent for a while as he considered my plan. The whole thing overwhelmed Theodore. Finally Buzun said that while it was a bold plan and if it worked could bring us great success at minimal cost, it was fraught with danger. He had to admit that most of the danger would be borne by my force. We would be operating behind enemy lines, and if the enemy did not take the bait at the river crossing, but instead detected our movement and went after us we could all be lost and they would have our arms and horses. Also, he wasn't at all sure Silpitocle could be trusted.

I told him that his points were well taken, but even if we were detected and the bulk of the army came against us, we had superior mobility and could retreat to a mountain pass and hold it against them until the rest of the Ordu brushed aside the screen and came after us. We would fire red rockets if we achieved all our objectives and green ones if we were in trouble. As long as he did exactly as I asked, we had every chance of complete victory. He shrugged and turned to Theodore.

"It could work," he said. "But it is risky. What do you think?"

"If my cousin thinks he can do it," Theodore replied with surprising calm, "then I'm sure he can. We will do it exactly as he says so that he has every chance."

"Thank you," I said. "I know it will work. But remember, on the afternoon of the eighth day you must cross the pontoon bridges. That should give me enough time to get into position."

"It will be so," Buzun assured me.

I wished Theodore well and returned quickly to my camp with Silpitocle in tow. Since I would be in command of three tumen, I was given the white sash of Ordu commander. It was immediately noticed when I arrived in camp, but no one commented since they weren't sure what it meant. I had given Cimnashote my black sash and put him in temporary charge of my tumen. I called together the other two tumen commanders, Miquiztli and Sose, and told them of the plan. They very much liked it and immediately went out to get their men ready. Meanwhile I called together my minghan commanders and outlined the plan to them. They, too, were very pleased about the plan and soon the camp was a bevy of activity. Early the next morning, we broke camp and rode along a trail leading toward the northeast.

Actually, we first had to go west and then we could turn northeast because we were camped on the south slope of a mountain well above the river. We made lots of noise and held our banners high as we made the turn to the northeast. Our path would keep us in full view all morning to a competent spy, properly positioned across the river from our camp, as we climbed up the slope on the north side of our mountain. By afternoon we were out of sight, but the dust cloud I made certain we caused continued to indicate our movement to the northeast. By late evening we were well into the mountains in a dry gulch surrounded by snow-covered peaks and it was quite cold.

The next day we followed a barely discernible path over a snow-covered pass through the mountains and gingerly began to pick our way along the very rough terrain on the other side. Silpitocle assured me that this had been Kakan land as had most of our path. The Re Che did not live in the mountains like the Kakan did and only crossed them to trade and then only along specific trails which we would have to cross, but would not actually take. He emphasized that it would be very important that we leave no indication that we had crossed those paths when we did. I assured him we knew how to leave no mark behind.

That night we camped below another snow-covered peak. The next morning, Silpitocle went ahead since we would be crossing one of the trade trails, and I made sure the men were rigged for silent marching. He was waiting for us at the "trail"—a vague path at best—and urged us on across it. He was impressed at how quietly

we were able to move. Once we had passed that trail, he rode ahead again to check out the next trail. I decided to go with him this time. He was glad since there were actually three trails close together and we had to cross them all before nightfall. Actually all three were passes through the mountains that merged on our side and followed a well-worn path through the mountains toward the east. The first two were clear, but there was a small caravan of perhaps twenty of the llamas carrying packs wending its way down from the third as we arrived. I sent Silpitocle back to keep the men coming while I kept an eye on the merchant.

As the man drew near, I faded into cover among the rocks. I could not tell from the look of him whether he was Kakan or Re Che. He did not seem concerned about anything although he did look about as he walked his caravan along the trail. He passed my position without noticing me and continued on the path, as it turned first south, then east. I followed him at a discreet distance for a while, but he never slowed down or gave any indication of alarm. Silpitocle came up to my position and told me that the column was just behind him. Because of the curve in the trail it would be easy for them to keep out of the man's sight even though they would have to follow the trail for a short distance. He went ahead to make sure the man continued beyond the point where we would turn off, and I climbed back up to the third pass to make sure there were no more travelers coming that way.

That night we camped out of sight of the trail, but with sentries posted to make sure we were not detected. The next day we set out again along a very vague path, which threaded its way just east of a ridgeline along some very rough country. Late in the day we came to two more trails across the mountains that merged into one on our side. The first proved unoccupied. We again had to go along part of the trail because the second pass was the one we would take. We camped just below that pass on the trail that night. Silpitocle spent the night at the pass to make sure we were not detected.

The next morning he came down to tell us the pass was still clear and we moved on over it. It was rough, but not snow covered. Once on the far side, we turned immediately south along another vague trail around a small mountain and into a valley. We skirted the mountainside of the valley and suddenly came upon a tiny town. We quickly surrounded it, but found it to be deserted. That might have been a bad sign, but closer examination proved that it had been abandoned for a while. We crossed the stream south of the town and turned west down the valley. The terrain was forested with a kind of thorn tree and laurels and still rather dry so we had to be careful of giving ourselves away by generating a dust cloud. We camped for the night along the stream just in the cover of the trees. Needless to say we sent sentries out in every direction. Silpitocle went out alone to find the enemy encampment.

The next morning he was already back in camp. Our sentries had seen nothing and he assured me that the Re Che did still not know of our presence. He had come upon one of the reserve encampments only about thirty or so li down the valley near another one of their settlements. I mounted up the men. With five horses apiece we could ride hard and still be freshly mounted for the attack. Just as we started, a brief drizzling rain began to fall settling all the dust. Things certainly looked very good for us.

By late morning we could see the smoke from the houses in the settlement, and as we debauched from the forest into a cleared area, we could see the encampment south of the settlement. I told the men to charge through it, but make sure the enemy fled to the south, and then we would immediately regroup and move on to the next encampment. We could not waste time trying to wipe them out.

As we rode toward the encampment, perhaps a li from where we broke through the woods, I could see they were not expecting us. There was at first confusion then agitation, then panic. We hit them from the northeast. South and west of the camp the area was all cleared, so as they poured out of the camp into these open areas, they were easy targets for our arrows. The few who stood to fight with crude spears, bows, clubs, and slings were quickly dispatched. We chased them to the edge of the clearing running down many and leaving the rest in complete panic.

We blew the recall signal and the men returned to formation. The settlement had pulled thorn bushes around themselves and was obviously expecting us to attack. We had other fish to fry, however, and immediately set out for the other camp at full speed. Along the way we overtook and dispatched some of the refugees who were trying to warn the other camp. We reached it in midafternoon and again swept through it before they had a

chance to mount any organized resistance. More of them stood and fought and we suffered a few casualties, but nothing like we inflicted. Again we sounded the recall. I decided to hold our position for the night before turning north. If the other three enemy encampments had taken the bait, they would be at least three days' ride away. I decided to wait until dark to fire the red rockets. I thought it was probably too far away for our people to see them anyway. While we were at it, I sent a few rockets into the forest to the south of our position to make sure none of the enemy had crept back. They hadn't. Even so we posted sentries everywhere and all the officers took turns walking the perimeter.

The night passed without incident, but it was time for us to move north to intercept the theoretically fleeing enemy. I sent Silpitocle and the best scouts out to find the enemy, and with scouts on all sides, we moved northward quickly. Toward the end of the day, I saw a high hill nearby, and I directed the men there. We camped on its wooded slopes while I proceeded to the somewhat cleared summit. It gave quite a view. There was a large settlement a little east of north about twenty li away. There was a major dust cloud to the north, but just barely discernible above the hills in that direction. As soon as it got dark, I sent up another red rocket.

Early the next morning, Silpitocle roused me. He reported that the enemy was fleeing this way, but in generally good order, not in a panic. He and the others had found that there were three unequal and ill-defined groups. One was riding along the coast and would probably continue that way far out of sight of our position, the other two would pass a little to the east and a little to the west of our current position if they continued on their present course. We could intercept either one, but both would severely outnumber us. I reminded him that we had superior mobility and we would be well rested since we would wait near here for them. I asked him if he knew the disposition of the rest of our forces. He did not, but he assumed they were coming after the fleeing enemy.

I toyed with the idea of taking the settlement, but I didn't want to sacrifice mobility just in case the other tumen were not closely pursuing the fleeing enemy. Not long after dawn, the dust cloud had reformed, had grown much larger, and was definitely heading our way. I got the men ready and we headed north to intercept the enemy. There was a broad open space about thirty li north of our hill and we waited in the forest south of the space. We did not have long to wait. First a trickle, then a flood of men came out of the far woods and turned southeast to head toward the settlement. It couldn't have been better for us, as they presented their sides to us as they rode. As soon as enough of them were in range, we began to fire arrows into them. They were surprised, but seeing their danger, turned and charged toward us. We discharged arrows into them until they were near to closing with us; then we turned and galloped to the rear on fresh horses. They could not keep up with us and we soon outdistanced them. We stopped at the edge of another clearing and repeated the exercise. I couldn't help but notice that not many of them had come after us, so we allowed them to close with us and finished them off except for a few that rode back north.

We rode south again toward the place we had spent the night. I had a feeling they had sent a small group after us to lure us into a trap. I was right. Before long a very large group was streaming around the flanks of the position we had abandoned. Seeing their ploy didn't work, they came after us again and we again thinned their ranks while staying out of closing range. It looked to me that we had accomplished as much as we could at this point so I looked for an exit strategy. I rode up the hill to have a look around while the men were still pouring arrows into the enemy. It looked like there was a dust cloud far to the west and south of our position and another to the east of our position but turning this way. It was clear we would have to escape to the west.

I rejoined the men and we began turning our withdrawal toward the west, then at midafternoon, we disengaged and rode swiftly toward first the west, then the north. By dusk we were on a wooded hill. Mystified by the absence of the other tumen, I sent Silpitocle north to find them. I told him not to make contact with them, just see where they were and return and report. Meanwhile I set up sentries at some distance from the camp in case the enemy came after us. I suspected they were headed toward the two camps we had just destroyed to set up a second line of defense. I also suspected they would be very upset when they found out what we had done, and would likely continue on to their next position.

No one attacked us in the night, but the sentries did report seeing a few stragglers riding by in the night. The next morning, Silpitocle reported that the other tumen were across the river, but did not seem to be in any hurry.

At their current leisurely pace, elements of them should reach our position in a short time. To be sure, we soon found the outriders of one of the tumen approaching warily. I asked for directions to their commander and soon found myself before the man, a Ben Zah named Chachi, appropriately as I later found out, the name meant "snail." I asked him what his orders had been. He said he was told to move forward warily, keeping in contact with the tumen on either side, and expecting an ambush at any moment. I asked if scouts had been sent out, and he said they had not been. I then asked where Theodore and Buzun might be found. He suspected I might find them toward the east, about two tumen over nearer the middle.

I sent word to my men to hold their position for now and prudently got behind the lines of the tumen before moving east to find Theodore and Buzun. I finally found them late in the morning. Theodore was visibly relieved to see me, but it was hard to tell with Buzun. I asked if they had seen my rockets, but apparently they had not. I thought that odd, but just possible. I then told them where the enemy were at my last contact and asked why they hadn't sent out scouts to find them instead of creeping through the forest.

"I have always found scouts unreliable," Buzun said. "Besides, when we sent them in before, they never returned."

"This is different. The Re Che were fleeing before you, but since you did not pursue vigorously, they had a chance to regroup and greatly outnumbered us when they reached us. Fortunately, we were able to inflict considerable harm on them and still get away with our superior mobility. Had I waited for your arrival, I would have been annihilated."

"I told you it was a risky plan." Buzun shrugged. "Meanwhile, I had to base my decisions on the situation at hand."

"I see. Well, we can use my men as scouts so we can stop inching along and roll up the enemy before they get a chance to form an effective defense."

"If that is what Theodore thinks is best, it is fine with me."

"Yes, of course," Theodore stammered.

I turned and sent orders to all the tumen commanders. I could see that this was an untenable situation and either Buzun or I would have to go. Meanwhile the pace began to pick up and we reached the area of the settlement by nightfall. It was, not surprisingly, abandoned. That night I sent out Silpitocle and the other scouts to find the enemy. I asked Theodore how the plan for the crossing had gone. He told me that it had been just as I had suggested. All their activity immediately got response across the river and they could see horsemen riding back and forth and then that the enemy were moving closer by the dust clouds. He mentioned that Buzun did not trust the dust clouds, since they could be a ruse. Finally, on the eighth day, they crossed the river in the late afternoon and set up camp on the other side. Then at dark, they left their fires burning and returned across the river just as I had told them. In the morning just before dawn, they heard a shout and a sort of war cry and the attack was on. The cannon were all loaded with shot, and as soon as they could make something out in the lifting fog across the river, they opened up on them. They were brave and even started to storm across the bridges, but their horns called them back. Once they had cleared the area, our men rushed across the river and pursued them until they reached the forest. That was when Buzun ordered the infiltrative tactics.

I tried to think of a way to get rid of Buzun. It finally came to me. I asked Theodore if his father had set up any ports along the coast in our area. He said that the nearest one was that which served Cuzco near the mouth of the Rimac River. I told him that he needed to establish a port nearby so we could be supplied more easily than by the overland route. He thought that was an excellent idea. I asked him if there was anyone in his command who could find a suitable spot. He told me that Buzun had mentioned being involved in building the port near Cuzco. I told him that obviously he was the one to send. Unfortunately, he was hesitant to take such a decision on his own and sat down to write a letter to his father. It looked like I would be stuck with Buzun for a while.

The next morning the scouts reported back that the enemy was still in three columns and had fled south of the Choapa River, along which we had attacked the day before, and had shown no sign of slowing down. The column moving along the coast was about twenty li farther south than the other two, which were maneuvering

through some very rough country, ideal for setting traps. Buzun immediately seized on this scrap of information as proof that we must revert to infiltrative movement. Fortunately, I was able to convince Theodore that it was too early for that and anyway we would continue to send out the scouts to look for any traps.

I organized the tumen into groups of three and spread them out between the coast and the mountains about twenty li apart. The broken nature of the land would make it very difficult for each column to maintain contact with the others, but they should do so with scouts. They should also have scouts well out on all sides, including the rear, since the enemy would likely use some hit-and-run attacks to try and slow us down. The bulk of their forces should be bunched together, not strung out for several li, so that any such attack could be repulsed with ease. They were also to continue south, not chase after any small group of the enemy. One of the tumen commanders of each group of three was appointed Ordu commander until we reformed at either the first major river or a strong enemy position. The Ordu moving along the coast was told not to disturb the Chango villages in any way.

We burned the thorn barrier around the abandoned settlement, but left the houses undisturbed. I suggested that Buzun, Theodore, and I remain with the middle group of tumen, which conveniently was my group. I made sure that contact was maintained with the other four groups. Other than a few stragglers, there was no contact with any of the enemy that day. I had given orders that any stragglers we encountered were to be held and used to build the new port. We crossed the Choapa late that afternoon and camped near the enemy camp we had overrun. Word reached me from the Ordu to our east that the settlement we had bypassed during our initial attack was now abandoned.

South of the Choapa the terrain got very rough. We seemed to be on a halfway decent trail, but it was filled with boulders and we had to pick our way through. The scouts assured me it was worse elsewhere except along the coast. The coastal Ordu kept getting ahead, but then had to set up and remove their pontoon bridges to cross the rivers along the way. Farther inland, the rivers were easily fordable, so far. That night we reached another small river that was fordable, so we camped along its north bank. The scouts reported back that the enemy had retreated across a major river to the south called the Concon after a village at its mouth. Our eastern Ordu would be able to ford it, but the western Ordu would have to build pontoon bridges, and my Ordu, might be able to ford depending on just where we reached the river.

At the war council that night, Buzun suggested we try another end around like we had done at the Limari River. I told him he was underestimating our foe. They would probably expect us to do exactly that. Instead, we would make it look like we were doing the same thing, but would attack across the river. That way they would pull off enough forces to guard the passes and we would be able to push the rest back. He insisted that we should try what worked before and I insisted that it wouldn't work again. Fortunately, Theodore again sided with me. It was good that we had bonded on the march down from Tamalameque.

The next day's march was the worse yet. At first we scrambled along a vestigial trail, but then we had to turn into the mountains and pick our way across a ridgeline before descending a tiny valley to the Concon. We camped on a plain in sight of it. Word reached us that the enemy had attempted an ambush on the easternmost Ordu, but it was quickly repulsed and not pursued. The scouts that returned affirmed that the enemy was across the river ready to repulse any attempt we might make to cross it. I suggested that we rest a few days so I could look over the terrain before implementing our next move.

All along our way south, although the land became less dry, the thorn trees, laurels, and dry brush persisted. The increased wetness just made them thicker and reduced the dust. I had to weave my way through a forest of that vegetation to reach a peak to the west of my position. It had been cleared on top as a lookout, no doubt, and I decided to take advantage of it. Indeed, I could see all the way to the ocean from that vantage point. I could see that the Concon was quite wide near the ocean and there was a very long, tempting flat area just south of the river all along a bend in the river where it turns southwest and then west to the sea. Upriver it was flat along the river, but I could not see very far because of a mountain on the far side that blocked my view. When I got down the mountain again, I rode upriver.

Near the camp of the Ordu to my east I climbed a little way up a mountain to a cliff. From that opening I could see that there was a very large open space south of the river across from the camp of the easternmost Ordu. I

spent the night with the Ordu just east of mine and returned to my Ordu the next morning. As I had hoped, Silpitocle was back. He had been wounded, but not seriously. He reported that the enemy was again in three camps with about five tumen per camp, each overlooking the open areas south of the river, but hidden among the trees above them. As I had expected, they were covering all three of the passes in the area with the poorly armed troops we had routed.

I could see that Waikiyaf was no fool, but his defense was not foolproof. I began to draw up my plan. That evening I presented it to Buzun and Theodore. I suggested that we have the western Ordu build their pontoon bridges across the river slowly as before. The eastern Ordu would each move farther east to the end and the middle of the clear area and look for good fords. My Ordu would gradually move east looking for fords, but not finding one until we reached the western end of the clear area. Then while the western Ordu make their faint across the bridges, the eastern three Ordu would storm across the fords and attack the easternmost camp of the enemy. We should be able to roll them up and force them to flee southward. Then we could turn on the second camp, which should be en route to us anyway. Once the third camp started to move either toward our attack or to the rear, the two western Ordu would attack across their bridges and chase them down.

Buzun shook his head, insisting that it would never work. He was certain that all three camps would be waiting for our attack by the time we got across the river. On the other hand, what if the western camp destroyed the bridges with their cannon? Then they would be trapped across the river and be no help at all. I pointed out that the scouts had assured me all the cannon had been withdrawn to the south. I added that there was no way a good leader would leave our Ordu to build pontoon bridges across the river unobserved. At least one of them would remain to watch. We would have sufficient men to defeat two of their camps, but the losses would be heavier for us should that be necessary. However, I reminded him, they do not have our mobility and it was very unlikely they could bring two of their camps to bear on us, unless the easternmost one fled to the central one and then together they turned to face us. I felt that was very unlikely, unless the leader of that eastern camp had the discipline to appear to flee in the sight of the enemy. I really didn't think it was possible, but even so my Ordu would be able to cut them off to some extent if they did. Theodore stuck by me, however, much to Buzun's discomfiture. In fact, I could see that he was becoming resentful and wondered if he was capable of rash action. I sent my instructions to the Ordu commanders that night.

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The Re Che Campaign Continued 113–4 K

(Central Chile, 1481–2)

The plan went well at first. We sorted ourselves out for a day and then the western Ordu began working on the pontoon bridges while the eastern Ordu checked out fords. I continued to send out spies, but fewer were returning. Silpitocle always returned, however. The next day, as the pontoons were nearing completion, the eastern Ordu crossed the river in force and all headed straight for the spot where the eastern camp of the enemy was supposed to have been located, just west of the cleared area. My Ordu was closest to the site, but when our forward elements reached it, it was abandoned. I immediately became suspicious and had recall sounded. As my men withdrew into the clear area and the other Ordu stopped in their positions near the middle of the clear area, there was a sudden battle cry from the east and the enemy exploded onto our left flank. They charged to within arrow range and let loose a volley into the easternmost Ordu.

I was not expecting them there, but it really was not a problem, and we all turned to attack them. I was reasonably sure their middle camp would be rushing out of the trees on what had been our right flank but was now our rear. Still, I felt we could make short work of the eastern camp before they could close and we could turn on the middle camp in the open space and do great harm to them before they could close with us. However, the eastern camp withdrew into the trees on the eastern end of the clear area and poured a withering fire into our men as we closed with them. Once we closed with them, we began to push them back into the trees, but slowly for there were quite a few of them. I was still concerned about the middle force, however, so I sent Silpitocle to find them while I set up the cannon in a semicircle to cover our western and southern flanks. As more men were brought to bear, the battle began to go our way, and with some difficulty, I kept two of the tumen back in reserve and insisted that we only try to envelop them from the north.

Suddenly Silpitocle broke from the woods in the southwest riding hard toward our position. Before he could reach us, however, the middle force charged out of the wooded slopes to our south and stopping at arrow range let loose a volley and retreated just as our cannon fired into them. Their losses were significant, but ours were heavy as well. One of the arrows should have hit me, but something pushed me sideways and it just missed. I could see that the middle force was moving east to aid the eastern force. I had the cannon send solid shot into their midst through the trees and had the recall sounded to extricate the men from the battle.

I then had the cannon turned toward the east and formed the men behind them as they returned, well out of arrow range from the forest. Silpitocle told me that he was rushing to warn me, but had been too late. He speculated that they must have moved in the night into their new positions. It occurred to me that if that was true, their horses must be rather tired already. But from what I could see, they didn't look tired at all. The last of our men cleared the forest with the enemy in hot pursuit. We fired a volley of arrows into the enemy as soon as they were in range, but could only fire the southernmost cannon. It proved to be enough to force them to pull back into the cover of the woods.

I had the canon send some shot into the woods to wreak a little havoc, but I couldn't tell if it had been successful. I next sent some rockets screaming through the woods. Again, I could not tell if anything had happened. Then suddenly we could see a large force of the enemy ford the river to the north side and ride frantically to the east. I had to sound recall to keep the men from chasing after them. Finally, I had to assume they had all withdrawn, so I formed the men into their tumen and had them charge into the woods to the east and southeast. We routed some rear guards, but from the tracks, it was clear that the bulk of their forces had fled south. I kept us all together and went after them in force. It was hard to tell how much of a head start they had, but I suspected their one horse apiece would slow them down. Meanwhile I sent Silpitocle to find out what had happened on the western front.

We easily followed the enemy trail since they made no effort to hide it. After a few li, they had split into two groups, but we continued to follow the western of the two, since the terrain was slightly better, and I didn't want the enemy to be able to concentrate their forces between my force and the western Ordu. We were unable to overtake them before dark. I sent the best available scouts south to find them in the dark while we camped for the night. It was not until morning that an exhausted Silpitocle caught up with us just as we were about to leave. He reported that the western Ordu had crossed in force around midmorning and had chased a force of the enemy they could see withdrawing before them. Then, when they heard the cannon, they turned to go to our aid. He had found them about halfway toward our battlefield. He suggested to them that they should go back to chasing the enemy force south since that was what we were doing. They agreed. I was of two minds over this. On the one hand, they did show some initiative in coming to our aid. On the other hand, they were too far away to possibly reach us in time to affect the battle one way or the other. I was coming to the conclusion that I needed to keep the entire force close at hand for all future actions.

Late in the morning, some of our scouts returned to report that the enemy was still well ahead of us and quite numerous. They estimated that the one force we were following had very near our numbers. I sent some scouts to find the two eastern forces of the enemy. Meanwhile, the terrain had opened up before us into a broad intermountain valley, with hardwood forests and grasslands and dotted with cultivated clearings around villages, which were generally along rivers and streams. I rode up a hill, which promised a good view. From my vantage point the whole long valley stretched out far to the south before me. I could see the group we were chasing about twenty-five li ahead of us. I could not see the eastern group anywhere, but suspected they were somewhere among the mountains that blocked my view in that direction. I could see nothing toward the west but more mountains. There were not as many villages as I would have expected in such a valley, but those I saw looked fairly large. I rode back down and sent a signalman with a few rockets to keep an eye on our progress and warn us if the enemy turned and tried to set a trap.

Around midday, I received word that the western Ordu was about ninety li away in a fertile seaside plain chasing a small force southward. Late in the day I finally discovered why we hadn't caught up with them yet. They had pontoon bridges in place across all their rivers and paused only long enough to break them up before continuing on their way. We were forced to stop and build one of our own to cross each river and then wait to take it down again to bring with us before continuing. This delay enabled them to spare their horses enough to

keep most of them going. We had encountered some ruined horses along the way and I did notice as the last of the enemy scampered away from this latest river that many of them were on foot. We quickly built the bridge across the river, crossed it, and set up defensive camp. I ordered the engineers to leave the bridge this time. I had the suspicion that the enemy would try something tonight, since it was their best chance, and I didn't want to cut off my line of retreat.

Once again I sent Silpitocle ahead to find the Re Che. Meanwhile I doubled the sentries and set up the cannon fully loaded in a semicircle near the center of the camp with the horses behind them and the men in a circle around the horses and cannon. Because of the rather unpleasant smell, it was not the best configuration, but I didn't want to take any chances on losing any horses. Near midnight, Silpitocle awakened me. He had found the Re Che sneaking up on us for a dawn attack. They had halted perhaps half a li away from our outermost sentries. He knew they favored dawn attacks, since they could usually count on fog to help them. I sent him to get some rest and ordered that the sentries be withdrawn into the camp perimeter well before dawn. Instead I had one of my more skilled men set some traps in the clearing around the camp perimeter and had the cannon moved a little closer to the perimeter.

Not long before first light, the men were all aroused and quietly placed in position around and behind the cannon. The inky blackness had been softened by a thin mist, which spread out from the river well before we roused the men. Finally, I could just detect the slight lightening of the mist. Then the first trap was loudly sprung on our right, followed quickly by several more from that direction, and then a shout. The enemy began to take vague shape on our right and we let them reach the camp perimeter before opening fire, first with arrows, and then when there were enough of them, cannon. I was puzzled that the attack was only on our right and suspected that perhaps the eastern band had returned and was waiting for an opportune time to attack our left. I ordered the men on the left to remain in place and kept almost half the cannon loaded and aimed in that direction. Less surprising was the fact that they attacked on foot obviously not wishing to risk losing any horses to our fire. Of course, the reduced mobility worked in our favor.

The fog never got very thick, and as the morning lightened, the Re Che began to fall back on the right. I sent some units to keep in contact with them and finally was rewarded with a shout on the left. We held off until we couldn't miss and slaughtered them. They were mounted, but before they even reached our camp perimeter, they broke off and fled to the southeast as quickly as they could. I mounted up the men and chased after the main band. They had tried to scatter, but we were able to capture or kill the bulk of them. For Carlotta's sake, I was glad to see that more were captured than killed. The next few days were spent rounding up as many as we could find. I sent Silpitocle to look for the eastern band. The western Ordu had finally run down the small force they had been chasing and they had surrendered after a token resistance.

I reasoned after such a loss, the Re Che would withdraw somewhere and spend some time trying to regroup. The scouts I had sent to look for the eastern two forces before we even reached the central valley finally showed up confirming that the two forces had come together in the mountains and slipped across the river far to the east and then moved west downstream to attack our left flank. Actually it was a good plan, and if I had charged after the main body with all my men, they would have made short work of our rear guard and captured our cannon and turned them on us. Fortunately, I didn't take the bait.

I decided that it would be an excellent opportunity for us to fan out in force and look for any pockets of resistance behind us and rebuild pontoon bridges to our rear to ensure our supply lines. Of course, we also had the captured Re Che fields to harvest. I sent the individual tumen in various directions to this end. I suggested to Buzun that he was the only one competent enough to see to the pontoon bridges. I think he was a little mollified by the apparent compliment.

By late winter there were thousands of captured Re Che working on construction projects. When Buzun returned from bridge building, I asked him if he could find a suitable site for a port. He puffed up a bit and immediately set out to do so. That had been easier than I had anticipated. Before long the Re Che prisoners were building a port at a site about thirty-five li south of the mouth of the Choapa River, near a Chono village. He suggested we name it Henribalikh. Of course, we agreed. I made it a point not to go anywhere near the port, but sent Theodore there at proper intervals to make a big fuss over whatever Buzun was doing.

Silpitocle returned to report that the remains of the eastern band had crossed the Mataquito River along with a few stragglers from the central force and destroyed their bridge behind them. He slipped across the river and determined that they were withdrawing farther south. We were able to cross that river unopposed at the end of fall. They were holding below the Maule River for the moment, but again Silpitocle reported that their women and children were still moving south and only the warriors remained behind. I thought it might be a good time to offer them peace again. So we found a captive who had lost a leg and was thus unlikely to be of much use in future battles and, with Silpitocle interpreting, gave him a message to give to Waikiyaf. Essentially, I suggested that he had put up enough of a resistance to earn our respect, but now it was time to give up and spare his people any further bloodshed. We rowed the man across the river and gave him a captured horse, well past its prime, to ride.

A few days later a man was seen swimming across the river to our side. He was rounded up and brought to me. I could see immediately that he was no Re Che. He had the tall, slim build of a Leni lenape. When he spoke to me, it was in flawless Mongol. He introduced himself as Sacook, a mapper, who had been captured about a year earlier while mapping the mouth of a large river to the south called the Bio Bio. I asked if he was the son of Watomika and he acknowledged that he was. I told him of my acquaintance with his father and how he had asked me to be on the look out for him. He then explained why he had been released.

“Waikiyaf sent me because you released his cousin to give him your suggestion that he surrender. His answer is this. I wrote it down to make sure I got it right. ‘It is true that you have repeatedly defeated us and it seems that Ngenechen favors you. It may be that you will continue to defeat us and we will be removed from the face of Tchili. If that comes to pass, it is the will of Ngenechen and we accept it. But we will never really disappear. We know that even after death we will continue in a land much like this one where you Huinca cannot disturb us. Why should we trade our freedom either in this world or the next for your chains? We will fight you until you leave our land or we are all in the next world.’ ”

“Do you think he means that? He wants us to wipe out his people?”

“He knows you have captured and enslaved many of his people and he presumes that is what is in store for them if they give up. I tried to explain that the Mongols do not enslave those that join them and even those that resist are eventually freed after they have been pacified. I told him about the Mingue, for example, but I’m not sure it matters to him. He assured me that he would fight as long as he breathed. I’m sure he means it.”

“I was afraid of that. Well, we will have to root him out then. Do you think he will make his stand below the Maule?”

“I would guess that he will withdraw below the Bio Bio before the very heavy winter rains begin. You will not be able to cross it until next summer or at least until late spring. It is very wet there with thick forests of beech, cedar, and laurels making it easy for them to hide and attack from ambush.”

“If we attack now across the Maule River, do you think they will run or stand?”

“I would guess the bulk would run and a rear guard will stand.”

“What is the Bio Bio like?”

“It is quite a river. In the winter it is a torrent from all the rain. In the summer it can be bridged; they have a pontoon bridge across it now. But they have cannon below the Bio Bio. I have seen them. They will use them to destroy any bridges you try to throw across before they are finished.”

“Did you see how many cannon they had?”

“I only saw four. But they probably have more. I don’t think they have much powder, however.”

“We assumed they didn’t, or they would have used them by now. Do they call this place ‘Tchili’?”

“Yes. It is their word for ‘snow.’ I think they call it that because you can always see the snow on the mountains all along their land.”

“What does ‘Huinca’ mean?”

“Outlander, foreigner, a person who is not Re Che.”

“And Ngenechen?”

“Their God.”

“Were you coming from the south when you were captured?”

“Yes. I started on the coast to the east from the south bank of Karamuren, around the southern end of the landmass and all around the large island off the tip, then back up the western coast. There is a large archipelago south of the Re Che lands. The people on the large island are called Shelknam on most of the island, but Haush on the southeast corner and Yamana on the islands off the southern coast. Northwest of the island there are a people called Alacaluf who extend about sixteen hundred li along the islands off the coast and to some extent along the coast also. North of them are the Chono who extend to just below a large island called Chiloe that is occupied by a group of Re Che. Until I reached the Re Che, no one minded my mapping activities. Fortunately, they only got me, not the ship that was carrying me. It must have returned to the Green Mist.”

“I wish they would have gone on to Georgbalikh, the port for Cuzco.”

“They had their orders to return to Tegulunbalikh.”

“Tegulunbalikh?”

“It is a small port, just founded two years ago on the bay where we first found the Genakin. It was named for the Khan just before he died. I suppose I should eventually return there as well, although I would like to finish my mapping. Anyway, the voyage around the southern end of the landmass is very rough. The storms are memorable. Perhaps I will wait until I can return by land.”

“You could probably do that now, but I agree, you should finish mapping. There is the interior up to the Limari River and the mountains which could use some better mapping.”

I sent a letter to Watomika telling him about his son’s safe return from the Re Che and included a note from Sacook. Sacook then went on to map the interior of the area we had just conquered and promised to send me copies. I urged him to pay close attention to the mountains and look for any good passes through them. I also suggested that he be very careful and he report back by the beginning of winter. He promised that he would.

Not long after Sacook departed, we had a visitor from Tamalameque. It proved to be Henry’s chief of staff, Thoxe. The name was Wazhazhe, but the man looked like a native of the Tamalameque region. He arrived just as Theodore returned from one of his trips to Henribalikh. Thoxe was a medium-sized man with a slender build and gray hair. He had steely eyes and practically no expression at all. Still, I detected a slight softening in his expression when he saw Theodore. The latter ran up and embraced him like a favorite uncle when he caught sight of him. Thoxe stiffly returned the hug, but I noticed the trace of a smile.

Theodore lost no time in introducing me to his best friend in the capital. Thoxe acknowledged me, and then pulled Theodore away to talk with him in private. I wondered what this was all about, but was determined not to let it bother me. After a while both men returned to me. Theodore was still smiling, so that was a good sign.

“It seems that you are responsible for all the success of this campaign,” Thoxe began. “The Khan had misgivings about the competence of Buzun to lead a campaign and apparently you prevented him from expressing his limitations in disaster.”

“He is very well suited to engineering. I have him working on a port at the moment and Theodore assures me it is going quite well.”

“Yes, that was an excellent idea. It is clear that you should be the leader of this campaign, with Theodore as second in command. We can do this since you are related to the Khan. Of course, it would be best if Theodore remains officially in command and you appear to be his advisor.”

“Of course.”

“Excellent. Now, what is the current situation? What are your plans?”

I explained the situation to him. He listened attentively, then asked some very good questions ensuring that he understood the apparent standoff completely. Then he asked what I planned to do next. I told him that we would shortly cross the Maule and mop up any rear guard left to annoy us. Then we would appear to be stymied by the Bio Bio. Toward the end of spring, we would build pontoon bridges for them to destroy until they either ran out of ammunition or our counter battery fire destroyed their cannon. Meanwhile we would either find a pass enabling us to flank their river, or if we could get enough ships, we would drop below their lands and attack from the south. The best solution would be both, but we would need more tumen for that to be accomplished.

“How many more would you need?” he asked.

“Another five.”

“Six should be arriving by late winter.”

“And ships?”

“The Khanate doesn’t have transport ships, but we can get use of them from the Khakhanate. They should reach here before the end of spring.”

“Mid spring would be best.”

“I’ll see what I can do. Anything else?”

“Sacook, the mapper who was captured by the Re Che, told me that he had already mapped the coast south of the Bio Bio, and that the maps were likely taken back to the Green Mist. Do you think you can get us a copy?”

“They usually send us a copy of any maps, just as we send them. I’ll see that it is sent to you the moment it comes in.”

“Excellent.”

“Now, there is something else I must tell you. Ignace has died.”

“Oh! Poor Paula,” Theodore exclaimed.

“You remember her?” Those seemed shocked.

“Oh not from when I was a baby. We met her while we were in Cuzco. She was most hospitable. What will become of her?”

“She is still in Cuzco. I suppose once a suitable husband is found for her, your father will see that she is married.”

“But she was running the city while he was ill. Has she been removed?”

“My boy, nothing has been done to her. The city is still under her control. Why does this concern you?”

“Well, I...we...it’s just that...”

“Theodore and Paula became close friends while we were in Cuzco.” I came to his rescue. “He is simply inquiring about his good friend.”

“I see. I will tell your father of your ‘concern’ for your ‘friend’ and do all I can to see that her wishes are seriously considered.”

“Thank you. Do you think I should go to Cuzco to comfort her for her loss? Would that be the proper thing to do?”

“Not in the middle of a campaign.” He shot me an incredulous look. “Just write her a note offering your condolences. I will deliver it to her personally.”

“Are you sure?”

“Positive.”

“That would be best,” I added. “The men would not understand your leaving in the middle of a campaign.”

Theodore looked crestfallen, but glumly agreed and went off to write his note. I suspected it would be the length of a short book. Meanwhile, Thoxe asked me exactly what the relationship was between the cousins. I told him that as far as I knew they had just developed a close friendship. He expressed the hope that it was no more than that. He would find out in Cuzco. I told him that Paula was a very fine young lady and did seem to be running things quite well while we were there. He thanked me and wished me well in the coming campaign. He left the next morning.

Theodore seemed very distracted after Thoxe left so I put him in charge of getting the pontoon bridges quickly across the Maule, and leading ten of the tumen across to round up any Re Che still there. I sent Cimmashote with him to make sure he didn't daydream. Because of my new position, I made Ah Uk the new commander of the Maya tumen and kept Cimmashote in a staff position. The men were disappointed to lose me, but were mollified by my choice of a fellow survivor of the massacre as their new commander. Somehow, it was felt to be fitting. I was very pleased to see that the other jagun commanders elected Nezahualpili the new minghan commander in Ah Uk's place. I had them and three other tumen guarding the bridges. The last tumen was in Henribalikh guarding the port. Meanwhile I took just Silpitocle and headed east.

We followed the north bank of the river upstream. We seemed to be going a little south of east. By the first night, we were well into the mountains. Early the next morning, we came to a fork. One came from the south and the other from the east. I decided to take the south fork. We crossed the bitter cold east fork and followed the south fork along its eastern bank. This passage was very rough and I couldn't see bringing a few tumen along this way. The autumn had been rather dry, but as winter began, it started to rain a little. This made the going even worse, between slippery paths and flash floods. Still we continued, and after three days and three more bitter cold eastern fork crossings, we came to a small lake. The next morning, we followed its eastern shore until it turned west, then continued south into the mountains. We found a stream and followed it southeast, then south for two days, and two more cold stream fordings until we reached an intermountain valley. It was very narrow to the south along the river and wider to the west along two streams. The whole area was heavily wooded with a kind of beech tree. The canopy was so dense there was little undergrowth, so while the footing was easy, it was hard to see where you were going. We decided to check the western part first.

While wandering along one of the streams, we suddenly came upon a tiny settlement. There was a small clearing with four rude shelters made of hides and poles. There were a few women and some children about, but no men. They were shocked to see us and froze long enough for us to raise empty hands to indicate no hostile intent. They were not Re Che. One of the women pointed to me and said "Mogu" and to herself and said "Genakin." I nodded assent and asked Silpitocle if he spoke any Genakin. He knew a smattering, so we settled down to wait the return of the men. The women went about their business, but the children kept coming up to us and touching things.

Near dusk the men returned with their game, one of the smaller llama called guanaco, and were also stunned to see us there, peacefully sitting among their families. The head of the village approached us, and with some difficulty Silpitocle was able to communicate with him. He affirmed that they were subjects of the Khanate of the Green Mist, although they had never been bothered by them before. We were invited to dine with them and they politely asked what we wanted. I had Silpitocle ask them if they knew of a path over the mountains to the west, preferably at a point well south of here. They told us that there were several passes over the mountains and those farther south were easier to cross than the northern ones. I then asked if there was one that could accommodate a large force of men on horses. The headman was sure he knew of one and agreed to take us to it.

I then discreetly asked where the nearest outpost of the Khanate might be. They told me it was far to the west on the plains. It was a training "ugu" where their young men learned our ways. I was much relieved to hear that. It would not do to have tumen from the Khanate of the Clouds appear to be conquering territory of the Khanate of the Green Mist.

We set out in the morning, first to the west, then southeast upstream along a small river. The next morning, the river led us south. Near noon the next day, we crossed the river where it was fed by a river from the west and another from the east. Moving a little to the west, we found a third river joining it from the south and followed it upstream. The following morning, we continued along the river until it became little more than a stream, and

where it veered to the west, we turned southeast along a slight path, just before we camped for the night. The path came from the west also, and our guide told us that it would lead us into Re Che lands a little north of the Bio Bio. I decided we would take that trail on the way back to see if it would do.

We continued southeast the next day arriving at another narrow intermountain valley a little after midday. We followed the valley south for four days. We passed through a couple of tiny Genakin settlements along the path, but were not delayed by them. Finally, on the fifth day, we turned toward the mountains to the west along a rude path. Late in the day, we came upon a small river flowing out from the mountains. We camped just below the pass. It was quite cool that night. The following morning we crossed the pass reaching another small valley on the other side by dusk. It was quite cold in the pass, so I was glad we didn't have to spend the night there. In the morning the path led us a little south of west across the valley to a river that drained a long lake. By nightfall we had followed the eastern shore of the lake to the northern shore. The next day we followed the northern shore until midafternoon; then the path moved away from the lake into another small valley with two small lakes north of the path.

As we went along, more and more of the beeches had dropped their golden red leaves, giving the valleys a beautiful carpet. The regular ground cover was mainly mosses and herbs making for a very pleasant ride or walk. We camped that night at the edge of the valley where the beeches began to give way to evergreens, mostly a kind of cypress. We followed the path west up into another pass between two high mountains that day. By evening we were through the pass and in another very narrow valley along a westward-flowing river. Our guide told us that there was a small Re Che settlement about a day's ride down the valley. I asked him if he knew what they called this river, but he wasn't sure. He suggested that we could ask at one of the Genakin villages we passed a few days before. I was satisfied we could bring the Ordu this way, so the following morning we returned the way we had come.

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The Re Che Campaign Continues 114–5 K

(South Central Chile, 1482–3)

The return trip was uneventful, but colder. When we reached the Genakin villages in the long valley, one man told us he thought the Re Che river at the end of the pass we had just traversed was called something like "Tolto." I rather hoped it was marked on Sacook's map so I could get some idea how far south it was. When we reached the trail our guide said would take us across the mountains, north of the Bio Bio, we thanked him and sent him off with two of our horses. He was very pleased with the gift and assured us that the Khanate of the Green Mist had no more loyal subject.

It took us more than a day to negotiate the pass and it was a bitter cold night above the tree line where dusk caught us. The next morning we descended along a river through the mountains. The vegetation was sparse here, mostly a small kind of cypress tree. The end of the day found us at the base of a high snow-covered mountain, likely a volcano from its almost perfect cone shape. It was not smoking or rumbling, fortunately. The following morning we continued along the trail around the mountain reaching its far side and just beginning to descend into another very narrow valley at dusk. The next morning I noticed that the little cypresses had given way to a strange kind of pine tree. I only call it a pine tree because it had large cones. Instead of needles it had small sharp, flat leaves. Silpitocle told me that the Re Che called it "pehuen" and harvested the cones for the nuts. I noticed that there were some medium-sized parrots harvesting the few remaining nuts at the moment. They were blackish green with red on the face, belly and tail, and were making quite a bit of noise, although Cuauhtzin could have easily put them to shame.

We knocked down a few of the cones and got out the nuts. They were large and not bad, I suppose, for pine nuts. We continued down the valley and came upon an abandoned tiny village late in the day. We spent the night in one of the two houses, which Silpitocle said were called "ruka." The ruka was shaped like an elongated oval with the only opening, a door facing east. It was made of wooden walls with a high thatch roof reaching nearly to the ground and a central hearth made of stones, with a smoke hole above it in the roof. There were no

furnishings, just some heaps of grass for beds. There were also a few empty damaged baskets and broken clay jars. It wasn't much of a house, but it did keep out the cold rain that fell that night.

The next day we continued west along the river and around midafternoon came upon a jagun patrolling up the river. The commander gave me directions to Theodore's camp about three days west near the north bank of the Bio Bio. We passed a few more abandoned Re Che "villages" with three to five of the rukas spread out along a river or stream along the way. We found the camp situated on the cleared slopes of a hill about fifteen li north of the Bio Bio. It was a good position, commanding the lower ground for some distance in all directions. Of course, that ground was a thick forest, so there wasn't much to see. Both Theodore and Cinnashote were most relieved to see us, although for different reasons. Theodore was worried we had come to grief; Cinnashote was anxious to return Theodore's care to me. Buzun had finished the port and had returned. I immediately asked him if he thought he could find a good site for a port nearer to the Bio Bio. He said he had noticed such a spot on a bay just north of the mouth of the river. I sent him off to build the port, which would be named Theodorbalikh, after my uncle, the first Khan of the Clouds, not my young cousin.

The first of the new tumen had just arrived, but none of the ships had yet come. There was no map so far, but Those could not have reached Tamalameque yet. There was a dispatch from Watomika, including a letter from Luis. This was an opportune time since I would not be able to do anything until the ships arrived. Watomika had not received my letter about his son yet, he just greeted me and enclosed Luis' letter. It had taken about a year to get it to me.

I noticed that Luis had taken to placing a date on the top of his letter. It was Martxoa, 1481. If I remembered correctly, Martxoa was one of the twelve months, into which they divided the year. I presumed he did not want to try to date our way. He began by answering my question about the Roman empires. It seems the Roman Empire was founded over two thousand years ago and had gradually conquered all of the shores of the Mediterranean Sea as well as much of Europa. It had become corrupt because it was pagan and God had punished it by letting it be overrun by wild tribes from the north and east, both Alemaneira (German) and Eslaveira (Slav) who eventually overthrew it about a thousand years ago. The Holy Roman Empire was the creation of Carlos el Magno (Charlemagne), the Frank king who ruled an area including Frantzia, Alemainia, Suiza, and Italia. He had himself crowned emperor by the aitasantu, himself, on Gabon-egun (Christmas Day), 800. When he died, the empire was divided into three by his grandsons, but eventually became two, Frantzia and the Holy Roman Empire. The former had a strong king, after a very long struggle; the latter had the hapless emperor. He added that the Franks were one of the German tribes that had invaded the Roman Empire leading to its downfall. I wondered if anyone had written a book about the history of Europa. I suspected it would be very interesting, if confusing. Of course, if it was anything like Hanjen histories, it would be full of bias in favor of the current regimes. I remember, when I was a child, being so disillusioned to discover that not everything written in a book was true.

Meanwhile, there was a new king in Portugal, Juan the Second, and a revolt against him by the nobles, led by Ferdinando of Braganza. The war between Hungaria and the empire continued, with the former getting the better of it. Not much else was happening, but he had heard the "great" news that the gallant Knights of Santu Juan had repulsed the evil Ottoman Empire's attack on Rhodes. I had to check my map for that one, but it turned out to be an island off the south west coast of the Ottoman Empire. It was easy to see why they were trying to conquer it. He also asked about my campaign.

In my response I told him about the campaign, so far; then I asked him if anyone had written a comprehensive history of Europa that might actually be accurate, rather than a pack of lies and exaggerations to curry favor with the writer's ruler. I also asked him what a Knight of Santu Juan was, and how was it that they owned an island so close to the Ottoman Empire. I also asked how it happened the Roman Empire was pagan, but all of Europa was Christian, and what he meant by Gabon-egun. Finally I asked him if he had married yet. He was certainly of the age most young men get married, but he hadn't mentioned anything about it, and I was curious. I sent the letter off with another note to Watomika assuring him that his son was still in good health. I knew that because he had returned just as I was finishing my letter to Luis. I hoped that the letters would get to Yangzi by next spring. That would be a little less than a year since it was late spring there now. I guessed another letter from Luis was en route by now.

Sacook had done an admirable job of mapping from the Limari River south to the Maule and had come by to report to me before working on the area between the Maule and the Bio Bio. I showed him my crude map of the route I had taken and asked if he knew of any Re Che river called something like "Tolto." He remembered a river called "Tolten" the mouth of which was about five hundred li south of the mouth of the Bio Bio. I asked how much farther south was the island called Chiloe. He thought it was just about the same distance or perhaps a bit more, 530 li. If that were true, then my planned eastern attack route would be right in the middle of their territory. I still hoped I would get a copy of Sacook's original map before winter set in. Meanwhile I sent him off to map the remaining area we had conquered.

As winter deepened, the rainfall decreased, but it really wasn't unpleasant in this area. I was aware that my plan for the upcoming campaign called for dividing my forces into three Ordu. I wondered whom I could trust to follow the plan exactly and which Ordu I should personally lead. Early in the spring I received word that the ships had arrived in Henribalikh and were continuing on to Theodorbalikh. I ordered six of the veteran tumen, including my Maya tumen, to head to the latter port, and I rode ahead. I was beginning to rethink my original strategy.

In the short time he had, Buzun had done a fine job. There was a sturdy long pier completed, another about half finished, and a dry dock was under construction. The town was slowly taking shape mostly with stone houses in the Inka tradition. There was a tumen camped around the port to protect it. Two of the fuchuan type of ships were already tied to the pier, half a dozen larger ships were at anchor in the harbor and the sails of more were visible approaching from the north. I marveled at how much faster ships were than horses. I first sought out Buzun to heap praise on him for his excellent work, leaving him actually glowing with pride. Next I rode down to the dock and walked out the pier to the first ship.

The captain proved to be a typically expressionless Chosin, named An Huang. He introduced me to the captain of the other docked ship, another Chosin, named Kim Yu. Both were anxious to hear what my plans were for them. I explained that I would need the whole fleet to ferry six Ordu about eleven hundred li south. Then I would need one or two of the ships to remain behind to ferry supplies. They went over to their charts and measured off the distance and checked their notes, then said it would be possible. In fact they could go even farther south if I wished. I asked to see their maps. They had maps of the entire coastline complete with depth soundings, but no details of the land, beyond the river mouths. I explained that we had to drop below the island of Chiloe. They measured again and told me that would be over fourteen hundred li, but still acceptable. I asked what was not acceptable and they said two thousand li. I asked why and they said that the weather was treacherous and far too dangerous for transporting men and horses. Finally I asked where they happened to get the maps and they told me that the coast had been mapped some years before, but the land was still being mapped. They, of course, had no interest in the land.

I studied their maps for a while, but decided I would need to know exactly where the Re Che lands end, and for that would need to talk to Sacook. Before I left, they wanted to know how soon we would start. I told them we would start loading the men within a few days. I had just decided it was time to start this campaign. I went ashore and asked if there was a nearby Chono village. It turned out there was one on another bay just across the peninsula, which made up the western shore of the bay on which Theodorbalikh was under construction. I next asked if anyone knew their language. No one did, but it seemed that one of them had learned ours. I sent for him. I also sent word that Sacook should report to me immediately on his return. I hoped he would return soon.

The first to arrive was the Chono man who had learned Mongol. He said his name was Delco and that he had learned our language so he could satisfy himself that we meant his people no harm. He had learned Re Che for the same reason some years before. He said he was the head of the village, but was not any sort of a king, just a leader who looked out for the interests of the village. He seemed much too sophisticated to be what he claimed, but he did look like a Chono, not a Re Che. Still, I had to wonder. I asked him to wait a bit and went out to speak to Silpitocle. I asked him to speak to him and see if he was what he claimed to be. I did not detail my misgivings.

A little while later, Silpitocle returned to me and explained that Delco was what he claimed to be, head of that fishing village. However, he was not really a Chono, but a fellow Kakan. He had fled south during our conquest

of their land, and had found the Chono more to his taste than the Re Che, so he had adopted one of their names and settled among them and in the fullness of time, become their leader. He was certain we could trust him as long as we planned no action against the Chono. I went back to talk to him.

“What I need you for is to tell the Chono south of the Re Che that we mean them no harm and will not disturb them in any way.”

“Do you plan to attack the Re Che from the south?”

“The less you know the better. All you need to know is that we need you to reassure the Chono that we will not bother them, just as we have not bothered them here in the north.”

“It is true that you have not bothered them here in the north. But if you bring all these ships to their lands, they will be terrified and flee in all directions. You will have no need to reassure them.”

“We will only take a small party on one ship south,” I dissembled.

“Well, then I can probably convince them that you mean no harm. I must go back to my village and tell them that I will be going with you and that they need not fear that I have come to any harm.”

“Of course. Be back in the morning.”

“May I ask how far south we will be going? I have some friends among the villages there.”

“Just to the first village below the Re Che lands.”

I did not trust him, because of his questions, but I decided to make it look like I trusted him. I returned to An Huang’s ship. I told him that a small party and I would depart the next day on his ship. The rest of the fleet would load up and follow us in a few days. I then looked at the charts and pointed to a spot that was well below Chiloe Island and should definitely be Chono land. I asked if it would be a good place to land. He looked it over and agreed that it looked quite good. I told him to write out orders to the other ship captains and seal them so they would not be opened until they put out to sea. Each ship should sail beyond the horizon before turning south, then stay out of sight of land until it was time to turn into our landing site. He pointed out that the fleet would be quite visible from all the islands they would have to pass to reach the landing zone, but I explained that it wouldn’t matter by that time. He nodded and sat down to write the orders. I returned to shore.

Much to my relief, Sacook was waiting for me. He had returned for supplies and heard that I needed him. I drew from memory the spot I planned to land the troops and asked if it was well below the Re Che lands. He corrected my crude map and showed me roughly where the border was located—he estimated it to be almost 250 li north of my spot. Of course, he reminded me that the Chono tended to be on the coast all along the Re Che lands since they exploited the sea and the latter did not, but the Re Che did not extend much beyond Chiloe Island, because, frankly, the mainland south of there wasn’t much suited to their lifestyle. He added that we would not likely enjoy it much either. It was hilly, with dense forest, rain all year long, and a seemingly constant westerly wind, sometimes very strong. There were no trails, because the Chono traveled by boat everywhere.

“Do you think we could cut a road through there?” I asked.

“Possibly, but you would have to maintain it all the time. It is like a temperate jungle, if you can imagine such a thing.”

“The northwest coast of the Khakhanate is like that.”

“I never got there.”

“I am taking a small force on a single ship to contact the Chono and assure them we will not bother them. Would you like to come with us and flesh out your maps?”

“I mapped that area already. If a copy gets here on time, it would serve you better than I would, but, of course, I’ll happily go with you if it will help.”

“By any chance to you understand the Chono language?”

“Yes, I do, at least enough to get by.”

“Then you will be invaluable.”

“I will come with you.”

I thanked him. The next morning Delco deepened my suspicions by showing up with a “friend.” He told me his friend had come to see him off. I acted unconcerned. He then asked what I was going to do with the big ships. I told him that they were being used to ferry some tumen back north rather than have them march all the way back. He expressed surprise and wondered if we didn’t need them to finish off the Re Che. I told him that we could finish off the Re Che with half our current numbers. As soon as autumn came, we would cross the Bio Bio and make short work of them. He excused himself to say good-bye to his friend and then came with us to board the ship. Once aboard, I noticed he immediately began to chat with the crew. Of course, on all Mongol ships the crew knows absolutely nothing about their destination, so I looked on with amusement. He next tried to speak to the officers, but they also knew nothing. He didn’t dare speak to the forbidding An Huang.

Besides Delco, I only took with me Sacook, Silpitocle, a jagun from the Maya tumen, and a man who could help us build a pier at our landing site. There was also a full contingent of sailors on the ship, of course. I didn’t let anyone know about my suspicions of Delco. I didn’t want to risk tipping him off. I did tell Sacook not to let on that he understood Chono. About midmorning we sailed out of the bay and into the west. Once we were out of sight of land, we turned south. I could see that both Silpitocle and Delco were apprehensive about being out of sight of land, but I reassured them that our ships did not need to be in sight of land, since they navigated by the stars. They were familiar with the stars and had their own names for them, but they had never navigated by them. By the fourth day, they were both clearly upset and had taken to looking longingly toward the east. Early on the fifth day, both were greatly relieved when they finally caught sight of land, an island off the port bow.

Silpitocle now returned to chatting and joking with the rest of us, but Delco was staring hard at the islands trying to get his bearings. I kept an amused eye on him. Finally, as we threaded our way through a narrow channel, he came to me to announce that we must have gone too far south since this was not the northern limit of Chono lands. I told him not to worry we were right on target. By midafternoon we pulled into the bay and dropped anchors. Again Delco came to tell me we were much too far south. I again told him not to worry, this would do. He was clearly uncomfortable, but did not know what to do. The bay was a narrow one with mountains on all sides. There was a river at the apex of the bay and a small Chono village. There were also many small Chono boats heading back to it.

I took an arban and Sacook, Silpitocle, and Delco and rowed to the village. The villagers had armed themselves with spears and clubs, but made no move to attack as we landed on their beach. They were a mean-looking people, dressed in skins or bark or leaves. A few wore bone necklaces and some, feathers. They wore nothing on their feet or heads. Some of them were scarred intentionally in patterns, but there was no tattooing or body piercing. Their housing was very rude, sticks tied together with hides or bark thrown over them in a domed shape.

I approached with Delco and Sacook. We had our shields on our arms, but our weapons were sheathed. Three of the Chono approached us with their weapons lowered, but still in hand. I told Delco what to say and kept an eye on Sacook to make sure he was saying it. Sacook gave no indication of alarm, and before long, the Chono laid down their arms and welcomed us to partake of their evening meal of raw shellfish. Somehow I kept it down. We rowed back out to the boat for the night. Delco had wanted to stay in the village, but I insisted that we all stay together. Once back on the ship, I asked Sacook if Delco had said exactly what I had told him to say and he assured me that he had.

The next day we returned to the Chono with some gifts of knives and asked their permission to build a pier on the other side of the bay from their village. They were very pleased with the gifts and happily gave us permission. Delco asked why we were building a pier and I told him it would make trade easier in this area. The village was on the east side of the bay, so we began working on the west side. I asked the Chono to send word to the other villages that we meant them no harm and had gifts for all the headmen if they would present

themselves. They were pleased that the gifts were only for the headmen, not everyone as we had done for them and they quickly fanned out to spread the word.

The Chono were much interested in our activity and no one seemed to notice that after we had cleared a small area on the shore for our camp, we were cutting trees in a pattern to make a path to the north. While the work progressed, Silpitocle, Sacook, Delco, and I explored northward. Only Delco did not realize we were mapping a road. About twelve li to the north, we found a lake that drained to the north along a river. Sacook and I were satisfied that their eastern shores would make an excellent path for the road. We returned to the camp. As we returned, Delco grasped the obvious and asked why I had misled him.

“It’s really quite simple,” I replied, “after looking at the charts, this appeared to be a better place to land. Besides, what difference does it make to you?”

“Oh, it’s just that I had friends in the border village, and I was looking forward to seeing them.”

“No problem. You can see them when we reach them.”

“Of course. I didn’t think of that.”

I detailed a man to keep an eye on him when we got back to camp. I also told him to stay in camp in case any of the headmen arrived. The headmen started arriving that evening. We presented each with a fine knife and told them we were here to protect them against their enemies. They told us that the Re Che from Chiloe Island would raid their villages and steal and enslave women and children. They did not tell me that they would raid the Kawesqar for slaves, which they sold to the Re Che. We assured them that the Re Che would not bother them for long. The day before the transport ships were to arrive, I asked Delco if he wanted to visit his friends in the north before we got there. I assured him we would have no trouble communicating with the other headmen. He seemed genuinely surprised by my offer, but jumped at the chance and quickly paddled off. Once he was gone, I had Sacook explain to the Chono that many large ships would be coming to let off men and supplies, but we would then be moving north away from their village and only a small force would remain here. They understood that it was necessary to fight the Re Che and offered to help. I asked them to spread the word to the other Chono that our ships were no threat to them. They agreed.

I next explained to Silpitocle that his fellow Kakan was in league with the Re Che, and if he went north, he would find them heading our way in force. He was stunned, but agreed to find them if they were there and added that he hoped I was wrong. He moved out immediately. By evening, the first of the big ships had dropped anchors in the bay and the men began coming ashore. I was very pleased to see they were from the Maya tumen. I explained the situation to Ah Uk who was among them. The next morning the men all pitched in to finish the pier and unload supplies. Meanwhile during the day, three more of the ships arrived, and the first one departed. By midafternoon the pier was completed and all attention had shifted to the road. The last two ships tied up to the pier to unload cargo and passengers.

The next day, the process continued. The four ships left and six more arrived. In each case the men aboard unloaded supplies quickly and the ships left. The last ship of the day had the first of the horses. Meanwhile the road had already passed the lake and was following the river north. The following few days were the same and by the end of the fifth day, there were three complete tumen ashore with one horse apiece and the road had reached a bend in the river. I had left the camp in the capable hands of Ah Uk and with Sacook was at the road head marking the path it would take.

That evening a crestfallen Silpitocle arrived to tell me that indeed a force of Re Che was on its way. It was not large, only about two thousand men, and they were on foot and being guided by Chono, including Delco. They would reach our position the next day. He apologized for being taken in by Delco. I brushed it off as a small matter and ascertained the exact direction of the force. By morning a trap was set. Silpitocle went back out to make sure they had not changed directions and by noon had returned in time for us to adjust a little to the west. Not long afterward, the enemy began filtering through the forest from the northwest heading toward our road. By the time their leading elements reached the edge of our road head, we had almost closed the trap behind them. They began to mill at the road head looking in vain for our workers and arguing with Delco.

Once the envelopment was complete, a screaming arrow was shot into the air, and the men in the clearing were quickly shot down with arrows. We closed with the rest for hand-to-hand combat, since bows were useless in this forest. They resisted bravely for a while and about half of them fell before the rest surrendered. Among the dead was the hapless Delco. He had an arrow in him, but the fatal wound was from a sword at close range, so one of the Re Che must have thought he led them into a trap intentionally. The prisoners were marched on to the port and transported north to work. I sent Silpitocle out again to see if any more Re Che were heading our way, and we continued work on the road.

The rain did not help this project, and we finally had to use the trees to line low spots, which tended to become quagmires easily, and to bridge any streams we had to cross. There was plenty of game, but the other problem we had was the lack of suitable fodder in this dense forest. I was glad we had only brought along one horse apiece for this campaign, and I sent word back that the next supply ship be loaded with fodder. On the other hand, even though it was early summer we had very mild weather. It did get windy, but on the trail we hardly noticed it.

Eight days after our ambush we reached the shore of a long lake and Silpitocle caught up with us. He reported that there was a small Re Che village at the eastern end of the lake inhabited mostly by women and children and some old men. He added that he had found a few more such villages farther north. I sent a tumen with him to surround and capture all the villagers he had found and continued working on our road. Once we reached the village at the end of the lake, we turned northwest along a river until we reached the coast. We found some grassland in this area as well as a Chono village. The Chono fled when we arrived, but we moved a little north of their village and started work on another pier. Before long the Chono returned and eventually were leading us to the neighboring Re Che villages. I sent word that the supply ships should now come to this new port and I sent a message to An Huang that he send one of the fuchuan ships to patrol the area between Chiloe Island and the new port. It occurred to me that the Re Che might also try a “naval” sortie.

By midsummer we had completed the road 620 li from our original landing site. Of course we were hardly using the southern half of the road, but did take some effort to maintain it. I had one tumen guarding the new port, one hunting, two rounding up Re Che, and two working on the road. I rotated the assignment to keep everyone from getting jaded. Much of the road went along or near the coast, and we had just reached a small river when we found a large force of Re Che on the other side in defensive formation behind felled trees. It was hard to tell how many of them there were, but it looked like a strong force. I was a little surprised that they didn't attack us as we were, but simply waited to challenge our crossing the river. It really wasn't a wide river, but we couldn't get close enough to see how deep it was without drawing enemy fire. I decided to concentrate my forces except for the tumen guarding the port.

Within three days, I had five tumen with me and best of all, Silpitocle, whom I sent out immediately to scout. He returned a day later to tell me that there was a large force across the river, but it was smaller than ours. However, they did have at least four cannon, which were well hidden, although he could show us about where they were. I sent scouts out along our side of the river and behind our lines to root out any Re Che spies and sent Silpitocle to find a suitable ford well upstream from the enemy's position. He did not disappoint and in three days all was ready.

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End of the Re Che Campaign and Return to Tamalameque 115–6 K

(Southern Chile to NC Colombia, 1483–4)

The battle began with an artillery barrage from us into the area where Silpitocle had seen the cannon. It was not answered. Next a hail of arrows was fired into the enemy position. This was answered. Meanwhile three tumen rushed across the ford upstream and swept down on the enemy position from the north. I was with this latter force so I could react quickly to any surprise. Ah Uk was in charge of the tumen across the river. Silpitocle had been sent out before dawn to look for any possible ambush. He had found nothing, he assured me when he joined us just as we swept into the left flank and rear of the enemy. They were taken by complete surprise and most fled south causing chaos in their line. Some of the Re Che did stand and fight bravely, if futilely.

Fortunately we overran their cannon battery before they could turn them on us. Finally trapped between the sea and us, the survivors surrendered.

Among the captured was the leader of this force. He had been knocked senseless by a blow to the head or he would never have been taken. We could tell he was the leader since he wore the white sash of Ordu commander. He was presented to me. He was of medium stature and muscular build like most Re Che. He was dressed in skins and his sash was wool rather than silk like ours. He held himself proudly before me, although it was obvious his head was still pounding. I spoke to him through Silpitocle. He identified himself as Talcahuenu.

“You made a brave, but futile defense of this river,” I said to him.

“You caught all my scouts behind your lines, or I would have been ready for you.”

“I don’t doubt that. You and your men will be sent to the north until this war is over.”

“I would rather die here as a free man than live as your slave in the north.”

“You will not be a slave. You are held as captives only to prevent you from fighting us. We put you to work because idle minds soon turn to mischief. It would have been better had you joined us instead of resisting.”

“It would have been better if you had left us in peace. You see what this land is like south of the Bio Bio. Why do you want it?”

“We have worse land than this, like that of the Atacames for example.”

“Must you own the whole world?”

“For the moment we seem to be taking only this landmass.”

“But why?”

“Because the Khan wants it.”

“You let a single man have so much power? Why?”

“It is our way. We have always had a Khan and they have always wanted to expand their Khanate.”

“If you do not want us for slaves, what then?”

“Once you stop fighting us, you will be left to return to your villages and way of life. You will not be allowed to make war on each other or your neighbors. If you want to fight wars, you will have to join our armies and go on campaign with us.”

“If we die and are buried far away, our spirits will never find our way to the blessed land across the sea, and we will wander the other world forever.”

“The spirit world is not like that. You can find your way easily to wherever you wish to go.”

“Are you a machi?” (A sort of shaman, Silpitocle explained.)

“No. But I have visited places far away in the spirit world and never gotten lost.”

“How can this be?”

“You need a spirit guide. Go within, fasting and meditating until you find your guide. Then ask him to take you where you want to go.”

“You have done this?”

“Yes.”

“Will you show me how?”

“I will.”

While the men fanned out to secure our position and a bridge was thrown across the river, I sat down with Silpitocle, who was still interpreting, and Talcahuenu and taught them both how to seek their spirit guides. I

then made sure they were given some solitude to make their quest, although the latter was kept under discreet guard. While they were so engaged, I assessed the situation. We had captured two of their cannon and destroyed the other two. They only had enough powder to fire each a few times, which explained their hesitancy to use them. I did notice that the cannon looked a little the worse for wear and were probably not safe to fire. It seems they did not know how to maintain them properly. I also noticed that their powder was damp. It looked as though we did them a favor preventing them from firing the cannon. I sent four of the tumen out to round up any Re Che and sent Sacook with them to map the area. Meanwhile the other two tumen and the prisoners began to work on the road again.

It took Talcahuenu three days to reach his spirit guide, but he finally made it, although he was quite weak from the fasting. I noticed a serenity in him and he spoke no more of wanting to die, but threw himself into the road building with an enthusiasm that spread to the other captives. Silpitocle gave up his quest after a day, telling me he would try again some other time. I sent him out to look for Re Che again. Several days later Sacook returned with a map. It appeared that we were on a peninsula bordered by a large bay to the northwest and a long estuary in the north. He suggested that we turn the road north to cut across the base of the peninsula. Meanwhile the tumen returned with a few hundred more Re Che women and children from the nearby villages and I sent them on to the port for transport north.

The path Sacook had chosen for us was a rough one up over a ridge and down the other side. Even with the help of the prisoners, it took four days to reach the estuary. As we were working our way along the shore of the estuary, Silpitocle returned to report that the Re Che were gathering across a river that emptied into the base of the estuary. But there were not many of them, so he thought it was just a rear guard. He left again to find the real force. Four days later, we were at the end of the estuary and across the river from the enemy. We exchanged a few arrows and they withdrew into the woods. I sent scouts inland to the north and east and more west along the river to see what was there. I sent Sacook with the last group to map.

I kept the Re Che in the woods engaged by firing an occasional rocket into their position and picking off anyone who showed himself. Meanwhile the Re Che prisoners were marched south to the new port to be transported to the north. We continued the road parallel to the river, but behind a screen of trees, since it was too wide at this point to bridge. I received word that the two fuchuan I had requested were now on patrol and had already intercepted some Re Che boats and shelled and destroyed concentrations of their boats on Chiloe's eastern shore, where most of the villages happened to be. It seemed the Re Che had made a brazen attack on one of the fuchuan at night, but the watch detected them, and they were driven off. I had to admit they were brave.

On the third day, the scouts all returned to report there were no Re Che to the north or east, only mountains. To the northwest, however, the river made a sharp turn to the northeast where it drained a large lake surrounded by mountains. There were small bands of Re Che all along the river, on the far side, and no fordable spot was detectable. There was an impressive waterfall, however. It was clear we would have to force our way across this river, and from the strength of the current, it wouldn't be easy.

Our road was now about thirty-six li upstream from the mouth of the river, and the area on the far side of the river appeared rather flat. It looked like the perfect place to cross for our road. I called together the tumen commanders and asked if any of them had men that were well versed in infiltrative tactics. They all assured me that all their men were so trained. I explained that I needed a few jagun that could cross the river soundlessly on a suspended rope, neutralize any of the enemy on the other side, and hold the shore until we could throw a bridge across the river. The bridge would be in sections so we could put it in place quickly overnight. The longer the enemy was unaware of our activity, the better, so supreme stealth was necessary.

After some discussion among them, they finally agreed that the best men to use would be those from some of the jungle tribes well south and east of Tamalameque. They made up about half of one of the tumen. I told their commander to get them ready to move at dark the following day, which would have a moonless night. Meanwhile I asked for the strongest swimmer and a very long length of rope. About this time a soaking wet Silpitocle presented himself. He reported that even though this was the best place for the Re Che to stop us, they were instead massing behind a river some distance to the east. There were only about a thousand of them strung along this river. He suggested that perhaps they did not hold this line because the very large volcano, which

loomed over the far side of the river, was smoking and rumbling. There was another volcano also smoking, but not rumbling to the north across the river in that direction. Perhaps they knew something we didn't.

That gave me pause, but I decided we would have to chance it anyway and would not tarry in the shadows of the two volcanoes. I explained my plan to him and he told me how far upstream the swimmer would have to enter the river to get across it near where we wanted him. He also suggested that he was the strongest swimmer. I reluctantly agreed, for I knew he was the stealthiest man we had. He went to rest. Later that day Sacook returned from his latest mapping foray. The lake to the north was very long and fed by rushing rivers. He had only been able to map the southern shore and it was obvious that going around the lake was not much of an option.

The night of the operation was not only moonless but also cloudy. Just before sunset a light rain began to fall. Silpitocle assured me that it would make his task even easier. We attached the rope to a large strong tree solidly anchored behind the first row of trees, and Silpitocle carried the rest of the rope letting it out along the bank until he was far enough upstream to satisfy him. Actually, there wasn't much rope left at that point, just enough to tie around his waist. He slipped into the river without a sound and began swimming across. He was soon lost in the gloom and the rain. I followed the disappearing rope downstream until I reached the tree where it was attached. The rope eventually came out of the water and grew taut. The men began to cross on the rope.

Once they were all across, we began working on the bridge. It was difficult in the rain because everything became slippery. But we worked steadily through the night and before dawn the bridge was in place. I started the men across as soon as it was ready. By first light we were all across and fanning out up and down the river. We only killed or captured a few hundred of the rear guard; the rest melted away. It was obvious that a pontoon bridge was too precarious over a river like this one, so I got work started on a suspension bridge. The man we had brought to build the ports knew how to build bridges as well and took to the task with enthusiasm.

After clearing the riverbanks, we swarmed around the volcano and down the west bank of the estuary. There was a large lake north of the volcano and a few abandoned villages on the lakeshore. By evening we were on the western side of the volcano. The next day we reached the bay and the following day started to move west again. It took two more days for the tumen that was clearing the estuary to rejoin us. There were no Re Che there, but it was quite a distance. By the time they rejoined us, we had brushed aside another rear guard and were just reaching their latest river line. This one was impressive. It was a river that drained the large lake into the sea. But the river proved to be about one hundred li long. I couldn't imagine how they could defend the whole thing.

Instead of challenging them, however, I decided to consolidate. They had evacuated all their people, but I saw what was an ideal place for another port and as soon as our engineer had finished the suspension bridge, I put him to work on the port. I also had Sacook map the newly conquered area. I was surprised to find out when he returned that they had allowed us to cut off Chiloe Island from their lines. By the time the first pier was in place on the new port, Ignacebalikh, after Uncle Theodore's first son, it was mid autumn. I had sent word that the supply ships should now put in at this port and before long the first one arrived. I left Ah Uk in charge of the Ordu and returned to Theodorbalikh on the supply ship with Sacook and Silpitocle. It was time to put the rest of my plan into action.

When we reached the port, I could see it had been completed and Buzun was just putting some finishing touches on it. I paused long enough to heap some praise on him before continuing on to the camp. I sent Sacook on to finish his mapping. When I arrived in the camp, I found Theodore sulking in his tent while Cinnashote was keeping the men busy on patrol and clearing our side of the river of the dense forest. I approved his efforts and thanked him for keeping the fifteen tumen active. I had the men decamp and march up the river to a spot about two hundred li from the mouth and organized a new camp.

Next I detached six tumen, had them pass Theodore and me in review, and march north as if they were leaving. Once they reached the Laha River, they turned east to follow the path Silpitocle and I had mapped out the previous winter. Much as I wanted to be with this Ordu, I put Cinnashote in command, to his undying gratitude. He was as happy to have independent command as he was to be rid of my hapless cousin. I reluctantly sent Silpitocle with him knowing how invaluable he would be to the enterprise.

Now I turned to our part. I started three pontoon bridges about half a li apart across the Bio Bio. I set all our cannon along the riverbank in plain view to perhaps draw some fire from theirs, but none came. It was not until the bridges were almost complete that we finally heard from their cannon. One of them blew itself up with its first shot, a second managed a second shot before blowing up, the third was silenced by our counter battery fire, but not before destroying one of our bridges. If they had more cannon, they did not use them. We continued to fire across the river while the last two bridges were completed. Then the men poured across and fanned out to form a strong bridgehead. We found a few intact cannon that had failed to fire and been abandoned. I wondered if they had any more. We had accounted for ten so far and most tumen had twelve.

I could see how vulnerable the bridges were so I had enough supplies for many days brought across and then asked Buzun to build a suspension bridge over the river. I detached a tumen to guard and help with this task. With the remaining seven tumen, we began to move south into the wooded valley between the mountains. Six of the tumen proceeded on foot while one remained on horseback in reserve. Before we had gone far, the Re Che had taken advantage of the swift current and sent a flaming raft down the river to set our eastern bridge aflame. The next day a number of large logs tied together splintered our remaining bridge. We replaced the bridges, of course, but they continued to destroy them until the suspension bridge was completed. They were unable to harm that.

As we progressed slowly southward, I sent scouts to find the enemy, but those that returned had found no concentrations, only small bands. These continued to employ hit-and-run and ambush attacks against our flanks, but these were not particularly effective. We easily brushed aside any opposition we met, but were slowed down by all the rivers we had to cross. We came across abandoned villages and fields cut out of the forest. They apparently used the slash-and-burn technique to clear the forest, as some of the clearings were still full of charred tree stumps. I kept the tumen fairly close together, so progress was slowed as we zigzagged across the valley. About one hundred li south of the Bio Bio, we had just turned toward the west again when our left or east flank was attacked in force. The tumen on the flank was able to hold out until the reserve smashed into the enemy and sent them reeling to the south. We were able to capture quite a few of them.

While this was going on, an even larger force attacked the right or west flank. They attacked from the front and our men were able to withdraw slowly so we could bring the next tumen to bear and then slowly drive them back until the third tumen was able to join in and force them to withdraw. I could see that our line had been pulled apart and suspected that an attack on the center might be difficult to repulse. I had the cannon massed and loaded with shot just in time as the largest enemy force charged across a clearing toward our center. The massed cannon shredded their attack and they fell back in confusion. I had to admit, it had been a good plan. We tried to pursue, but didn't have the numbers to do so effectively.

I concentrated the men and continued south. Again we were subjected to hit-and-run attacks, which annoyed, but did not slow us down very much. We eventually reached a large cleared area around a rather significant village along the Cautin River. It was nestled between two mountains, a larger one to the north and a smaller one to the south. The village was on the north side of the river, but they had fortified both sides of the river with log breastworks. The breastworks were less than half a li from the town and the cleared area in front of them was almost two li.

It was obvious that they hoped we would divide our force and attack on both sides of the river. I suspected there was a force standing by to fall on our rear as soon as we committed to battle. I stayed north of the river and advanced to just out of bowshot. I put two tumen on the front, two facing the rear, one facing the right flank, and three in the middle in reserve. I used the river as my left flank since it was too deep and swift to ford. I next sent out scouts to find the rest of their forces. I should mention that all this time I had been consulting with Theodore exploring options with him and helping him understand why I was taking my decisions. I was rather surprised that he still did not seem to have any feel for tactics at all and, in fact, was usually too paralyzed to suggest anything. I sincerely hoped that he did not make war his career.

A more pleasant surprise at this time was the arrival of my nephew, John, Theodore's son. I was delighted to finally meet him and I thought he favored Mahwissa more than Theodore. He informed me that my son was well and learning much from his teacher. He also assured me that his parents were well. He did have to report

that Mathilde seemed to be getting weaker, although he didn't know why. Aspenquid also seemed to have lost a step or two. Finally, he thought I should know that Kujujuk was reported to be ailing. I was equally sorry to hear the last three. He added that young Carlotta was thriving with her relatives in the northeast. He remained with us for the rest of the campaign and soon found himself quite busy.

It was now full winter and the scouts began to trickle back and all reported no sign of the enemy to the east or north. There were some of them guarding the paths around and over the mountain north of the town. There was also a large concentration on the south side of a river some twenty-five li south of the town. I could see that there was a pontoon bridge over the Cautin on the western end of the village, so they could evacuate if things became tense. It appeared to be that the whole point of this exercise was so that we would lose men charging across an open field and then fighting through the town. I decided to mess up their plans a little. I had the men cut down some large trees and tie the logs together into a formidable ram which was then thrown into the still swift-flowing Cautin. It smashed into their bridge tearing away the greater part of it.

We opened up with our artillery firing solid shot into their barricades, splintering the logs and wounding the men behind them. Once the barricades were ruined, we followed with shrapnel blasts to further clear the front. Then the mounted tumen rode up and fired flaming arrows into the village setting everything ablaze. Finally once confusion reigned, we charged into the village staying out of bowshot from the south side of the river. Finally we moved the cannon up behind the remains of the barricade and began raking the enemy across the river until they fled to the west, then south behind the southern mountain. We did not get many captives in the village, but we did round up a few hundred who fled west and some more who had been on the north mountain.

Soon we had a bridge over the river, and leaving a tumen behind to mop up, we brought up the horses and surged across. We almost captured their bridge across the Huichahue River, but they fired at it the last minute stranding hundreds of their men on our side. We rounded them up and detached a tumen to take all the prisoners north. We swept along the river looking for any stragglers, but didn't catch many. While I was looking for a good spot to cross the river, the enemy suddenly seemed to melt away.

We quickly bridged the river and rushed south. We did not get far when we discovered the reason the Re Che had withdrawn. Cinnashote's Ordu had funneled out from the mountains and hit them in the rear and flank. He captured thousands of them, but some few did manage to slip across the Tolten and disappear into the woods. Still we had captured many of their women and children this time and that had to dishearten them. We crossed the Tolten and continued south. I sent Cinnashote to clear the Tolten valley all the way to the coast, and then continue south along the coast. I kept Silpitocle with me. We continued to capture their women and children who were trying to flee south on foot as well as some of their men who had become too exhausted to continue. Organized opposition began to dissolve and we were able to hunt down and capture small bands of them.

Meanwhile Ah Uk had not been idle in the south. He defied the two volcanoes and sent four of his tumen around the large lake to flank the enemy position. The eruption they counted on did not materialize although the more southerly one continued to smoke and rumble ominously. Ah Uk's command bagged the bulk of the enemy on the western shore of the lake. They then streamed northward and we met them at the Lollehue River about 240 li north of their starting point, the Maullin River. Once our forces joined, there was only left some mopping up except for Chiloe Island. By the end of spring, it was done, and at some point along the way, Waikiyaf was killed. We did not recover the body, but he was no longer a factor. On the other hand, Talcahuenu proved to be a force for reconciliation between the Re Che and us. We allowed them to return to their villages except in the far south. Most of our tumen began withdrawing north.

Chiloe Island was attacked in the summer. I let Cinnashote handle the entire operation, and by the early fall, they, too, had surrendered. Their resistance was limited because they were unable to fish or hunt seals since the two fuchuan continued to patrol and sink anything they tried to launch. They also shelled and destroyed all their villages along the coast forcing them inland where they were more fragmented and unable to mount a serious defense. Late in the fall we contacted elements of the Kawesqar and forced peace between them and the Chono. By the following summer, we had made contact with the Yamana although they had already been contacted by the Khanate of the Green Mist, which claimed the large island off the coast. Of course, by then, I was gone.

Once the Kawesqar were contacted, I felt the campaign was finished, and with Theodore, Cinnashote, and Silpitocle sailed north from Ignacebalikh to Theodorbalikh. From here we marched north with the original fifteen tumen we had brought with us three years before. It had been a hard campaign and few of the tumen still had half their full strength. The six tumen that had joined us a year later remained behind to complete pacification and root out any diehards. Ah Uk was left in charge of this task and of any further road, bridge, or port building he felt was necessary.

When we reached Theodorbalikh, I was given dispatches from Tamalameque. These included Sacook's long-lamented map of the southern islands, forwarded from the Green Mist. I enjoyed looking at it, even if it was too late to help. Sacook was still mapping the interior at this time, so I couldn't share it with him. Instead I sent it on to Ah Uk whom we appointed governor of the Re Che lands. He had earlier named Nezahualpili as commander of the Maya tumen, which was returning with me, telling me that the boy had more than proved himself worthy of command. I was very proud of him. Also among the dispatches was the latest letter from Luis. I read and answered it before we started back.

This one was dated Martxoa, 1482. He started by expressing the hope that my campaign was going well. Then he said the expected hostilities had broken out between Espainia and the perfidious Mairu (Moors). The Mairu king of Granada had besieged Zahara, but had been forced to lift the siege by Ferdinando. God was clearly on the side of Espainia since there was a three-party civil war in Granada among the king, his brother, and his son. Otherwise, Hungaria was still getting the best of the emperor and the revolt in Portugal by Ferdinando de Braganza was not doing well at all. There was also word of a civil war in the evil Ottoman Empire over the succession to the murderous Mohammed the Second, called the Conqueror. It was he who had conquered the Byzantine Empire. Nothing else was happening.

I summed up the campaign for him, and then I asked him what the Byzantine Empire was. I also asked him if he really thought God took sides in wars. Since he loved all his creation that did not seem logical. I also ventured that I suspected the Mairu were no more or less evil than anyone else. In my experience the word evil was bandied about too freely when discussing those who disagreed with you. It was beginning to lose any real meaning.

John decided to stay behind and see what he could learn from the local healers. Before we left, he gave me a special pack of things I needed to take now that I was older. It was hard to think of myself as older, but I was forty-four years old now and I supposed that would be considered "older." Whatever they were, I took them faithfully and still do and continue to enjoy good health.

We reached Cuzco in early winter. Buzun had been appointed governor not long after he completed the suspension bridge over the Bio Bio. Theodore asked him if he knew what had become of Paula, but he only knew that she wasn't there when he arrived. We did not tarry long, but continued north. It took another season to reach Tamalameque, but it was autumn when we arrived rather than spring because of the change along the way. We filed into the training camp southeast of the capital and the following day Khan Henry came out to thank the tumen, pay them, and dismiss them. Thoxe was with him. Theodore was beside himself with concern about his cousin Paula, but I urged him not to leave the Ordu until his father had dismissed them.

As soon as Khan Henry turned to thank us, Theodore blurted out his questions about this cousin. His father was clearly annoyed with him and Thoxe tried to deflect the question. I discreetly excused myself to bid the men farewell, especially the Maya tumen. When I returned, Theodore looked crestfallen and Khan Henry took me aside to thank me for my flawless handling of the campaign. He urged me to stay in the capital as long as I wished as his guest. I thanked him and agreed, thinking Theodore might need me. I also brought Silpitocle's invaluable service to his attention and urged him to consider a suitable office for him. He was intrigued and promised to do so. He also told me I had some dispatches waiting for me in the capital. He returned with Theodore leaving Thoxe behind.

Thoxe told me that Paula had been sent to Tlatelolco to marry Khan John. I expressed the fond hope that she would be happy. He also thanked me and asked if Theodore had betrayed any talent for war. I told him frankly that he had not and urged him not to send him on campaign again. He replied that he had expected as much and

urged me to spend some time in the capital with Theodore. I promised I would. He then went to talk to Silpitocle to find out how the Khanate could repay him for his service.

I told Cimnashote that I felt I should spend some time in Tamalameque with Theodore and he understood, but had no wish to spend any more time with him and wanted to go back to the Blue Sky. I told him I would join him soon and urged him to visit his parents and give them my love. He said he would. We rode together to Tamalameque, and then he continued on to the coast and a ship home. I rode up to the palace. I was saluted and ushered into the entrance hall. There I was greeted by the head of the guard who led me to a reception hall and gave me my dispatches. These proved to be two letters each from Watomika and Luis.

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Exile on Amona 116–23 K

(Mona Is., Puerto Rico, 1484–91)

Watomika's first letter thanked me for passing on the news about Sacook and securing his release from the Re Che, the second thanked me for telling him Sacook was still well. I wrote him a note explaining that both his letters had caught up with me in Tamalameque and that I deserved no credit for extricating Sacook from the Re Che, since my part in that was only coincidental. I went on to tell him that Sacook was mapping the interior of the Re Che lands and was truly a credit to him.

Luis' first letter dated Martxoa, 1483, thanked me for the information on the campaign and wished me continued success. To answer my questions, he told me that he knew of no comprehensive history of Europa; the professors in the university lectured from their notes rather than from any books. There were some histories of the old Roman Empire written by the Romans, which had survived, but he had never read them. Next, he explained that the Knights of Santu Juan were an order of religious knights who had taken vows like monks, but were warriors whose order was founded to defend the Holy Land. Originally, they had been in the Holy Land along with the Knights Templar, but the evil Musulmen had driven them out and they in turn had conquered the island of Rhodes in 1309. Then he explained that Europa had become Kristau (Christian) over a long time. While the Roman Emperor Constantinus had become Kristau there had been a lot of backsliding and heresy, which God had to punish; that was why the barbarians overran the empire. I felt he was evading my question there. Next, he expressed shock that I didn't know that Gabon-egun was the day that Kristo was born. The day was Abendua (December) 25. He helpfully added that Abendua was the twelfth month of the year. Finally he announced that he had indeed married the year before and was the proud father of a son named Carlos, after me. He explained that Carlos was the equivalent of Karl in his language. That was rather flattering, but I hope the boy didn't inherit my family's curse.

Moving on to the happenings in Europa, in Espainia, the treacherous Mairu had ambushed King Ferdinando at Loja and defeated him. It was a dark day for Kristautasun. In Portugal the revolt of Ferdinando of Braganza against King Juan the Second was still not going well. In Italia, Venezia and the Aitasaindutza were at war with the cities of Milano, Firenze, and Napoles over the city of Ferrara. Hungaria continued to ravage the possessions of the emperor. Ingalaterra has invaded Ezkozia under the figurehead of Alejandro, the younger brother of King Jaime the Third, of Ezkozia. The king had to abandon his capital to his brother's forces because of a revolt of his nobles. The Ezkozia nobles were always revolting, it seemed, and since they were divided into factions over which noble had the most valid claim to be king. Word had also reached him that the civil war in the Ottoman Empire had been won by Bayazid. He had withdrawn his troops from the Italia city of Otranto and was said to be avoiding hostilities. No doubt that was God's work. There was nothing else to report.

The second report was dated Martxoa, 1484. He began by expressing his regret that he had not heard from me, but he understood that it might happen since I was so far away. He added that he hoped the campaign was going as well as Watomika had assured him it was. He wondered if Watomika really had any way of knowing how something so far away was going. He also mentioned that his wife and young son, Carlos, were fine although a second son, Jenaro, had died in infancy. He did not know why, but it was not uncommon for such things to happen. He hoped my son was well.

As to events in Europa, in Espainia, King Ferdinando had captured the city of Lucena and with it, Boabdil, the son of the nefarious Mairu King Hassan of Granada. Boabdil was released after acknowledging Ferdinando and Isabella as his sovereigns. His father and uncle, Abdullah, repudiated his pledge. Hassan, Abdullah and Boabdil were engaged in a three-way civil war over the throne of Granada. This was proof that God was on the side of Ferdinando. Meanwhile Ferdinando was reorganizing his army into a professional force much like the formidable Suizos army. He was also building up the fleet. In Portugal, King Juan the Second had crushed the revolt of Ferdinando de Braganza. Frantzia had a new ruler, Carlos the Eighth. In Italia the war over Ferrara continued with the alliance of Milano, Firenze, and Napoles getting the better of it so far. Hungaria continued ravaging the emperor's eastern possessions and would likely annex them if he couldn't stop them. The treacherous Ottoman Empire conquered the province of Herzegovina. Finally, King Jaime the Third of Ezkozia had forced his brother to flee and retook his capital. This was because King Eduardo the Fourth of Ingalaterra had died and his brother, Ricardo the Third had taken over for his young nephew, Eduardo the Fifth, and crushed a revolt by one of his nobles. That was all there was to report.

I wrote back a long letter detailing the just completed campaign, and then I expressed my condolences for the loss of his child and assured him that my son was well. Next I asked a few questions. What did he mean by the Holy Land? How was it that Kristau cities of Italia were fighting the head of the Kristau religion? Had they become pagan or Musulmen? Who are these "nobles" that were revolting against the kings? Do the kings share power with them somehow? I explained that the only revolt we ever experienced in the Khakhanate had been by a disgruntled tribe. We did have a power struggle or two over succession to the Khanate, but they never turned into a war. Finally I added that Watomika would know the outcome of my campaign, since dispatches from the front were sent to the capitals of the Khanates and from there on to the governors. I also wrote letters to Theodore, Mathilde, and Iskagua and Ghigooie telling them about the success of the campaign and thanking Theodore for sending John and praising Cimmashote's part in the campaign to Iskagua and Ghigooie. I sent off all the letters, then went to look for my young cousin, Theodore. I found him in the garden in the center of the house watching the tiny hummingbirds sampling the many flowers.

He was obviously morose again, but I sat next to him and tried to draw him out. He took a while, but finally acknowledged my presence and after a time started talking. He admitted that he felt more than brotherly affection for his cousin and was devastated that she had been married off to his miserable cousin John. I pointed out that John was a suitably distant relative and furthermore it allied the Khanate of the Clouds to the Khakhanate by marriage since John was the grandson of the Khakhan. He admitted that he knew I was right, but when one is in love, one doesn't care about what was right. I consoled him as best I could and urged him to be patient; there was always more than one person with whom one could fall in love. He pointed out that if that were true, I would have remarried. I tried to explain that the special relationship I had with Carlotta could not be found with anyone else, but were I so inclined, I was sure I could find another woman with whom I could be happy. We continued talking over the next few days and he slowly emerged from his depression and went back to being a young man.

What really helped him snap out of it was his little parrot, Q'omer-inti-tuso'h. She was quite a character. She would play incessantly, rolling over on her back and savaging pieces of wood, leather or cloth. She would sing the opening lines of several songs in one of the local languages. It seems she would only imitate one of the servants, who, among her other tasks, had to take care of the bird. She would laugh or cry just like the servant did and would prattle on in her gibberish version of the girl's language with occasional real words thrown in at random. The singing was clear and the notes and words perfect, however. The girl joined us one day to sing along with Q'omer. I had to wonder what the very dignified Cuauhtzin would think of this little green bundle. I, of course, thought she was most charming. I also got to see what Theodore had meant about her feathers defocusing your eyes. It was an odd sensation.

I was about to leave Tamalameque when word reached us that the Khakhan had died. An official period of mourning was decreed and I took part in all the ceremonies since I did regard Kujujuk highly. When the mourning period was over, it was midwinter and I decided it was time I returned to the Blue Sky. I asked for an audience with Khan Henry. It was quickly granted.

"I was about to send for you," he explained when I presented myself.

“Do you need my services?”

“No, you have already done more than I could ask of you. I have received a message from the new Khakhan, Juchi. It does not make sense, but it is not my place to question his orders.”

“Do his orders concern me?”

“Yes. It seems you are to report to Amona Island and remain there until further notice. I don’t even know where that is. Do you?”

“Yes. It is a small island between the large islands of Aiti and Boriquen. It is the place to which Kujujuk exiled his daughter Chabi. I suspect the hand of my cousin John in this somehow.”

“After all you have done for me during this recent campaign, I am willing to report that you left already and I can’t find you.”

“Thank you. It means a lot to me that you would offer to do that. It won’t be necessary, however. I have no fear of spending my last years in such a place. Solitude does not bother me at all.”

“Will you at least accept an honor guard to escort you to Yumabalikh?”

“If that will please you, I will accept it.”

“My son and I will be leading the escort.”

“Thank you.”

“We will leave in the morning.”

I was surprised that John had gotten Juchi to exile me, but I was not at all upset about it. I was surprised that Khan Henry wanted to escort me to the port. That was not only an honor to me, it was a bold statement of disapproval for the order. I wondered if there would be any repercussions from Juchi. I hoped not. Meanwhile I found a quiet spot and summoned my guide and Carlotta. We went to visit John. He was aware of us and soon joined us. I explained my situation and urged him to stay where he was and not try to see me since I would be unable to protect him and it was such a long journey. He told me not to worry; he would visit me every day in spirit and come immediately if he was needed. We all clung to each other until I fell asleep.

The next morning after a fine breakfast, Khan Henry, Theodore, and I mounted up in front of two jagun from the Khan’s guard in their white uniforms, and an equal number of attendants and rode north to Yumabalikh. We moved at a leisurely pace camping along the way in the Khan’s luxurious tent. It took twice as long as usual to reach Yumabalikh. All along the way, both Khan Henry and Theodore chatted amiably with me as though we were old friends. It was strange since I barely knew the former. When we reached the port, Khan Henry stood on the pier with me while Theodore led the troop by in review. Then he walked me to the ship, a fuchuan again, and bade me a surprisingly affectionate farewell.

The whole scene was not lost on the ship’s crew, for I was treated with deference even by the typically stolid Chosin captain, who personally escorted me to my cabin and asked permission to sail with the next tide. My cabin was easily the nicest on the ship, but then I seemed to be the only passenger. On the ninth day, we dropped anchor off the west coast of Boriquen. I was rowed ashore to a small village and was wished well. I thought that was rather strange, but I went on into the village and asked to see the headman or guama, as he was called in Taino. The guama, whose name was Daguao, was a very dignified-looking man with the bearing of a warrior in spite of his advanced age. I asked him who ruled this particular province. He told me that this was the province of Yagueca and the kaseke’s name was Behechio. I asked if he could have someone guide me to him and he insisted that he would take me there the next morning and asked me to be his guest for the evening. The name Behechio was familiar to me, but I couldn’t place it at the time. That evening he asked if I was returning from campaign and, when I said I was, asked about it. I gave him the short version and he was most interested. It was no surprise to me to learn that he had been on campaign in the Green Mist for some ten years in his youth.

The next morning we rode up a trail along a pleasant river called the Yaguez until we left it around noon to follow another path that seemed to veer a little to the southeast. The vegetation was not exactly lush like in a jungle, but it was rather thick. Once we gained the trees, we lost the breeze and the humidity became more uncomfortable. The terrain was hilly, but not difficult. After a short time, the trail brought us to another river trail. This river was called the Maricao. This proved to be a more narrow valley and the vegetation became more lush. Toward midafternoon we reached Yagueca, Behechio's town. We were taken to guest caney, as they called their thatch huts, and all our needs were tended until Behechio returned from a trip. Daguao and I traded war stories along the ride to Yagueca and until he left the next morning. I had a very pleasant stay waiting for Behechio. I had been among the Taino in Xaymaca before, but never on this island. I found them just as friendly and generous. I wandered around and looked at their fields. They grew their staple, cazabi (yucca), in mounds, about knee high and perhaps twice as wide, that were called conuco. They would also plant some other things in the mounds like boniata (sweet yucca), a similar plant, and batatas (sweet potatoes) or camohtli as we called them in Nahuatl. They also grew a little centli, which they called ector, but it was not an important food for them. They also grew some types of etl and chili, but not nearly the varieties used in Anahuac. They grew cotton for clothing and also cultivated fruit, especially matzahli, which they called anana (bananas), and a sweet acid yellow fruit they called guayava. I also saw their ball courts, a very pale reflection of those in Anahuac.

After three days, Behechio returned and I was immediately brought to his rather large house that was called a bohio. He was a tall, well-proportioned man somewhat younger than me. He was sitting on his low, backless ceremonial chair glowering at the door as I entered. When I walked in and presented myself, the stern look he wore dissolved into a huge smile.

"It is you! The man who saved me from the snow."

"I did?"

"Was I merely one of many you pulled from death's hands?"

"A snow storm? Wait, now I remember. That was a long time ago. You certainly look a lot better than when I saw you last."

"I spent days trying to find you to thank you once I recovered, but no one knew where you were."

"They were probably just protecting me from a stranger. That has proved necessary over the years."

"Well, very well met at last. Thank you for all your help to a very young and very foolish boy, who did not appreciate the danger posed by snow. What can I do to serve you?"

"I need a boat to take me to Amona Island where I have been exiled by the Khakhan."

"What? Why?"

I tried to explain the situation to him and he offered to report that I must have gotten lost in the jungle. I told him I really didn't mind the exile and it would be best if I were there in the event that I was needed again. I did ask him if he would see that my correspondence reached me. He guaranteed it. Then he insisted that it would be a personal insult if I didn't let him send his uncle and aunt, Macon and Amana, with me to take care of all my needs. I pointed out that an exile was supposed to be alone. He replied that it wasn't my fault that he had sent them there to watch over the island before I arrived and it would be very unfair to demand that they leave. I agreed as long as it wasn't too odious to them. He explained that they had no children and would enjoy the change. Somehow I wondered, but they have never given me any reason to think they have been put upon in the slightest. They are a very close couple and really enjoy the time by themselves.

I asked Behechio about Amona, and he told me that it had long been inhabited by people from the Aiti province of Higüey. When the unfortunate Chabi was sent there, all were removed back to Higüey and well compensated for their discomfiture, but warned of dire consequences should they ever return. It was part of his duty to see that the island remained uninhabited, so he would periodically send a few boats out there to check on it, but he had never been there himself. Since people had lived there, I had to suppose it was the solitude rather than the

island, itself, that had proved intolerable to Chabi. I asked if they fed her or left her to fend for herself. He said that they had been ordered to deliver food to her every few days. He understood it was always a trial with her trying to get on the boats. Everyone was relieved when she killed herself. For the first time I felt a little sorry for her.

A few days later, Macon, Amana, and I rode to Daguao's village on the coast where we spent the night as his guests. The next morning we were rowed in the large, painted dugout canoe belonging to Behechio all the way out to the island by a crew of sixty men. With us were all the things we would need to build two huts and enough food and water to tide us over until they returned in several days. We landed on a small beach on the southwest side of the island and Macon and Amana made a point of getting on shore before me, to further the fiction that they were there first. The crew unloaded everything and carried it up the precarious trail dug into the cliff side to the top. They then insisted on building the two caney's under Amana's strict supervision, again theirs was built before mine. She then fixed a fine meal and they stayed the night. We had a fine time trading stories until quite late. They left at dawn.

The next day, Macon went off to fish, Amana went looking for a place to plant a garden, and I decided to explore the island. I spent most of the first few days walking around the perimeter of the island. I calculated it to be at least fifty li and shaped sort of like an etl. Over the next few days I discovered that it was about nineteen li from east to west and a bit more than twelve li from north to south. The vegetation was sort of desert scrub except for some mangrove forests and in the several sinkholes, one of which Amana was using for her garden. The island is full of sea birds nesting in the cliffs and a rather large version of the lizards called cuetzpalin in Nahuatl and iguana in Taino. There are also bats in the many caves, but no other animals on the island. There are some rather large spiders. They are not the hairy ones I knew well from the coastal regions of Anahuac, but just large long-legged spiders. They fed on the also large and obnoxious flies. There are also some parrots in the mangrove forests.

The island was mostly gray limestone over tan dolomite and jugged out of the ocean as much as two hundred feet. The largest beach was on the southwest side near where we landed. Just east of that is a thick mangrove forest. The cliff is over a li from the shore in this area. There are smaller beaches on the west and southeast shores, but elsewhere the ocean laps at the bottom of the cliffs. I found the remains of two ball courts on the island, so it must have had a good-sized population at one time. Some of the caves had pictures painted on the wall and carvings of various symbols and creatures of Taino myth. I also noticed a very small but very tall island off the northwest coast. It is probably ten li away. Over that first year, I explored and mapped as many of the caves as I could reach, but finally grew tired of it.

I had arrived on the island in late winter. Late in the following spring, I received letters from Theodore, Watomika, and Luis. The letter from Theodore thanked me for my kind words about John, and then gave me some devastating news. My sister Mathilde had died late that winter. She had taken ill, but died before he could reach her. Aspenquid was devastated and looked completely lost. Theodore was not optimistic about him. The older children had been notified and Sarah was on her way to tell Little Carlotta. The latter was to have returned home this summer, but under the circumstances would be given the choice of staying where she was or going back with Sarah. He also wanted me to know that the Khakhan exiled me in order to stop John's attempts on my life. He warned John that if he made any further such moves, he would be sent to replace me on Amana. Theodore added that he didn't think I would be here forever.

Watomika wrote that he had been transferred to the capital. He regretted my exile and would use his good offices to reverse it. He assured me that his successor, Beedut, would see that I got all my correspondence from Luis. He included a short note from Beedut affirming that and expressing being honored to do so. That was most kind. From his name, he must be an Anishinabe. I didn't know many of them had entered the Khan's service, but they are a fine people, not known for empty promises.

Luis congratulated me on my successful campaign, but expressed his shock and disbelief that I had been rewarded with exile and asked if I wanted him to rescue me. All he would need is some idea where I was, and he was sure he could get his fellows to pick me up on the way home. In answer to my questions, he wrote that the Holy Land was the place where Kristo was born and lived. It was the land that his presence made holy. The

evil Ottomans dominated it at moment. I could find it on the map in the southeast corner of the Mediterranean Sea. The cities in Italia were still Kristau, but were fighting the Aitasantu in his capacity as the ruler of the Aitasainduaren States (Papal States). I would find them on the map in the middle of the Italia peninsula. Finally he explained that nobles were the tier just below the king, although there was a hierarchy of nobles. The highest nobles were dukes, earls, and barons, and they tended to rule over large areas. They generally had sworn fealty to their king, but often felt that they should be king. Because of all the intermarriage among kings and nobles, things could get rather confusing, especially if a king died without any direct heirs.

As to the events of the past year in Europa, King Ferdinando was still working on his army and navy, and had only taken a small area in the western part of the Mairu Kingdom of Granada. In Italia, Venice and the Aitasantu had been defeated and Ferrara was free. Mateo was still ravaging the emperor's lands. The evil Ottomans had attacked the Poloinia province of Moldavia. Its ruler, Esteban (Steven), was resisting, and the Poloinia King Casimiro was rushing to his aid. Esteban had repelled an earlier invasion in 1475. Ingalaterra again invaded Ezkozia, but was again repulsed. It had been said that the Ingalaterra Regent Ricardo the Third had imprisoned his nephews, the boy king and his younger brother.

I wrote letters to Aspenquid and all the children expressing my condolences on the loss of Mathilde. I wrote about a different anecdote illustrating what a special person she was to each of them. I thanked Theodore for his information about my exile and reminisced about Mathilde. I thanked Watomika for all his help and kindnesses and sent Beedut a note thanking him for sending on Luis' correspondence. Finally I wrote to Luis thanking him for wanting to rescue me, but assuring him I didn't need rescuing. I was quite happy in my exile and was enjoying a sort of retirement. In fact I really doubted if his fellows would have been willing to jeopardize their very lucrative arrangement to rescue me, but it was kind of him to offer.

Late in the summer, I was surprised to wake one morning and find a small ship at anchor off our landing site. My first thought was that it might be another one of John's assassins in spite of the Khakhan's warning, but as I watched, a boat was lowered, and the crew rowed a man and boy with a parrot on his shoulder ashore. I could not see from this distance, but I was sure I knew who the boy and parrot were. I rushed down the cliff trail to the beach and as the boat drew near I could hear the unmistakable shriek of Cuauhtzin. I recognized the boy as John and the man as Cinnashote. They both splashed ashore while Cuauhtzin launched himself into the air and landed on my shoulder. I embraced them both and invited them all to my caney.

Cinnashote explained that they could only remain until high tide, but since that would be near dusk, they had most of the day. I was surprised that Cuauhtzin transferred his loyalty back to me so abruptly. He remained with me all that day and ever since. John had grown considerably since I had last seen him, but I would know him anywhere. His mother's face was all over his, and anyway I saw him in the dream world every night. He was only eleven, but he seemed so mature, so calm, so much at peace. He did not just seem happy, he seemed serene, as though he would not take notice of a hurakan storm if it suddenly broke over the island. He was still with Ayun'ini and Egwani. There were also a few others with them now. He had brought me Cuauhtzin because he felt the winters in the mountains were too hard on him, and, anyway, he was my bird, not his. I thanked him, and asked what he had learned over the last five years. He told me as much as he thought I would understand, but, of course, I didn't. I could tell he was where he should be.

Cinnashote told me that Ghigooie and Iskagua had both died that winter, first his father, then his mother. Before she died, however, Ghigooie had made him promise to find John and bring him to see me and give me my grandfather's book that I had left with her when I was a boy. He had kept his word. He presented the book to me and reminded me that his mother had seen me writing one of my own, so he had also brought me a bundle of paper. I thanked him and asked what he had been doing since we parted company. He said that he had gone right back to Itsati and reached there before winter. He was there for the deaths of both his parents. He had met a widow named Woey, who was just about his age. They had become friends and had married. Ghigooie lived long enough to see it and was very happy about it. I congratulated him and wished him all the best.

Late in the afternoon, I accompanied them back down to the beach to the boat. I embraced them both and thanked them for coming and for bringing Cuauhtzin and my grandfather's book. As the boat pulled away, Cuauhtzin gave out a plaintive shriek, but remained firmly attached to my shoulder. I reached up and gave him

an understanding pat, then turned and went back up the cliff. I remained on the cliff edge until their ship dropped beyond the horizon. They were heading west into the setting sun. I sighed heavily and Cuauhtzin mumbled something in Otomi and we returned to my caney.

I'm afraid Cuauhtzin's charm was lost on Macon and Amana. They agreed he was beautiful, but thought he was too loud. They felt I should have a higuaca, one of the beautiful parrots of Boriquen, some of which could be found on the island. They are mostly green with a white ring around their eyes, something like Q'omer, but a little smaller, with no yellow on the back of their heads. Instead they have blue wing tips and a red spot over their beaks. They make a very loud shriek as they fly, however, so I really didn't see why Macon and Amana preferred them. Anyway, while Cuauhtzin could leave one's ears ringing on occasion, he was generally very quiet and dignified. From the look in his eye, I could see that he was getting old. I was always sure he was older than me, but really didn't know how much.

Once Cuauhtzin and I got thoroughly reacquainted and used to each other, I sat down and read again my grandfather's book. It had the desired affect and I began to write this book. I came to see what he meant by reliving all the events of his life in writing about them. It has been wonderful. Of course, it took a long time, some six years. Every year Cinnashote comes to see me and to bring more paper. Every year I get a letter from Luis and a few from some of my relatives. John has not been back, but he and Carlotta still visit me every night as they promised.

Aspenquid died the winter after Mathilde. My brother Theodore died the following spring. Mahwissa lived another four years. Other relatives of mine, died, got married, had children and so on. My nephew John, Theodore's son, took over from his father and kept me up to date on all the relatives. It has become a daunting task and I won't even try to summarize it here.

Luis' letters came every year, usually in late spring or early summer. Over the years he had three more children, another boy and two girls. One of the girls died in infancy also. He kept me posted on the happenings in Europa. To summarize, during the years he called 1485 through 1491 the following occurred. In Espainia, King Ferdinando continued his campaign against the Mairu. He captured Ronda in the west and Cambil in the north in 1485, Loja in 1486, Malaga in 1487, Huescar, Velez-Rubio and Mojacar in 1488, the fortresses of Baza and Almeria and the cities of Zujar and Guadix in the east and Almunecar in the west in 1489 and had camped outside Granada in 1490. This was the last stronghold of the Mairu on the peninsula. Portugal continued exploring the west coast of Africa reaching the southern tip in 1488. In Frantzia, a revolt by the dukes of Orleans and Bretagne supported by the Ingalaterra king was defeated early on in 1488, but skirmishing continued for a few years. In Itailia, the Napoles barons supported by the Aitasantu had revolted against their King Ferdinando in 1485, but with the support of the city of Firenze he defeated them by 1486. In the empire, Mateo took Wien and all of the emperor's home provinces in 1485. The following year the emperor's son, Maximiliano, took over from his father and organized a standing imperial army. He supported the revolt in Frantzia, and then turned his attention to Hungaria attacking them in his home province and capital in 1490. Mateo, the king of Hungaria, died that year and was succeeded by his son, Ladislao the Sixth. In Ingalaterra, King Ricardo the Third was suspected of murdering his young nephews in 1485 since they died in his custody. Later that year, a rival claimant to the throne named Enrique Tudor led a revolt aided by some soldiers from Frantzia. He prevailed in a great battle at Bosworth when most of Ricardo's forces switched sides. Enrique became king. In 1487 he put down a revolt of a man claiming to be the nephew of the late King Ricardo. Jaime the Third of Ezkozia was killed putting down another revolt of his nobles. In Poloinia, the king led an army into Moldavia to face the Ottomans, but they made a truce and withdrew in 1485. It seemed that the Ottomans were fighting other Musulmen in Egypto.

That brings me up to date. I will write more as it occurs.

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Colon, 124 K

(Mona Is. PR to Port au Prince, Haiti)

I didn't think I'd be writing any more, but two events brought me back to the journal. The first was the death of my beloved, oldest living friend, Cuauhtzin. He seemed quieter than usual during this past winter, which season was hardly noticeable here. Early in the spring, I noticed he was not preening himself effectively. I took over and did it for him. It is probably hard for anyone who has not known such a creature to understand, but I felt he was grateful to me for my help. He seemed to look at me with affection rather than the stolid dignity to which I had become so accustomed. It was not really a surprise the morning I found him lying on the ground under his perch. I buried him down in the mangrove forest since that was more natural to him than the desert scrub on the cliffs. That night I sought out John in the dream world to tell him of the loss of our friend. He was glad he had brought him back to me for his last years. I had often wondered just how old he was. The best guess was that he was easily older than me. Macon offered to catch one of the higuacas for me, but I preferred to see them fly around freely.

Later in the spring, the second event occurred. I received an interesting letter from Luis. It seems that the city of Granada surrendered early this year and King Ferdinando was considering financing an expedition by a man from Italia to sail west to find the "Indies" which was what they call the Middle Kingdom and its neighboring countries. He reports that the man, Colombo, had been wandering around the capitals of Europa looking for a sponsor for this expedition for some time before finding a sympathetic ear in Queen Isabella. From what he understood, Colombo has miscalculated the size of the earth by a third, so he has no idea that the Khakhanate lay in his path. Luis has reported this development to the Khakhan, but wasn't sure what he should do. Since Colombo was unaware of what actually lay in his path, the Khakhan was fairly sure no Euskera betrayed our arrangement. In any case he had agents in place to join the expedition if possible.

While I was mulling this over, a fuchuan came into view and dropped anchor off our beach. It was flying the pennant of the Khakhan, but I doubted he was on board. As I watched, a boat was dropped and a Kashik officer was rowed ashore by six of the green-clad sailors. As they drew near, I went down to meet them and saw that the officer was a minghan commander. He splashed ashore and saluted me.

"Sir, the Khakhan requests that you accompany me at once."

"To the ship?"

"Yes."

"The Khakhan is on that ship?"

"No."

"Will I be returning here?"

"No."

"I must take a moment to return to my caney and get some things."

"Please hurry, sir."

I was reasonably sure I wasn't under arrest from his courtesy. I went up to tell Macon and Amana what was going on and asked them to send my journal to Cinnashote to hold for my son. They promised to do so and wished me luck. I got a few things and returned to the impatiently pacing Kashik. Once I reached the beach, he jumped back in the boat. I followed him and the sailors pushed us out to sea. We soon reached the fuchuan and climbed aboard. The Kashik led me to the cabin area and scratched on the door of the main cabin in the back. The door was opened by a bent-over ancient who looked like he might be a Pansfalaya and I was ushered in without a word. The ancient then reclaimed his seat next to the door.

The cabin was luxuriously appointed, but not particularly large. Seated at a table in the middle of the room was a man of about my age, but a little shorter and with gray hair that hung down to his shoulders. He was dressed in a raw silk tunic and leather pants and boots like a warrior and wore no indication of any rank. I could not tell by looking at him what tribe he was from. He looked up from his writing when I entered and motioned me into a chair across the table from him, without changing his expression. When he finished writing, he sat back and looked me over.

“Well, you are a strange-looking one, as I was warned.”

“You have me at a disadvantage.”

“My name is Chowa. I am the Governor of the Islands.”

“Chowa is a Kadohadacho name. I would have thought the Khakhan would have appointed a Taino.”

“Well, he didn’t. But if it makes you feel any better, my mother is a Taino. However, I didn’t come to see you to discuss my ancestry or your strange looks. The Khakhan has need of your services.”

“Of course. What does he wish me to do?”

“I understand you receive letters from our agent from across the eastern sea?”

“Luis, the Euskera, yes.”

“Did he inform you that one of the local rulers was sending an expedition in our direction?”

“Yes, he did say that appeared to be imminent.”

“From what he wrote the Khakhan, the expedition should be arriving in our area since they will be following the trade winds west from a group of islands southwest of Europa. I can’t remember what they are called, but they’re on the map he sent us. We have ships stationed along this island chain to intercept them and bring them to us in Aiti. I am given to understand that you can speak some of their languages.”

“Yes. I can speak Luis’ language and an old language called Latin that is still understood by the educated. When do you expect this expedition?”

“That isn’t clear, perhaps later in the summer or even the fall. But you are to accompany me to Aralbalikh, my capital, so that you are available when they are apprehended.”

“I would be glad to do so. What does the Khakhan want to do with the expedition members?”

“I understand he hasn’t decided yet. But we will be receiving instructions soon. Obviously he doesn’t want us to kill them, or he wouldn’t be bothering you to speak to them. I think he wants to know what their intentions are.”

“Trade with the Middle Kingdom, from what Luis wrote.”

“Well, that isn’t possible now, is it? If it weren’t for the Chosin, we would have no trade with them. What do you suppose they want from the Middle Kingdom? Silk? Ceramics?”

“Luis told me that silk was highly prized.”

“What do you suppose they have to trade?”

“I have no idea, but if they come, we’ll find out.”

“Indeed. Your cabin is next to mine, the next door up the hall on the right. I’ll see you at dinnertime.”

“Thank you, sir.”

He went back to his papers and I placed my things in the cabin, then went back out on deck. We were already sailing away from Amona and I watched it disappear in the east as we sailed swiftly west and wondered if I would eventually end up back there again. By evening I could see the southern coast of Aiti to the north. At dinner Chowa proved to be an indifferent conversationalist until the subject turned to campaigns. It seems he had risen through the ranks from warrior to Ordu commander over three campaigns in the Green Mist. His last effort had been about the time of mine. He had been involved in taking a part of the jungle. He told me it would take many campaigns to take all of the jungle and in the end it was probably not worth the bother. I told him about the Re Che campaign and he listened with rapt attention. He said he had not faced such a foe, although the Genakin were good fighters. The jungle tribes were very hard to fight. They would set up ambushes, and then melt into the trees. Any village he would come upon would be deserted. He only began to make progress when he was able to ally with one tribe against another. He didn’t much like that approach, but it was necessary. I expressed gratitude that I was never called upon to do any jungle fighting.

It was fortunate we were able to talk about campaigns since the trip took five days, over the course of which we must have almost exhausted our mutual store of war stories. Of course, I only saw him for evening meals; the rest of the time I was on my own. The only passengers on the ship were Chowa, his ancient assistant, the Kashik and I. The Kashik kept to himself and would not say a word, even during meals. I never found out his name since I got the impression he didn't want to be bothered. I supposed he was not particularly pleased to be on this mission instead of with the Khakhan. The ancient assistant must have taken his meals elsewhere since I didn't see him again until we left the ship. I spent most of the days looking at the southern coast of Aiti as we sailed along. The first third of the island appeared fairly flat along the coast, but the rest was quite mountainous. The vegetation looked lush from my vantage point. Early on the fourth day we turned north, then east following the long narrow southwestern peninsula back to the main land and the new port city of Aralbalikh.

The ship pulled up to a pier and dropped anchor. Chowa led the Kashik, the ancient, and me along the pier to the town where a jagun was waiting to escort us to his residence. We mounted up for the short ride. It was rather a small place for a governor's residence, but was made of stone with high ceilings in the usual design with a pleasant garden in the center. I was shown to my fair-sized room by an attendant who also gave me the schedule of meals and events. I was informed that my attendance at these was expected; otherwise, I was on my own, unless the governor wished to see me. When I thought of the informal warmth of Watomika, I had to wonder what Chowa's problem was. Perhaps he still thought he was on campaign and had to maintain strict discipline. I don't think he inherited much from his mother's people.

Aralbalikh was still a small town of barely a hundred houses, mostly caneys. There was a tumen camped up in the mountains above the town. I went up to visit and was very cordially received, but I didn't find anyone I knew. Most of the men were Dzitsiista, Ocheti shakowin, and Kensistenoug. I did some exploring in the jungle, seeing many colorful birds, although none were like Cuauhtzin. I always think of him when I see a colorful bird. I still miss him. There were no higuacas here, but there was a similar small green parrot with very different markings. It has a white area over the beak and a red spot under it. It has black patches on its cheeks and a dark red area on its lower front. When it flies, its wings look blue. I wondered if each island had its own version of the green parrot. I wished I had noticed the ones on Xaymaca, but I hadn't.

Summer dragged on and there was still no sign of this Colombo. I had answered Luis' letter and asked him how it was he knew what was going on in the royal court. I asked if he had an agent there. I also told him how his news had ended my exile and expressed the hope that perhaps I would get to see him next year. I also sent a letter to Behechio explaining my current situation and thanking him for all his kindness, especially the services of Macon and Amana. Finally I sent a letter to Cinnashote, telling him what was going on and advising him that my journal was being sent to him.

If it were not for the westerly breezes, Aralbalikh would be uninhabitable in the summer. Fortunately, they only rarely failed. Chowa and I discussed every campaign we knew anything about over the course of the long summer. The Kashik was mercifully recalled to the capital midway through the summer. Chowa didn't seem to notice that he wasn't at meals any more. Late in the summer, a merchant ship put into port and among the passengers were Chowa's wife and children. She was a Kadohadacho named Bedoka. He had three sons, T'amoh, Cissany, and Haduskats, and a daughter, K'undeekuh. The boys were fourteen, twelve, and nine, and the daughter six. When Chowa saw them, I finally discovered that he could smile. He was very fond of his family, especially K'undeekuh.

Bedoka immediately took over the household and busily rearranged things. She is a very pleasant, but busy woman. I don't think I have ever seen her sit still. T'amoh was sent to the tumen camp to train, but the younger boys were allowed to run around and have themselves some adventures. K'undeekuh shadowed her mother wherever she went. I decided it was time I did some fishing. I joined some of the off-duty soldiers trying their luck off one of the piers. We rarely caught anything, but it was more relaxing than hanging around the residence.

Summer turned imperceptibly into autumn and there was still no sign of the intrepid explorer. I began to wonder if he had come to grief in a storm or if King Ferdinando had changed his mind. One evening during my usual visit with Carlotta and John, I asked them if they knew what had happened to him. They admitted that they

hadn't looked for him, but we all could if I wished. I decided to do so and we were soon above three small ships sailing through a wide area full of seaweed. They were farther north than Chowa expected them to be, but they were making good progress. I noticed the ships' armament, but I didn't want to see any more of them just yet, so we returned. John asked me what the Khakhan would do to them. I had to admit that I didn't know, but since he wanted me to talk to them, I didn't think he meant them any harm. Carlotta urged me to protect them if I could. That was no surprise.

Two days later, a new fuchuan bearing the Khakhan's pennant sailed up to the pier and dropped anchor. I was fishing off the pier, so I got up, gathered my things, and walked back to the town. Before long, a jagun of Kashik disembarked from the ship along with a very well dressed man a bit younger than me. He was tall, like an Ocheti shakowin or a Leni lenape, but he didn't look like either of them. He looked more like a Hotcangara, but he didn't seem to have the sneer most of them affect. I wondered who he was. I stood to one side as the jagun marched past and the man glanced around absently at the crowd and caught sight of me.

"Halt!" he ordered and the jagun stopped. "Orlok Kheree?" He addressed me by my Mongol name and title—which I didn't think we used.

"Yes, sir," I answered.

"Of course"—he laughed—"you don't know who I am, do you?"

"No sir."

"I am Khakhan Juchi."

"I'm sorry, sire. You don't look at all like your father."

"No, I favor my mother. Come, walk with me."

As I fell in beside him, Chowa came riding up furiously with a jagun of his own. Juchi greeted him warmly and told him to walk along with us. He said it felt good to have the firm ground under his feet again, and he wanted to walk to the residence. Chowa expressed regret that he didn't know he was coming and hoped he would give them time to vacate their rooms. He told him not to bother, he could stay in a guest room, and he didn't want me displaced either. I began to form a favorable opinion of Juchi. Once that was settled, he turned to me.

"You must have known that I gave you every opportunity to escape the exile in Amona. Why did you go anyway?"

"I wondered about that, sire, but I welcomed the solitude and the thought that I need not worry about any more attempts on my son's life."

"Your son is quite a shaman. He is so young and already I hear great things about him. I doubt if you ever have to concern yourself about his safety. I have also heard stories about my foolish nephew's assassins. As I understand it, he is now afraid of your son."

"Fear usually precedes hate."

"Perhaps, but it also tempers rashness. Anyway, what do you think has become of our would-be visitors?"

"They are north of the island chain, sire. They will likely make their landfall among the Lucayo."

"Do I want to know how you know this?"

"Well, it was a skill my son taught me."

"I see. How soon will they arrive?"

"A few weeks at most."

"Well"—he turned to Chowa—"be sure to send some ships north to intercept them."

"There are three ships, sire," I continued. "The largest is less than half the size of a fuchuan. The smaller ones are fast, but not as fast as a fuchuan."

“Interesting.” He again turned to Chowa. “Send three fuchuan together to catch them all.” He turned back to me. “Are they armed?”

“I only saw small cannon.”

“Excellent. I will stay until they arrive.”

“What will you do with them, sire?” I asked.

“That depends on their intentions and demeanor. We will see.”

At the request of Chowa, I taught the captains of the fuchuan that were going after Colombo a few key phrases in Latin. Specifically, “You will come with us,” and, “If you attempt to flee, you will be sunk.” It was a bit rude, but that was what I was told to teach them. I offered to go along, but since three groups of three ships were being sent, the Khakhan wanted me to stay here. It was almost exactly three weeks from the day of the Khakhan’s arrival that three fuchuan appeared towing the three little ships of our visitors. One of the fuchuan and the three little ships were brought up to the pier and their anchors dropped. The other two fuchuan remained in the harbor. I was sent to bring their leaders to the Khakhan.

I watched as the crews were ordered off their ships. They were a motley-looking group; all were bearded with no sort of uniforms, just the loose-hooded shirts and breeches like the Euskera wore with a few exceptions. These few were better dressed and one of them carried a sword. Once all were gathered at the end of the pier, I noticed a rather pungent odor coming from them. I tried to ignore it, but during my pause, one of the ordinary-looking men stepped forward and began to speak in some strange tongue. I turned to the commander of the jagun that had been on the fuchuan, and he explained that the man had been doing that on the way also. I motioned him to be silent and asked them all in Latin, who was their leader. The one with the sword stepped forward and answered that he was. He was shorter than me, but taller than most of the others. He had a rather florid complexion and white hair. His eyes were blue, but paler than mine. He fixed me with a confident look.

“Are you a priest, sir?”

“No. I have been sent to bring you and your officers to meet the Khakhan.”

“I knew it!” he exclaimed, and then turned to tell his crew something causing them all to cheer. “I will bring these three men with me.” He indicated three of the better-dressed individuals.

“Very well, follow me. The rest of your men will remain here for now. They will be given something to eat.”

I waited while he told them. They squatted down on the ground and a jagun remained in formation within easy reach of them. He and his three companions presented themselves, and I turned and led them to the governor’s residence. We went on foot led by another jagun on horseback.

“Your horses are smaller than ours,” Colombo said.

“Really?”

“Where are you from?”

“Anahuac. And you?”

“Genova. Where is Anahuac?”

“On the mainland far to the west.”

“The west? But you look like one of us.”

“I suppose I do, but I’m not.”

“Is this place you’re from in Cathay or Cipango?”

“I believe you call the Middle Kingdom, Cathay, but what is Cipango?”

“It is a large island east of Cathay?”

“Perhaps you mean Yapon uls?”

“Well, are you from either of them?”

“No.”

“Isn’t the Khan the ruler of Cathay?”

“The Khakhan is the ruler of the Khakhanate.”

“Well, Cathay is part of it, isn’t it?”

“No. Come along now, we mustn’t keep the Khakhan waiting any longer.”

I could see that some of his bravado had been replaced with confusion. It was clear that he still had no idea where he was. We entered the residence and I had them wait in the reception room while I went to see the Khakhan. Colombo began talking with the others in their language when I left. The Khakhan was waiting in the governor’s office and I was ushered in at once.

“Well?” he asked as I entered.

“The leader speaks Latin, although his accent would indicate he doesn’t usually speak it. He thought he was near the Middle Kingdom. But when he asked me if it was part of the Khakhanate, I told him it wasn’t.”

“Indeed. It isn’t. Well, before giving them any more information, we’ll have to see what they know. The captain of the fuchuan that brought them in told me that they raised up a flag on Guanahani as well as a strange wooden monument and held some sort of ceremony. The Lucayo were puzzled by the whole business. They did not display any hostility toward the Lucayo, but tried to trade beads and little bells to them for their few gold ornaments. He gave them red woolen caps, of all things, as gifts. It looks they have nothing of any value to trade at all. But we might as well talk to him. Send this Colombo in first.”

I went back out and told him that the Khakhan wanted to see him alone first. He affected a slight bow, and told the others. One of the others tried to catch my eye and when he did mouthed something. I nodded and led Colombo in to see the Khakhan. Once he was before him, he bowed low and launched into an address.

“Oh Great Khan, I am Cristobal Colon, the Almirante of the Ocean Sea and the Virrey of the king and queen of the Spains, their Most Catholic Majesties, Fernando and Isabella. They have sent me to bring to you the enlightenment of the true religion in which your predecessor expressed much interest.”

“If I tell him you are here to preach a religion, you will be executed immediately.”

“But Marco Polo said the Great Khan wanted instruction in our religion.”

“Perhaps Khan Kubilai did, but the Khakhan does not.”

“What was all that blather about,” the Khakhan interjected impatiently. “And what about Kubilai?”

“I’m sorry, sire,” I quickly said. “He was introducing himself as the ‘Almirante’ of the Ocean Sea and the ‘Virrey’ of the king and queen of Espainia. As to Kubilai, he seems to think you are his successor.”

“Well, I’m not. And he died a very long time ago. How old does he think I am? What do those titles mean?”

“I’ll ask.” I returned to Colombo or Colon as he was calling himself now. “What do your titles mean?”

“They mean that I will rule all islands that I discover in the name of their Most Catholic Majesties.”

“You think you are going to rule all these islands in the name of your sovereigns? Are you mad? If I tell him that, you’ll be dead.”

“Well, perhaps under the circumstances, they are just honorary titles with no real meaning.” He was clearly shaken.

“The titles are honors without meaning, sire,” I told the Khakhan.

“Ask him what the point was of his ceremony raising a flag and a wooden monument on Guanahani.”

When I repeated this question to him, he got very nervous, and lamely explained that he thought Guanahani didn't belong to anyone, so he was claiming it for his sovereigns. The monument was a cross, the symbol of their religion. I told the Khakhan that it was merely a ceremony celebrating their safe voyage across the sea.

“Ask him why he brought such poor trade goods with him. Do his people have nothing of value to trade?”

To this question he explained that the simple trinkets were very popular as trade goods in Africa so they thought they might be well received here, and, in fact, the Lucayo seemed to like them. As to what his people trade, it is mostly wool, although there are other things as well, such as vino, oliva oil, hides, soap, salt, and pickled atun (tuna), a kind of fish. I passed this on to the Khakhan and he was unimpressed although he asked what vino and oliva oil were.

I told Colon that we had no need of wool, salt, soap or hides, but the Khakhan wanted to know what vino and oliva oil were. He explained that vino was juice pressed from uvas (grapes) and then fermented into a strong drink. Oliva oil was oil pressed from the fruit of a tree that grew in their land. He had a little of each on the ship he would be glad to give us. I finally asked him what that pungent smell about him was. He looked puzzled for a bit, then said that it was probably ajo (garlic) a sort of spice they used. I translated for the Khakhan.

“I was wondering about that smell. Very well send him to fetch his oil and vino and also some of this spice of his. We might as well try them. Otherwise, we should probably send them packing. What do you think?”

“One of them was trying to signal me. Perhaps he is one of our agents?”

“Now that is interesting. Can you bring him in without making the others suspicious of him?”

“Why don't we show the men to their rooms in the residence, while Colon goes to get his things. I will take the one in question last so I can talk to him. Should he prove to be one of our agents, I'll bring him to you.”

“Excellent. And find some sort of housing for his crew.”

“Yes, sire. Follow me now, Colon, your interview is finished.”

“But, I have so many questions.”

“Not now. You will return to your ship and secure some of the vino, oil, and spice and bring them back. You will then be shown to your room. You will see the Khakhan again at dinner. Tell your men that they will be shown to quarters also.”

He again bowed low, and followed me out the door. I told one of the guards to tell the governor that the Khakhan wanted to find some housing for the crew. Then, I told a pair of guards to accompany Colon back to his ship while he got a few things, then bring him back, and show him to his room. I told him to tell his companions that I would lead them to their rooms now, where they would wait until dinner. He translated my words to them and I led them to the small rooms on the north side of the house—opening each door for them and closing it behind them, one at a time. I saved the one who signaled me for last. He was a short man with a small build, a thin face, long nose, light brown eyes, and a fair complexion. Once we were alone, he spoke to me softly in Euskera.

“I am Juan de la Cosa. I own the largest of the ships and was told by my people to join the expedition if it actually occurred.”

“Excellent. The Khakhan would like to see you. But some words of advice, don't tell him that your companions claimed our islands for Espainia or that they think they will convert him to their religion. It will get you all killed.”

“One wonders at the temerity of landing on an island that is clearly inhabited and claiming it. But the people of Europa do it all the time. The Canarios, the Azores, the Cabo Verdes all the same.”

“Perhaps we should send a ship to Espainia and claim it for the Khakhan.”

“Well, it would serve them right.”

I brought him in to see the Khakhan. The latter wanted to know as much as possible about the point of the expedition, and Juan assured him that it was to establish trade with the “Indies.” He then asked him what he knew about the army and navy of Espainia. He said he knew very little, but there were Euskera agents in both forces who would send reports to Luis.

“Are you thinking of invading Espainia?” he asked.

“Not at this time, and perhaps not at all. Would it make any difference to you if we did?”

“Not at all. We seem to serve Espainia, but it is only out of convenience. Our loyalty is to our home province.”

“Good. Go back among the others and let us know if they are up to anything.”

“Yes, sire.”

Dinner that evening was interesting. Their vino was like a weak strong drink and a bit sour, but their oliva oil, was quite good. Their spice was a bulbous plant with many kernels of the spice sheathed in the bulb. It was quite pungent but had a rather pleasant flavor. They were astonished by our chili and pronounced them far superior to their aji, which is some sort of condiment that comes from the “Indies.” They seemed to eat an inordinate amount of meat or fish. During the course of the meal, Colon peppered me with questions for the Khakhan. The latter was quite forthcoming.

He told Colon that we were not near the Middle Kingdom; there was a whole continent and another wide sea between our present position and them. The people of Middle Kingdom (the Hanjen) had driven the Mongols out over a hundred years ago and were now ruling themselves. He never heard of Marco Polo. The Khakhanate was a huge landmass extending thousands of li north to south and east to west. We were not prepared to show them any maps at this time. We might consider trading for their oliva oil and ajo, but had no need for their trinkets. We did have silk, obviously, since we were all wearing it, and might be willing to trade it, but all that would be up to the merchants. For his part, he would put them in touch with the local merchants. They could leave someone here to conduct any trading, but it could only be here. They would have to return home in a few days, and must only come to this city in the future. Any deviation would be considered a hostile act.

This last bit was a bit disconcerting to them and they talked among themselves for a while about it. And argued over whom to leave. Finally Colon asked if he could leave more than one person and the Khakhan agreed that he could leave three. Then Colon wanted to know if the Khakhan wished to appoint an ambassador to return with him. He gave that some thought, then said perhaps. Finally Colon had the temerity to ask if the Khakhan would consider sending a present to his sovereigns. This clearly took Khakhan aback. I could see him become furious, and then regain his composure.

“Of course, I will send him the same sort of present he sent me.”

Colon turned a deeper shade of red at this response and I advised him not to push his luck. He explained to me that his sovereigns wanted gold and would be very unhappy with the small amount he had gotten from the Lucayo. He was afraid they would take out their disappointment on him. I told him I would see what I could do.

After dinner I sought out Juan and asked him if what Colon said about his needing gold was true. He replied that there was little more prized than gold in Espainia and the king needed a lot of it to finance his recent wars. However, he was sure our silk and spices would fetch a very good price in Europa. The gold would be nice, but hardly necessary. I passed this on to the Khakhan. He was still seething over Colon’s gall, but decided to send a small token to their king, with his ambassador, me.

I was aghast. I asked why he didn’t send someone with rank or title rather than me. He replied that I had the rank of Orlok (Ordu commander), I was related to him, at least in so far as we had a relative in common, I already had a gerege proclaiming me an ambassador, and I spoke some of their languages. He would not send me back on their pathetic little ships, however. He would send me with a fleet of three fully armed fuchuan so that they would have no confusion over the power of the Khakhanate. A fuchuan would return twice a year to bring his instructions and take back any dispatches. I would tour everything and get as much intelligence about Europa as possible. He was sure we could trust our Euskera agents, but it didn’t hurt to make sure.

The next morning I told Colon that I had been appointed ambassador by the Khakhan, but would be sailing on our own ships. We could trim our sails to travel as slowly as they did so we could return together. I would have a present for his king, but I didn't know what it would be yet. He expressed the hope that it would be gold or at least silk. I told him, he was not in a position to make any demands. The man was a little too sure of himself. He would make a fine Hotcangara or perhaps even a Mexica.

The Khakhan did not join them for any more meals, but instead insisted that I did. Colon returned to the question of my ancestry and I told him that my grandfather had been born in the Middle Kingdom, while it was still under Mongol rule. He had become the Khan of Anahuac after we conquered this land. I then had to explain how the Khakhan was over the three Khans that ruled the lands in the south. He then asked if I was a Khan like my grandfather. I explained that my father was my grandfather's youngest son, and I was my father's youngest son. While the Khan John was my cousin, he was a fairly distant one. He then asked if I was of the true religion. I asked him what he meant. He said all of Europa was Catholic and subject to the papa in Rome. I said that to the extent I had any religion, it did involve belief in Deus as a single, all-powerful God, but I had no use for priests or papas. He was taken aback by this and expressed the hope that I would see the light once I was in Espainia (he pronounced it Espanya), the fortress of the true religion.

I began to wonder if these people would expel me when they found out I wasn't one of theirs. Of course, if any harm came to me, the Khakhan would be honor bound to destroy Espainia. I had to be sure and tell them that when I arrived. I sent letters to Beedut and Cimmashote explaining my appointment. I told the former I might be contacting Luis from Espainia, but I wasn't sure yet and I told the latter, I didn't know when or if I'd be back, but to look out for John for me.

A few days later, the Khakhan presented me with a new gerege naming me an ambassador in his name and I turned over my old one. I gathered up our visitors and walked down to the dock. They filed aboard their little ships, all of which were leaking since they were not sheathed in copper like ours. I boarded the same fuchuan that brought them here, and joined by the two fuchuan still in the harbor, we all sailed to the northwest around the northwestern peninsula of Aiti; then we turned east along its northern coast, before turning northeast. The Khakhan had sent me with a chest full of silk, a smaller chest full of gold nuggets, and a large amount of dried chili. The captain of my fuchuan, a typically enigmatic Chosin named Kim Sum, treated me with great deference. It made me more than a little uncomfortable. The trip across the sea was interminable. It took over thirty days to reach some little gray islands Colon told us were called the Azores which belonged to Portugal, and thus we had to avoid. Then it took almost another thirty days to reach Espainia. But finally we were all at anchor in the harbor of the town called Palos in Espainia.

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Espainia, 124–5 K

(Palos & Barcelona, Spain, 1492–3)

I was rowed ashore along with the jagun of Kashik that had been sent as my escorts. The latter caused more than a little consternation in the town, but Colon kept things under control. He then determined that the king and queen were no longer where he had left them, but had moved to another city. I asked, and it seems they do not actually have a capital at this time. Since their current location was also a seaport, he suggested we go there by sea. He sent the sovereigns some sort of long letter, he called a log, and leaving the smaller ships behind, returned to his ship, as we went back to ours, and we left the harbor together. We continued along the southern coast of Espainia and at one point came quite close to the northern coast of Africa. Then we followed the eastern coast all the way to Barcelona, where Ferdinando and Isabella were. It took another twenty-five days.

Barcelona is much larger than Palos, with many large imposing buildings, although it appears to be in a sort of decline. There is a large wall around the city and quite a bit of open space between the city and the wall. The port facility is large but barely accommodating our ship, because of the shallowness of the harbor. The piers are made of stone, an odd choice considering that ships are made of wood. There are also shipbuilding facilities, but these are enclosed in a huge building.

It is all rather confusing, but Colon explained that this city is the capital of the part of Espainia over which Ferdinando rules. It is called Aragon locally, although this particular part of the “Kingdom of Aragon” is called Catalunya. The part over which Isabella rules is called Castilla, in the local tongue (rather than Gaztela, as the Eskualdunac called it). To add to the confusion, the local tongues are not the same in the two parts and are not really dialects of each other either, but distinct languages, Catalan and Casteyano. I also learned that while Ferdinando and Isabella are “joint rulers” of Espainia, they each retain sovereignty over their own kingdoms. Oddly, the two kingdoms even have different laws. In Aragon, the king must consult with a body called “Les Corts” should he wish to raise a levy or go to war, but in Castilla the queen can do as she pleases. Even more strangely, they seem to be comfortable with situation since they have had a son, Juan, who will be king over both areas when he succeeds his parents.

After some thought, I decided to wear my Ordu commander uniform to meet the sovereigns. The Kashik jagun enthusiastically approved my decision. We waited on our ship while Colon hurried ashore to greet his rulers. Eventually he returned to lead me to meet them. I debarked and with my Kashik escort followed Colon through the city streets to the palace. He had only brought a horse for me, so we had to ride slowly enough for my escort to keep up. It was about two and a half li to the palace. There were many houses along the way of varying sizes, but generally of rather massive construction with thick walls. The streets were narrow and dark since the tall buildings blocked out the sun. There were some people in the doorways and windows of the houses watching us pass. Their faces showed no warmth, just uneasiness and fear. The men were dressed loosely, but not very neatly, although there were a few dandies in tightly fitting clothes among them. The women were buried in clothing; I couldn’t imagine how they could breathe in all that. The exception among them was a group of boys who followed along after us mocking the marching gait and the severe expressions of the Kashik. So their children are normal, but then something happens to them as they grow up. I wondered what.

As we rode along, Colon told me that while we were on our way here from Palos, a maniac had attempted to assassinate Ferdinando (he pronounced it Fernando). The man had come to the weekly session held by the king to hear complaints or petitions from his more humble subjects. When he drew near the king, he thrust a dagger into his chest. Fortunately, it was deflected by the gold chain he wears and only wounded him. He added that “Fernando” wanted to forgive the “poor mad fool,” but while he was recovering from his wound, the Royal Council dealt with him. It seems they first tortured him to make sure he was “mad”—he claimed the “holy spirit” told him he was a king and he must never go to “confession.” Then they cut off his hand for striking the king, cut off his feet for taking him to where he could strike, his eyes were gouged out for guiding the strike, and his heart was cut out for conceiving the idea. Then the corpse was given over to the mob and torn apart. I wasn’t sure what lesson I was supposed to draw from this tale, but assumed he was merely relating gossip. I did wonder if the “holy spirit” was the same one that was related to Deus and what he meant by “confession,” but decided not to ask. He cautioned me not to mention the attack since Queen Isabella was still very upset about it because she wasn’t here when it happened. I did not understand that bit either. Did she think her presence would have dissuaded the attack?

The palace, a large stone building more like a fortress, was to the right of a large square, but Colon led me to a reception hall at the far end of the square. As we dismounted, I told Colon that he was right about their horses being larger than ours, but I suspected it also meant they needed much more forage. He nodded absently much too absorbed in the pending interview. He seemed quite nervous about it. The hall proved to be a huge room with a high vaulted ceiling all of masonry. There were windows on one side only. It was an impressive, if cold place. I found myself wondering how safe it was, since we had no buildings this tall inside. The hall was crowded with all sorts of people, but there was an open path in the middle lined with soldiers, each holding a long spear with an axe head below the point, leading to the seated Ferdinando and Isabella. There were several people as well as more soldiers, some wearing swords instead of holding the axe spears, hovering behind them also, but only Ferdinando and Isabella were seated. I noticed to my smug satisfaction that the Kashik and I towered over the crowd in the room with one or two exceptions. Colon led my escort and me to within a few feet of his sovereigns and bowed low before them. I made a shallow bow of courtesy and looked them over while Colon prattled on in the local language. Ferdinando was about my age with a hard look like a warrior. He had black hair, brown eyes, a swarthy complexion, and regular features, except for a rather large nose. He

showed a little discomfort from his recent wound when he shifted in his chair. I could tell that he was shorter than me, even though he was seated, and he was looking at me with no expression at all, no doubt the same way I was looking at him. Isabella appeared to be about the same age as Ferdinando, but she had a fair complexion with greenish blue eyes and reddish hair. She was not beautiful, but not exactly plain either. She looked a bit haggard perhaps betraying her upset over the recent attack on her husband as Colon had suggested. She favored me with something of resolute look at first, although it changed to a look of wonder, as she glanced from me to my retinue. Finally Colon addressed me.

“Their Majesties welcome you,” he began, “and hope your stay with them will be pleasant for you. They warmly accept your appointment as ambassador from the Khanate to their court. They have remarked your appearance and your knowledge of Latin and wonder if you already knew of us.”

“Yes, we did. For reasons of his own, the Khakhan has decided to contact you at this time and sent me as his ambassador. He has graciously sent along some presents for you and hopes you understand that they are expressions of his generosity, not fealty. Be sure you make that very clear, Colon.”

“Yes, of course,” he replied and then spoke to them.

I noticed that some of those behind the rulers seemed to understand Latin also and were listening intently. One of them, a man of medium height with a nose that unflatteringly dominated his face and oddly dressed in a rough brown robe tied with a rope and wearing his hair in an odd style, shaved on the top leaving a fringe of hair in a sort of circle, whispered something to Ferdinando after Colon had finished. Ferdinando said something sharply to Colon and the latter bowed again and moved to one side. The man who had whispered then came around in front of me and spoke to me.

“Excellency, I am Francisco Jimenez de Cisneros. The Almirante Colon has left some things out in his translation so I am taking over. Does your Khakhan worship the one true God?”

“He worships the god, Tengri, like most Mongols.”

“Does he not share the interest of his predecessor in the true religion?”

“I already explained to Colon that the Khakhan is not the successor of Kubilai, and he has no interest in any religion.”

“Well, that is a disappointment. But what about you? Surely, you are not also a heathen?”

“I am here to discuss diplomacy not religion. My beliefs are my own and none of your business. I was mentioning the Khakhan’s gifts. They include this box of gold, this box of silk, and these bags of chili. You may tell your king and queen that it would be best if they gather up a similar bundle of gifts to send to the Khakhan.”

“I will tell them your words.” He turned to them.

From his look it was clear he was not happy about being put off from his rude line of questioning and, indeed, he annoyingly returned to it again and again while translating. Each time I brushed him off. Meanwhile the king and queen wanted to know what sorts of gifts they should send and I suggested products of their kingdom of which they were most proud. They sent someone off to see to my quarters in the palace and suggested that I reduce my entourage to perhaps five men. I insisted that it would have to be at least eleven. They agreed. We discussed trade and they appointed someone to expedite it. They asked how large the Khakhanate was and I said it was at least six times the size of Europa. They gasped at that and asked if it was larger than Cathay. I assured them it was much larger than the Middle Kingdom. Fernando (everyone here seemed to also pronounce it this way) wondered if I had brought a map with me. I told him we had maps but were not prepared to share them at this time. Then he wanted to know how it was that we knew about them. I simply replied that we had our sources, but I was not at liberty to divulge them. Finally the audience came to an end and Fernando ordered that my entourage and I be shown to our quarters, adding that he hoped to speak to me more informally very soon. I assured him I was at his disposal, then turned and ordered the jagun commander to detail an arban to me and

take the rest of the Kashik back to the ship. He saluted and the arban fell in behind me while the rest turned and marched out of the palace.

Before I left, I asked Jimenez de Cisneros why he was so interested in people's beliefs. He explained that he was a "fraile" who had dedicated his life to bringing people to the true religion. I asked if that meant he was a priest. He said that it did, indeed. I nodded my head in understanding and turned to go to my room. Just like among most of the tribes we had trouble with, these people were under the thumb of meddling priests. He called after me that he would be anxious to have an "audience" with me at my earliest convenience. I told him I would talk to him in the next few days.

The room I was given was not large, but not small either. It had masonry walls and floors covered with a kind of ceramic tile. The floors also had woolen rugs strategically placed on them and the walls had silk rugs hanging on them. The former were dyed with dark colors, the latter depicted heroic scenes or perhaps mythic characters. The lone window was covered with a kind of glass through which one could see, but not clearly. There was a hearth built into the wall. The furnishings included a rather oversized bed, with heavy colorful quilts thrown on it, in the corner next to the hearth, a small heavy table and chair on the other side of the hearth, a free-standing storage cabinet for clothes, a large trunk for storage, a hand mirror made of bronze, and behind a silk screen, a tub for bathing. There was a small room to one side where one could tend to bodily functions, reminiscent of those at the palace in Tlatelolco.

The arban was given three similar rooms adjacent to mine. I explained the furnishings to them. They were appalled that they were expected to share the same bed, no matter how large it was, and decided to take turns on it while the others slept on the floor. They were all too interested in the mirrors, however, and were constantly posing in front of them. I told them not to mingle with the local people at this time, but to remain together, until I could better tell what sort of people these were. They saluted, but their commander asked about exercise. I promised to look into that for them.

Not long after we were settled in, there was a scratch at my door that proved to be the chamberlain who had shown me to the room. He explained in halting Latin that it was time for the evening meal. I told him that I would join him, but he should have the meal brought to my men. He bowed and led me down the hall. I stopped long enough to tell the men that their meal was coming and gave them some of my private stash of chili in case the meal was tasteless. I was led down a wide staircase to the lower level, and then down an endless hall to a very long room nearly filled by a very long table. At the table, besides Fernando and Isabella, were many of the same people who stood behind them in reception hall as well as Colon. I noticed he looked rather glum as he greeted me.

I was seated between Fernando and Jimenez de Cisneros. The others were introduced to me, but one tires of all these names. The food consisted of inordinate amounts of meat of all kinds, domestic and game, fish and shellfish, either roasted, stewed, fried, boiled, or wrapped in a kind of dough like a nacatamalli (tamale). The meats were served with many strange sauces. Their bread was thick and heavy and their vegetables were soaked in brine. They all seemed to eat more than was decent. I made no effort to keep up with them. Frankly I didn't much care for any of it.

During the meal, Fernando asked if I had seen anything so far that might be suitable as a gift for the Khakhan. I mentioned that if he had a white horse among his large horses—it would be appropriate. I also suggested the window glass and perhaps a particularly well-made sword. He was very pleased with my suggestions. He asked about my uniform. I told him it was loose cotton pants, leather boots, raw silk shirt, cotton cloak, and a silk rank sash. He asked what my rank was. I explained the military ranks of the Khakhanate to him. He said my rank was the equivalent of army commander in Espainia. I noticed he pronounced it "Espanya" just like Colon, rather than the way Luis pronounced it. I adopted his version immediately. He asked if we used wool. I assured him that we did, but only in cold climate. While it was cool here, I did not find it cold. He said it was colder in the interior.

I asked Fernando if he had chosen an ambassador to send to the Khakhanate. He replied that it would be necessary to have someone learn Mongol first, if I was the only one there who spoke Latin. I agreed that would be best, but all of my relatives had learned Latin as children and most could speak it or at least, read it. He asked

if any of my relatives were with the Khakhan, and I had to admit they were not usually. He asked how my grandfather had come to be born in Cathay. I gave him the short version of the family history. He was amazed and said I was not too far from the Black Forest, which was about two hundred leguas from Barcelona, he guessed. It was still mostly part of the Holy Roman Empire. As to Innsbruck, it was the very city where the current emperor, Federico III, was born. I would have to visit there he suggested. All in good time, I assured him. He asked if I had been a sword maker at one time. I explained that my grandfather's brother's family had all the sword makers. He remarked that it was interesting how the family of artisans could become kings. I did not comment.

As was apparently typical, no real business was pursued at meals, only banalities and such were discussed. I suppose that was best for digestion. Colon looked so forlorn I suggested him as ambassador. That provoked a smile from Fernando and a smirk from most of those in earshot. Isabella looked at him sympathetically, however, and asked if he had been well received by the Khakhan. I replied that since I had been there to translate, all had gone well. She wanted to know what I meant. I explained that he had had the temerity to claim some of the Khakhanate for 'Espanya' and had suggested he was there to preach religion. I translated these things in a much less offensive manner.

"Bringing the enlightenment of the true religion is offensive?" Isabella was clearly shocked.

"In the Khakhanate, we have had nothing but trouble from priests. They have inspired the most resistance to us in the name of serving their gods' will. Therefore, they are not welcome and barely tolerated as long as they bother no one else."

"But surely the priests you talk about were heathen idolaters, not the priests of the true religion." Her face was turning an alarming shade of red and her eyes were flashing with indignation.

"All priests claim to preach the true religion and most consider all other religions false. Is it not so with you and the Ottomans?" I wasn't sure what they called the Musulmen in the local language.

"Let me answer for Her Majesty," Cisneros said to me, after mollifying her in her own tongue. "The Ottomans, like our Moros, worship the same God that we do. They call him Allah in their Arabic tongue, but he is the same God. We differ in that they believe that Mohammed was the last in a long line of prophets, which includes our Jesus. They believe that we stopped along the line of truth, but they did not. The truth is that they, as the Apostle Paul foretold, 'having itching ears, have turned aside from the truth to fables, heaping up to themselves teachers according to their own lusts.' "

While he translated this bit to them, I watched their expressions. Fernando looked bored, but Isabella beamed triumphantly and expressed what must have been lengthy gratitude to Cisneros for putting me in my place. I looked at Colon and he gave me a wan smile, so perhaps I did do him some good. Finally, Fernando interjected that this was no place for such a discussion and there would be plenty of time to discuss such things in a more appropriate venue. I told him that when he decided on his ambassador, I would be happy to teach him Mongol as long as he would teach me their local language. He agreed and rose from the table, the signal for us all to do likewise. Once he and Isabella left, the rest of us were free to go. To my relief, Cisneros followed after them, but Colon fell in with me in the hall.

"Thank you for telling the queen I tried to teach the true religion; it has returned me to her favor, at least."

"Why did you change what I was saying at the audience?"

"Why did you change what I was saying to the Khakhan?"

"To save your life. Besides, there was no one around to gainsay me."

"I have often found it necessary to dissemble when talking to royalty. It is prudent to tell them what they want to hear."

"Perhaps, but if he thought the Khakhanate had pledged him fealty, he would have been in for a very unpleasant surprise had he decided to visit."

"I would have told him later in private. It was also kind of you to suggest me as ambassador."

“It made sense to me. It is a long journey and I could easily prepare you for what you would encounter. You seem to have sufficient courage and self-confidence for the post. I think you would be a good choice for the post.”

“It is a post for nobles or clergy, not someone like me.”

“Whoever he sends would not be harmed, but might be sent back and all relations cut off, so he must pick carefully.”

“Be sure and tell him that when you meet with him.”

“I will. Good fortune to you, Colon.”

“Thank you. And to you, Excellency.”

The next several days consisted of meeting with different groups of royal hangers-on. Fernando was always there and sometimes Isabella was also. Cisneros was usually there, although occasionally a different “fraile” served as interpreter. Once in a while, only Fernando needed the interpreter. There is more than one kind of fraile. The various kinds dress a little differently: some wear the rough brown robe like Cisneros; others wear a white robe with a black cloth over their shoulders hanging down in front and back; others wear black or a different shade of brown. They all wear the distinct haircut. It seems they are priests that meddle in everyday affairs. Others like them remain in a large building called a monastery and work and pray there all the time. I think I prefer them.

By the end of these meetings, Fernando had decided on a large number of presents for the Khakhan and decided to send them with Colon as his representative, until a proper ambassador was ready. I immediately sat down with Colon to give him a short course in essential Mongol while he gave me a rudimentary course in Casteyano. He wasn’t much of a linguist, but much like Luis had, he wrote everything down in Latin script. I also taught him some Mongol etiquette including what sort of subjects and behaviors must be avoided. After a few more days, I felt he was as ready as I could make him and I rode down to the ship with him. I introduced him to the Kashik commander and urged the latter to speak with him during the trip to help him become more fluent in Mongol. He agreed. I watched the ship depart with the tide that evening and returned to the palace.

Once Colon had gone, Cisneros took over my instruction in Castellano (it seems it is spelled this way, even though it is pronounced Casteyano). I asked him if I should learn Catalan also, but he told me that it was not the language of the court. I picked the language up fairly quickly since it was not too far removed from Latin. I was much helped by two books he loaned me. A teacher at the University of Salamanca, named Antonio de Nebrija, wrote them. One was a Latin-Castellano dictionary and the other was a Castellano grammar. With the help of these, I was soon freed of my tedious teacher who continually turned the discussion toward his religious beliefs. I steadfastly refused to be drawn into the subject. I did ask him why Barcelona seemed to be in decline. He claimed he didn’t know what I was talking about.

While I was still being instructed by Cisneros, one of the Kashik brought me a letter he said a man had given him for me. He said the man approached him while they were exercising in the open space I had secured for them outside the city, but within the walls. He spoke enough Mongol to indicate the note was for me, but not enough to answer any questions. He seemed very nervous and was constantly looking around to see if anyone could see him. They assumed he was one of our agents and made every pretense of ignoring him. The letter proved to be from Luis. He had written it in Mongol in case it had fallen into the wrong hands. He greeted me and congratulated me on my appointment. He had heard from Juan de la Cosa who had been on the ship with Colon. He unnecessarily cautioned me to trust no one and never discuss religion. He promised to have his report forwarded to me by the Khakhan as well as any further correspondence from him. He urged me to do the same, as any contact between us would put his people in great jeopardy. It made sense to me so I destroyed the letter.

Once I gained a facility with Castellano, Fernando would speak to me alone. We got along rather well—I suppose we had a mutual respect for each other. He told me that he had expended much time and effort in making marriage alliances with the other powers of Europa since God had blessed him with four daughters and a son. The eldest, Isabel, a daughter, had married the crown prince of Portugal, Alfonso three years ago.

Unfortunately he died in a hunting accident after only a few months of marriage. The brother of Alfonso, Manuel, now wants to marry Isabel, but she is in deep mourning for Alfonso and has vowed not to marry again. He hopes to change her mind. He has betrothed his son, Juan, to Margarita, the daughter of Maximiliano, who has just succeeded his father as the Holy Roman Emperor. He also betrothed his second daughter, Juana, to Felipe (Philip), Maximiliano's son. Finally his youngest daughter Catherina was betrothed to Arturo (Arthur), the eldest son of Enrique the Seventh of Inglaterra (he did not pronounce it Inglaterra). His third daughter, Maria, was not yet betrothed. He asked if the Khakhan had any sons or grandsons that were about her age, ten.

I was a little taken aback by this question, but assumed it might only be rhetorical. Still, I answered that the Khakhan had two sons, Tului who was ten and Berke who was eight. I added that I was in no position to negotiate their betrothals, but as one father to another, I reminded him that his daughter would find the life of a Mongol princess very alien and difficult. Surely he could find her a good match closer to home. He appreciated my point, but said it was the duty of a princess to marry whomever her parents chose for her. I admitted it was the same among the families of the Khans.

He then asked if I wished for some female companionship. I told him I was married and not interested in other women. He told me that he respected that, but he had not been able to so limit himself. He asked if my wife would be joining me soon. I replied that she was always with me, but only in spirit since she had died some years ago. He could not understand that I had not remarried and I assured him I did not expect him to do so, but my wife had been and would always be the only woman for me. She was as close to me now as she had been in life. He ended this conversation by saying he would have to keep me away from Isabel or he would never be able to get her to marry again.

Late in the spring, Fernando and Isabella decided to leave Barcelona for the interior. The travel reminded me of the journey from Tamalameque to Yumabalikh with Khan Henry and Theodore. The huge procession left the city and moved slowly along the roads. If nightfall found us near a city, town, or monastery we would spend the night there. If we were out in the open, a huge tent city would be set up for the night. While on this jaunt, some of the other ambassadors made my acquaintance. The one from the "papa" was the most insistent on bothering me. He kept urging me to write to the Khakhan and convince him to join Europa in a crusade against the Ottomans to free the Holy Land. I kept telling him that such a war was hardly in his interest and logistically imprudent. Besides it appeared very unlikely to me that he could get Europa to undertake such a crusade for us to join. Cisneros would also bother me along the way. He finally gave me a copy of a Latin version of the "Biblia" a sacred book of his religion, but he urged me to come to him with any questions since sometimes people drew the wrong conclusions from the book.

To my surprise, the book had some of the stories my grandfather had told me when I was a boy. It was also rather repetitive, and had a quite a few difficult names, but I enjoyed reading it. Unfortunately, Cisneros kept bothering me asking if I understood it. I kept assuring him I understood it perfectly. Actually, I didn't, but I certainly did not want to hear any of his interpretations. Isabella congratulated me on the "privilege" of reading the book and recommended a number of commentaries she felt I would find most helpful. I remained polite, but suggested I should first finish the book. It was organized into short "chapters" so by reading only one or two a day, I was able to stretch out the reading for a long time.

Meanwhile, I did pick up some information from the more talkative members of the court. My best source was Luis de Santangel, the royal treasurer. He was a great supporter of Colon and appreciated my helping him. He told me that there had indeed been a decline in Barcelona over the last ten years or so. It seems that there had been a large Judio (Jewish) colony in the city. These were people who followed the religion of the first part of the "Biblia" on which both the Christian and Moro religions were based. Anyway, these people had long generally thrived and controlled much of the trade that came into the city. Because of increasing discrimination culminating in expulsion last year, they had mostly left. He explained that the fearfulness I had noticed in the people was because of something called the "Inquisicion" which sought to root out any heresy or backsliding among Judios or Moros who had converted to Christianity. These were called "Conversos" or Converts, but also "Marranos" and "Moriscos." These latter names were derogatory, especially the first, which meant "pigs" and referred to the fact that eating the meat of that animal was forbidden to observant Judios. As it happened, Conversos were being denounced all over the kingdom for little or no cause and losing all their possessions or

even their lives unless they fled. He added that all of his family members were Conversos, but Fernando had so far protected him. He had also protected the other Conversos at the Royal Court.

He also mentioned that the current papa, Alexandro the Sixth, was related to the Duque of Gandia in Valencia, part of Aragon. He had been the papal legato or ambassador to the Royal Court for many years. It was felt that he would be very favorably disposed to Espanyan interests. I told him that seemed odd since he was supposed to be the religious leader of all Europa. He replied that while that was true, history had shown the papa leaning to one or the other of the kings. He expected there would be trouble soon, however, because Carlos the Eighth of Francia (that is how he pronounced it) had just made peace with Maximiliano, Enrique the Seventh and Fernando and Isabella. It could only mean he has designs on Italia and that would bring him into conflict with the interests of the papa.

Apparently Carlos had been fighting Maximiliano over the provinces of what had been Burgundia (his name for Ardangori). He had lost to him in battle and settled on the smaller part of Burgundia. He had earlier paid Enrique the Seventh to remove himself from intrigues in Francia. Finally, he had agreed to return two small provinces in northern Aragon in exchange for the neutrality of Espanya in any action he might take in Italia. Fernando had given himself an out if the papa was threatened.

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The Espanyan Court and Gonzalo's Campaign 125–6 K

(Spain and Southern Italy, 1494–5)

In the fall I received dispatches from the Khakhan. Fernando himself handed them to me. He had received a note from Colon. The Khakhan wrote that he was still in Aiti, but was planning to return to Khanbalikh soon and take Colon with him. I wondered what Colon would think of the long trip when they went. He added that there was no point in passing on Luis' dispatch since I probably already knew what was going on in Europa. He still wanted me to report all to him anyway in case either of us missed anything. He did send a letter from Luis in Euskera but using the Uighur script, adding that he presumed there was nothing in it he needed to know. Actually, when I finally deciphered the letter, it proved to be just a repetition of the note he had gotten to me earlier, with a bits of personal information—he had another child, a girl, and he was teaching his son Mongol. He also added that he thought it best if I avoided visiting the Eskualdunac lands and he would only contact me through the Khakhan.

I prudently sent the Khakhan a word-for-word translation of Luis' note and also brought him up to date on all the court gossip including the rumor of impending war in Italia. I suggested that I would try to go along as an observer if Espanya should happen to get involved in the war so I could report on their tactics. I really expected that he ultimately planned to invade Europa, but I wasn't absolutely sure. I also reported on the unrest caused by the Inquisicion, but added that it was quite popular among those who were not threatened by it. Apparently, the authorities periodically stage an "auto da fe" in which those found to be heretics are publicly disciplined. I had not witnessed one, but I understand most of the accused are reconciled, admit their sins, and are variously punished with fines, imprisonment, wearing distinctive clothing, and such. The ultimate punishment is the rather barbaric burning alive reserved for the few unrepentant.

With my report to the Khakhan, I sent back all but one of my escort Kashik. They had taken turns getting some sort of respiratory ailment and two of them almost died from it. We built a sweat lodge and were able to bring them around, but I felt it was not healthy for them here. I caught the ailment also, but not as seriously as the others. I kept the only one who was as little affected as I was, Conthagah, a Hotcangara. My hosts were quite pleased with my decision, incorrectly assuming it meant that I trusted them now. Conthagah missed his companions, but fully understood my decision, and since he still was unmarried, he had no problem remaining with me. We both continued to frequently use the sweat lodge, and rebuilt it whenever we moved. Our hosts found it curious, but some of them had used hot springs for bathing and suggested our practice was similar. I assured them I had also used hot springs, but this was far more beneficial to health. A few of the court tried it, but only one seemed to enjoy it. This was Gonzalo Fernandez de Cordoba.

I had met Gonzalo and Rodrigo de Ponce, Marquis de Cadiz, two of Fernando and Isabella's military leaders late that summer when they both happened to visit the court. Both had been much involved in the defeat of the Moros. Rodrigo was very tall with fiery red hair. I found him a bit too full of himself, always bragging about his military prowess. If half of what he said was true, he was quite the fearless warrior. Gonzalo, on the other hand, was pleasant, intelligent, and an excellent conversationalist. At the same time, he was very strong, remarkably agile, and very skilled with all sorts of their weapons. On top of that, he was an excellent horseman and something of a dandy. He was vaguely related to Fernando, but was Isabella's favorite. He was about eight years younger than I. He, too, had lost a wife in childbirth almost twenty years ago, but he had remarried about five years ago and had a young daughter.

We got along famously and he even invited me to visit his home, although I had to decline until the wanderings of the court brought us near it. In any case, he told me how their army is organized. It is rather confusing. There is artillery, although he said they only had about 150 pieces. There is a group called *espingarderos* who carry a handheld cannon more primitive than ours. There is a light cavalry called *jinetes*, much like our forces, but armed with spears rather than bows. Then there is infantry, the bulk of their forces. Where it gets confusing is that the soldiers can be royal troops, directly subject to the king; noble troops, subject to one of the nobles; city troops, raised in the larger cities; mercenaries hired by a group called *Santa Hermandad*; members of the military orders; and finally a group called *homicianes*, men convicted of capital crimes who could fight instead of being executed.

The *Santa Hermandad* or Holy Brotherhood is an interesting group. They were founded by Isabella's brother, Enrique the Fourth, in 1476. They are armed bands of citizens who suppress crime and make the roads safe from criminals by dispensing summary justice to thieves, arsonists, burglars, rapists, and traitors. I suggested that such a group was likely to become abusive, but Gonzalo assured me that they had really made a difference. He added that they also contributed heavily to the war against the Moros by turning most of the taxes they collected over to the crown. It seems they collect taxes for their expenses from the towns whose citizens they protect.

The military orders are warrior *frailes* who separate themselves from the world to varying degrees, but come out to fight for "holy causes" like ridding *Espanya* of Moros. There are five of these orders. *Santiago* is the leading order in *Castilla*; Fernando now administers it. *San Juan Hospital* is the leading order in *Aragon*; they own much of the land along the lower part of the *Ebro River*. *Calatrava* is an order that owns the mines of *Almaden* and has agreed to make Fernando their master when the current one dies. *Alcantara* and *Montesa* are the other two orders. All but the last were founded in the 1100s to fight the Moros. I suggested there wasn't much point to them anymore, but Gonzalo reminded me that there were still many Moros in *Africa* who might try to invade.

Late in the winter, Gonzalo took me to see some of their artillery. It comes in quite a variety of shapes and sizes. They include "quartaos," large bore, short-barreled cannon; "lonbaldas," long guns that fired stone shot; "robadoquinas," small guns mounted in banks on carts; "culebrinas," huge cannon used in sieges; and others called "pasabolantes" and "cerbotinas." Most of these were made of bronze rather than iron. I asked him why and he said that the bronze was lighter and thus more easily transportable. He added that it was much more expensive and did not last long, so there was much interest in improving the iron cannon. I could see that their iron cannon were much more primitive than ours, but I didn't tell him. I asked him why there was such a variety of cannon and he said that almost all were procured from other countries, especially *Francia* and the empire. It was only recently that they had begun producing them in *Espanya*. Of course, he added the several types had different functions as well. The larger ones were used to reduce city walls and the smaller ones for antipersonnel purposes. I did not comment.

Once I was alone, I wrote up a complete description of their artillery and explanation their army "organization" for the *Khakhan*. I added that while we could easily overrun *Espanya*, we might have trouble holding it since it was so unhealthy. Not only was there the respiratory ailment, but there was also a plague they called the Black Death. It would move around the country almost randomly striking one or more city at a time, and then it would end. Fortunately, the court always stayed far away from any so afflicted city. It was a most unpleasant disease and I wrote a description of its progression suggesting that perhaps one of our *Chosin* healers would recognize it from the old land and know how to treat it.

Early in the spring, Fernando summoned me again to give me a dispatch from the Khakhan. He told me that Colon was now in Khanbalikh and had written that the Khakhan lived in a magnificent tent, not a palace. He wondered why. I explained that Khanbalikh means “the Khan’s city” and it was situated on a great prairie and it periodically is moved. Besides, I added, it was an old tradition dating back to Chingis that the Khakhan lived in a great “tent.” After all, the Mongols were nomadic people following their herds over the grasslands. I think he was even more puzzled by this, so I added that the three khans all had large palaces, more spread out than his, but not as tall, and without walls, in fixed capital cities. He asked me why there were no separate walls to protect the palaces. I explained that the outer walls of the palaces were not unlike fortifications, although there were windows on the upper level. He next wondered if there were never any revolts or civil wars among the Mongols. I said that they had occurred but were very rare and swiftly put down. He was impressed. He also told me that from Colon’s letter he could see that I had not been exaggerating about the size of the Khakhanate. It took them over two months to reach the capital from the coast. Colon estimated the distance to be at least 440 leguas. I mentioned that dispatch riders would cover the distance in about fourteen days. He marveled and again asked me to press the Khakhan to consider a marriage alliance. I told him I would mention it to him.

I looked over my dispatch from the Khakhan. He thanked me for conscientiously translating my missive from Luis, but assured me that I should only tell him anything I thought he should know. He approved of my plans to observe any warfare in Europa and wanted me to report all I could find out about the various military forces. I sent him my notes on the Espanya army, artillery, and the Black Death and promised to look into their navy and the armies of other nations. I also told him about Fernando’s interest in betrothing his youngest daughter to one of his sons. I added that he had made quite a life’s work out of marrying his children strategically and so was quite serious about it. I also mentioned my misgivings about the match considering how alien our two cultures were, but I did say the child in question was pretty and seemed to have a pleasant disposition.

Not long afterward Gonzalo returned to court and I asked him about the armies of the other countries in Europa. He told me that he had only fought the Moros and the Portugueses. Most of the battles with the Moros had been sieges with artillery bombardment and hand-to-hand combat. There had been some raids and even some pitched battles of cavalry and infantry versus cavalry and infantry. Against the Portugueses he led a company of jinetes under his older brother. Their army was similar to that of Espanya. As to other countries, Inglaterra was the only one that used the longbow. The others used pike men and the crossbow. Most also had artillery and espingarderos and all had cavalry either heavy or light or both.

I asked about first three groups. He explained that longbow archers carried a longbow with which they were able to send arrows quite far that could often penetrate armor. From his description these seemed to be self-bows made of elm or yew not recurved composite bows like ours. Crossbowmen used a weapon reminiscent of one used by the Hanjen long ago. It had originally been made of wood or composite, but now was made of iron. It fired a usually metal bolt, which could generally penetrate armor. Pike men carried a “pike,” a very tall spear, which they could use to good effect in defensive formations against cavalry. He added that the Suizos could use them in offensive actions also, but most others lost effectiveness once they were out of formation. I felt I really needed to see them in action before I could gauge their effectiveness.

Then I asked him about navies. He explained that they had ships, but no formal navy. The ships were used to transport army elements, which would sometimes fight at sea. I agreed that was the custom, but asked if the crews for the ships were not formally trained for battle. He said that they could defend themselves if boarded, but usually just manned the ship. He then told me that much of the crew on a galera (galley) consisted of galeotes or slaves. It seems that galeras were ships propelled by banks of large oars pulled by men chained to their benches. These men were mostly prisoners of war, usually Moros, condemned men, or those sentenced directly by the courts to be galeotes. I asked to see some of the ships. He said he would find out when any of them would be in a nearby port. I didn’t ask, but I suspected if the galera happened to be sunk, those chained to their benches would be left to their fate.

Late in the summer, Gonzalo came to tell me that there were two of the galeras in the port of Almeria, not far from where the court was at the moment. We rode to the port together. It had been the principal port of Granada, the last Moro kingdom, and the architecture was quite different from that of Barcelona or Palos. We

arrived late and spent the night with some local official who was a friend of Gonzalo's. Gonzalo seemed to have a lot of friends. The next morning we went down to the port to see the ships.

One of the ships was what Gonzalo called a galeazza; the other was a galleotta. The former had a single row of twenty-five huge oars on each side with five men to an oar. The oars were too large to handle directly, so there was a ladderlike device attached to each oar, which the men could maneuver. The ship had fore and aft raised areas, which were armed with cannon. There was also a ten-foot long metal ram on the front. The ship was about 160 feet long and perhaps 29 feet wide, and had two masts with large triangular sails. The latter ship had two rows of five smaller, one-man oars on each side and was about sixty feet long and perhaps ten feet wide. It also had two masts and triangular sails, but only mounted a single cannon.

Both ships were shallow with benches and oars along the sides and a narrow catwalk in the center. All the rowers were naked and chained by their ankle to remain at their benches night and day. The stench coming from them was overwhelming. The free men among them were not chained on the open sea, only while in port. They could be distinguished by normal hair and even mustaches. The slaves had shaved heads and the convicts had tufts of hair. I had to wonder what sort of morale these men had.

They also used regular sailing ships a little larger than those of Colon. These were crewed by professionals, at least among the officers. The crews could be from any country with anywhere from very much or no experience at sea. I had to wonder about the reliability of this lot. A few of these ships were also in port and they were indeed either a little larger or smaller than Colon's largest ship. I asked Gonzalo if the other countries in Europa had similar ships and crewing practices and he assured me they did. It appeared to me that the people of Europa did not take their navies seriously. He asked me if it was different in the Khakhanate. I told him that it was. Our ships were larger and crewed by professionals. We did not have any galeras. He said that the advantage of galeras was that not only did they have a shallow draft, but they were also not so dependent on the wind. I replied that I was no sailor and was in no position to judge the relative merits of ships. However, I added, if I was to sail anywhere during my stay, I would not want to be on a galera; the smell would kill me before we got out of the harbor. He found that very amusing and told me that passengers on a galera made generous use of strong perfumes or stuffed their noses with spices to overcome the odor. The thought of two competing strong odors made me ill and I asked to return to court.

When we returned to court, it was all abuzz about the invasion of Italia by the king of Francia, Carlos the Eighth. Apparently, in midsummer, he sent his cousin, the duke of Orleans along the coast toward Genova while he crossed the tall mountains called the Alpinas (Alps) into Italia. By the time he reached Asti, an Italiano city belonging to his cousin, his cousin had already defeated a Napoles force at Rapallo east of Genova. He then entered and was passing through the state of Milano. The ruler of Milano, Ludovico Sforza, called Il Moro because of his dark complexion, had urged Carlos to make his move on the Kingdom of Napoles, asserting some claim Carlos had to that throne. Of course the current king of Napoles, Alfonso the Second, happened to be related to Fernando, and the latter had some interest in perhaps inheriting the kingdom himself. On the other hand, he had signed the treaty last year promising not to interfere unless the papa felt threatened.

Meanwhile the dispatches arrived from the Khakhan. Fernando handed them to me in person and asked if there was anything in them about his suggestion of a marriage alliance. I had to open them up in his presence to find out. The Khakhan took it up first, as it happened. He told me to tell Fernando that he would consider his offer carefully before replying to it. I passed this on and he was clearly disappointed. He asked me if that was a negative response, but I assured him it was not. Of course, the Khakhan told me that such an offer was like a request from an ant to marry a bear. He was reasonably sure he could do better for both of his sons. He thanked me for the information on the army and arms of Espanya, and the warning about the unhealthiness of Europa. He had asked the Chosin healers about the plague and they affirmed that they were familiar with it. It had ravaged the old land many times, most recently during the ousting of the Yuan Dynasty from the Middle Kingdom. They claimed it killed about half the population. They said that it was usually preceded by a huge die off of rats and seemed to come in more than one form. The one I had described was the milder form, which would only kill about a quarter or a third of its victims. The other form would kill all its victims. The only treatment was strict quarantine for the homes of the afflicted, or the whole town if it was widespread. He urged me to avoid even approaching the plague towns. I was touched by his concern. He added that they were also

familiar with the respiratory ailment and had marveled that it was so rare in the Khakhanate. He sent along some herbs and instructions for using them should we succumb again.

I sent him my notes on the armies and navies of Europa and described the ships and the armaments used according to Gonzalo. I also brought him up to date with the events in Italia. I thanked him for the herbs, the information on the plague, and his concern for my well-being. Finally, I told him that I had not discouraged Fernando's marriage alliance hopes as he had instructed.

Luis' letter was mostly personal news. He had taken his son with him to the Khakhanate this year and the boy was very impressed and had learned Mongol well enough to understand all that was said. He added that the governor had been most kind to him. He went on to say that his daughter was thriving, and his wife was again with child. He also wrote that so far as he knew, no one in Europa knew about our arrangement with his people.

Actually, I had been recently approached by the ambassador of Inglaterra or England as he called it. He told me that his king was interested in opening relations with the Khakhanate. He added that their merchants had seen Basque (their name for Eskualdunac) fishing ships headed west of Iceland and wondered if we had encountered any of them. I told him I had never heard of "Basques" or Iceland. He explained that Basques lived in the northern part of Castilla and were called Vascos in Castellano. Iceland was an island in the North Atlantic Ocean, the name they use for the Eastern Sea, which had been settled by Norsemen many centuries ago. I feigned ignorance, but told him I would advise the Khakhan of his interest and let him know. I urged him not to send any merchant ships to the Khakhanate unbidden. He assured me they would not. I included a report on this request as well as a quick summary of their recent history so the Khakhan would realize that this was not a particularly powerful country. Actually, there were no powerful countries in Europa at this time.

I wrote Luis a warning about the merchants of England and suggested they continue to stay away from Iceland on their journey across the sea. I also congratulated him on his bright son and new child. I told him the latest court news and asked him if his agents already knew all of this. I suspected they did.

I had not received any correspondence from my relatives, but it was actually not necessary. John kept in touch with them and when I contacted him in the dream world, he would bring me up to date. Three of my cousins on my mother's side passed away while I have been here, so I'm very glad I went around to see them all when John was a baby. They were fine people.

By late fall, Carlos the Eighth had moved into the territory controlled by the city of Florencia. The ruler of the city, Piero de Medici, did nothing to stop the advance, but rather tried to negotiate and surrendered city after city. Finally he was overthrown by a revolution inspired by a fraile named Girolamo Savonarola. The new city leaders then negotiated a settlement with Carlos, allowing him to occupy their fortresses for two years, naming him their "Protector" and giving him a large sum of gold. Next he marched on Roma.

By early winter he had entered Roma. The papa had allied himself to Napoles and their troops had forced the Frances to march along the coast south from Florencia. He had then carried on a flurry of activity seeking help from even the Ottomans. The sultan, Bajazet the Second, agreed to help if the papa would put to death his brother, Djem, who was in exile in Roma and whom he considered to be a threat to his rule. Instead, the papa negotiated with Carlos and agreed to give Djem to him as well as some of his towns until the war with Napoles was over. He also had to turn over his son, Cesar Borja, as a hostage. The appeal by the papa to the Ottoman sultan caused many of his enemies to demand that a council be called to depose him for betraying Christianity. I must admit, I found all this rather curious. I would have questioned the annoying Cisneros about it, but he had been sent by Isabella to reform his order of frailes, the Franciscanos, and was no longer at court.

I asked my friend Gonzalo about it, and he just shrugged and told me that many people in the Church hierarchy were more interested in politics than in the Church. I told him we had always found that to be the case with priests and that was why we suppressed them. He said he could see how that could happen, but assured me that there were many very good priests only interested in the spiritual well-being of their people. He pointed out Cisneros as being one of them. I suggested that he was rather narrow-minded, but he countered that the man was merely dedicated to his mission. I did not pursue the subject.

After about a month in Roma, Carlos moved on Napoles. The king of Napoles, Alfonso the Second, resigned his crown in favor of his son Ferrante the Second and fled in a panic to Sicilia (Sicily)—a large island off the southwest tip of the Italian peninsula that was part of the Kingdom of Napoles. By midwinter Carlos had taken the city of Napoles and almost the entire kingdom. He settled in Napoles to enjoy his rather painless victory. By late winter a coalition had formed against Carlos. It was composed of the Italian cities of Venetia and Milan and the papa as well as the Holy Roman Emperor and Fernando. They agreed to defend the Christian states from the Ottomans, restore the papa's territory, and guarantee the borders of all the members of the coalition. Coincidentally, they agreed to rid Italia of Carlos.

While Carlos was absorbing the new situation, Fernando called me in to give me the latest dispatches from the Khakhan and to ask me if I wished to accompany my friend Gonzalo who was leading an army against the Frances in Napoles. I told him I very much wished to do so and he gave me permission. He also told me that Colon was now pressing his desire for a marriage alliance, although he too had written that it would be a difficult adjustment for his daughter. He asked if the Khakhan had written anything to me on the subject. Quickly reading through the letter, I found nothing, so I told him that the Khakhan was still considering it, and would likely have an answer by the next dispatch. He thanked me and wished me an enjoyable campaign.

I quickly replied to the Khakhan's letter explaining the situation in Italia and telling him I would be going on the upcoming campaign. He had thanked me for my information and urged me to put off the ambassador of England for the present, explaining that we did not want an indiscriminate number of ships plying our shores and would be very hostile to any that came unbidden. I passed this on to the ambassador, who was disappointed, but insisted that he understood. With my dispatches finished and sent off, I left the court, which was currently in the city of Madrid, in the middle of the country, and hurried to catch up with Gonzalo who was in Cartagena, a large port on the southeast coast. He had been busy recruiting and gathering supplies for the expedition. His "army" consisted of only about three hundred jinetes and two thousand infantry. It seemed more like a raiding party. As it happened, however, the rest of his army had already departed. Still the whole of it was much less than a tumen.

A fleet of thirty ships, commanded by Galceran de Requesens, met us at Cartagena. They were all galeras of varying sizes. I held off boarding until the last minute, but the smell was nearly as bad from the pier. To make matters worse, the winds were unfavorable, so we had to be rowed most of the way. Fortunately, we made two stops for supplies along the way, first at Palma on the island of Mayorca, and then at Cerdenya on the island of Sardinia. I can confirm again, that the nose does adjust when so cruelly assailed. It actually got to where I hardly noticed it.

Gonzalo and I had a lot of time to talk to each other while at sea. He asked about my family and origins and wondered if I wanted to visit the empire and my ancestral roots. I replied that perhaps after the campaign I might. I asked about his plans and he replied that he only wanted to serve his sovereigns to the best of his ability. I think he really meant that. We talked about the upcoming campaign and he seemed generally confident, although he was hoping Ferrante would stay in Sicilia and let him conduct the campaign. He had heard that Ferrante was rather impetuous and fancied himself a military leader of some merit. I told him that we often had princes along on campaign, but they usually deferred to the man appointed to lead the campaign, or they would have to answer to their father's wrath if things went wrong. He pointed out that Ferrante was now the king of Napoles, so he would be in command if he so chose. I could see he had a problem.

We finally arrived at the port of Mesina in Sicilia, which was still in the control of the king of Napoles. We only stayed there two days and then crossed the straight to the mainland port of Reggio, which King Ferrante had just taken with the help of the first group of Gonzalo's forces.

While we were at sea, Carlos the Eighth had crowned himself king of Napoles and a week later abandoned his new kingdom and marched north with about half of his forces. He had placed his cousin, Gilberto of Borbon, the duke of Montpensier in charge of Napoles. With him were about ten thousand men and all the Frances artillery. There were also some units spread around the kingdom. The forces nearest us, however, were under the command of a mercenary from Escotia named Everaldo Stuart, Lord of Aubigny.

Once we connected with Ferrante, it was obvious that his local troops were poorly trained and disciplined. They were disorganized and there was no apparent cohesion among units. To add to Gonzalo's difficulties, they were far better paid than his own grizzled veterans. He worked tirelessly to keep his forces in line and even used his own funds to supplement their pay. It also appeared that Ferrante had every intention of commanding the combined forces, although he would be open to Gonzalo's suggestions.

The immediate task at hand was to clear the Frances garrisons out of the small villages and ports around Reggio. This proved fairly easy since they had already managed to alienate their reluctant hosts. Since he was outnumbered, Gonzalo used ambush, night attacks on the enemy camp, and surprise attacks to demoralize the Frances and force them to hide in their fortresses. Then he turned his artillery against them causing them to flee or surrender. Next he garrisoned each sizable town with his own troops, not the Napoles. The easy victories caused many of the locals to swell the ranks of Ferrante's army. Of course, these volunteers were just slightly better than worthless.

By the time we encountered the forces Aubigny had consolidated near the town of Seminara, which Gonzalo had taken. Ferrante was growing impatient with Gonzalo's tactics. Gonzalo wanted to fully reconnoiter the enemy and perhaps probe them a bit to see what sort of troops they were, and then meet them at a field of his choosing. Ferrante and a few of Gonzalo's captains were all for attacking right away. Unfortunately, Ferrante had the last word and reminded Gonzalo of that fact. The Frances had mercenaries from Suiza as well as from the empire, hired before the alliance, and Gonzalo had never faced them before. They were mostly pike men. Frankly, massed artillery would make short work of them, but I was here to observe, not advise. In all the Frances had about four thousand infantry and six hundred lancers. It seems we were about to see our first battle among these people.

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Gonzalo's Campaign 127-9 K

(Italy, 1495-7)

Ferrante drew up his forces in the "Italiano" fashion. To his left were about forty-five hundred infantry of whom, perhaps fourteen hundred were Gonzalo's men. These were near the center with Gonzalo, mounted on horseback, at their head. On the far right were three hundred jinetes. Between the jinetes and Gonzalo's infantry but somewhat behind the line were about one hundred men-at-arms or heavy armored cavalry from Napoles with Ferrante. The Frances commander placed his four thousand infantry including about sixteen hundred pike men in his center, and split his lancers, a heavy cavalry, about three hundred on each flank. A small stream with little water separated the two sides. Conthagah and I found a hill behind and a little south of the line, which gave us a fair view of the battlefield. He muttered to me that with half a tumen we could wipe out both armies. He was right.

The Frances started things by moving their left lancers across the stream at the jinetes. The latter threw themselves at the heavier cavalry throwing them into some confusion, but doing little damage against their armor. They then fell back, reorganized themselves, and sortied again using a sensible hit-and-run tactic to keep the Frances off balance. It was obvious they needed some help, and I noticed Gonzalo riding over to Ferrante. I assumed and he later confirmed that he was asking him to commit his men-at-arms to assist the jinetes. They did not move, however, and Gonzalo later told me that Ferrante had said it was a very ancient tradition to keep the men-at-arms around the banner of the king as a rallying point.

While this was going on, the local levies on the far left began to melt away, apparently because they thought the jinetes were retreating instead of feinting. Seeing this, the Frances and Suizo infantry began moving against the faltering line. Gonzalo then led his infantry in furious counterattack that left the enemy staggering back. Without support, the jinetes had to fall back from the relentless Frances heavy cavalry. In the open field, they were no match for them. Soon Ferrante and his men-at-arms were engaged by more of the Suizos. His horse went down, but he jumped up and continued fighting furiously. Finally, one of his captains, Altavilla, gave Ferrante his horse and covered his retreat at the cost of his life.

With the Naples fleeing the battle, Gonzalo conducted an orderly retreat, constantly and ferociously counterattacking the enemy to keep them off balance and prevent a rout. The Frances finally gave up the pursuit, and Gonzalo retired to Seminara. We joined him there and found him rounding up all the men who could move and soon had them leaving the likely trap and on the way toward Reggio. There with the rear guard and the fleet that had brought him, he knew the Frances would not follow him. I expected him to be full of anger and recriminations over the ignominious debacle, but instead found him full of good cheer, urging on the men, and chatting pleasantly with me. He had a steely determination, which left me certain this campaign had only just begun.

Once we arrived at Reggio, Gonzalo was further cheered to find that Ferrante had departed for Sicilia leaving his army behind. He immediately started training the Italianos. He sent a report to his sovereigns explaining the loss and asking for reinforcements, supplies, and pay for his troops. He reorganized his forces. He replaced as many crossbows as possible with the handheld cannon they called arcabuces. He had the smaller real cannon carried by mules so they could be easily moved along difficult mountain tracks. He started the winter in Reggio, sending out parties to attack the Frances at every opportunity. Never in the pitched battle they wished for, but rather with hit-and-run, ambush, and skirmish always where and when they least expected it. The locals, thoroughly disenchanted with the Frances, were happy to help with timely information. This along with the continued illness of the Frances commander greatly undermined their morale.

His tactics soon forced the Frances to fragment and withdraw into fortresses and strong points. Gonzalo began to reduce these one by one. He finally established his winter quarters in Nicastro, well positioned to protect the rest of the peninsula. From here he sent out parties to keep up the pressure on the Frances. Then in the spring, the arrival of three hundred instead of the promised fifteen hundred infantry from the Castellano province of Galicia and the long-overdue payment for his troops was a partial relief to him. The new troops had no arms and were in rags, but he soon fixed them up and began to move north along the course of the Crati River.

About midway down the river, we came upon the Frances in the town of Cosenza. It fell quickly, but the citadel held off three furious assaults. To his credit, Gonzalo invested the citadel with enough troops to keep them there and moved north with the bulk of his army. We left the Crati at Terranova and paused at the town of Castrovillari. Here we received a message from Ferrante that he had been defeated near the town of Eboli by a Frances army under Francisco D'Allegre, Lord Percy.

It seemed that the young king had taken Gonzalo's advice and opened up a second front near Naples. He had landed unopposed at Magdalena south of Naples near the mouth of the River Sebeto. The Frances viceroy, Montpensier, sallied out of Naples with most of his garrison to meet the challenge. Once he was gone, the fickle citizens of the city rose up against the remaining Frances and slaughtered them. With his base gone, Montpensier retreated to the city's two castles, Del Ovo and Nuovo. The cities of Capua, Aquila, and Aversa also rid themselves of the Frances. Meanwhile, Ferrante entered into Naples with much triumph and rejoicing and soon received the allegiance of many of the barons who had previously sided with the Frances. Not willing to wait for the reinforcements from the Holy League, Ferrante decided to sally forth against the remaining Frances leaving Montpensier trapped in his castles. And so he rushed forward to meet the Frances relief column under Percy and was defeated at Eboli, about thirteen leguas southeast of Naples. Castrovillari was a farther thirty leguas southeast of Eboli.

Gonzalo called his captains together and invited me to join him. Some of the captains wanted to keep up the pressure on D'Aubigny and leave Ferrante to be rescued by the Holy League. Gonzalo reminded them that they were there to reinstall the king of Naples, so their first obligation was to make sure he was there to reinstall. While they were deciding the best way to proceed to his help, the impatient Ferrante decided to blunder ahead again against Percy, buoyed by the imminent arrival of the Holy League forces under Juan Francisco Gonzaga.

Meanwhile Montpensier received two thousand reinforcements from the city of Gaeta to the northwest. At the same time some still-loyal Naples nobles reinforced Percy. The latter decided he would retake Naples, but on the way, his Suizo pike men refused to fight until they were paid. Having no means to pay them, he was forced to retreat toward Benevento, a town about eleven leguas northeast of Naples. He then continued on to Atella

some six leguas farther east. It was in a broad high valley which, although strategically placed and easily defended, was far from the coast and any hope of help from Francia. Ferrante and Gonzaga followed him there.

Gonzalo left Luis de Vera with two hundred jinetes and six hundred infantry to cover his back and led the rest of his force north to join Ferrante. Not far along the mountain track, his scouts came back to report an ambush had been set for them on the road ahead by the prince of Besignano, allied to the Frances. Gonzalo had a portion of his men lounge about where they were, as though they were taking a break, and sent the rest of his forces around the mountain to hit the ambush from the rear. The ambushers were utterly routed. The next day he took the town of Morano.

Continuing north we next came upon the town of Laino, divided in two by the River Lao, the town on one side and the castle on the other. Here was the well-provisioned bulk of the prince's army. Since he could see that they had much heavy cavalry, Gonzalo waited until nightfall, then had his men infiltrate along both banks of the river to the bridge uniting the two parts of the town. He put a strong force in place to hold the bridge and sent some of the remainder to attack the castle and the rest to invest the town. I could not believe they were able to get into position without raising alarm, but they did, making no sound until their attacking battle cry "Santiago y Espanya." The surprise was complete. Most of the army was asleep and unarmored. Those in the town tried to reach the castle, but could not force the strongly held bridge. Those in the castle were thrown into confusion and quickly overcome. By dawn it was all over with only those that jumped into the river escaping. Many surrendered and the booty was impressive.

Before we left, word reached us that Luis de Vera and the rear guard had been surprised by D'Aubigny while sacking a village and routed. Gonzalo detached a small force under the Cardinal of Aragon to watch for and rally the rear guard. We continued north with about seventy men-at-arms, four hundred jinetes, and one thousand infantry. We arrived at the city of Potenza without incident and after a short rest continued on to Atella by forced marches. When we neared the camp of the besiegers, Gonzalo had the drummers beat the cadence, and dressing the ranks smartly, he marched them up in perfect order. Ferrante came out to welcome us accompanied by Gonzaga and the usual entourage of notables among whom was the son of the papa, Cesar Borja.

The entire besieging force was considerable, thirteen hundred heavy cavalry, fifteen hundred light cavalry, and four thousand infantry. The siege had gone on for a month so far and the Frances were quite secure. There was the River Atella that came out of the north, swept around the city, and flowed to the northeast, practically surrounding the city with a moat. Furthermore, there were fortified strong points all around the city. Gonzalo and I accompanied Ferrante to the top of a hill where we could see the entire area and then made the rounds of the besieging forces. It was obvious the allies didn't have enough men to storm the city. But Gonzalo noticed that along the river there were mills, buildings that use the flow of the river to rotate large stones which grind grain. These were guarded by companies of the Frances and their Suizo mercenaries. It was clear to him that he needed to take the mills.

He organized his men to attack while the Italianos watched. In the first rank were the armored infantry. Behind them were the pike men covering them and the arcabuceros. The jinetes screened the town and the men-at-arms were positioned to block a sally from the town. The Frances and Suizos moved between the mills and Gonzalo's men, the Frances arcabuceros in front and the Suizo pike men behind. The forces in the town remained there. The infantry attacked first, yelling their battle cry and rushing forward. The Frances arcabuceros then fired their volley expecting to repel the infantry. Instead it spurred them on and the Frances retreated behind the Suizos. These did not impress the infantry, but they pushed aside the pikes with their shields and hacked away at anything not armored, causing the Suizos to drop their pikes and flee toward the town. At this moment the jinetes swooped in on them and cut them down. Few survived. Finally the Frances sallied forth from the town and the men-at-arms slowed them up until Gonzalo sounded the recall and reformed his men to move against the sortie. The Frances soon gave ground and fled back into the town. It was after this skirmish that the Italianos began calling Gonzalo, the Great Captain.

Having taken and destroyed the mills, Gonzalo began taking the outer defenses one by one. In nine days he took two of their supposedly impregnable strong points, Venosa and Ripacandida. A small relief force was destroyed

by the duke of Gandia, the eldest son of the papa, who had recently been ignominiously defeated by the Orsini family, allies of the Frances. Soon the swollen population, the summer heat, and loss of the mills began to tell on the besieged. They were starving, thirsty, and disease ridden. They sent out Percy to negotiate within three weeks of our arrival. Gonzalo agreed to a thirty-day truce after which the Frances left the city with no arms and no horses. Ferrante insisted that they await evacuation from the sea and forced them into a swampy fever-infested place near Castellamare di Stabia where they languished for months waiting for their king to rescue them. Eventually only a few ships came and the rest had to walk back to Francia. It was said that of the five thousand who surrendered only five hundred made it back to Francia. Montpensier died there with his men. It was a shameful way for the Frances king to treat his men.

Shortly after the surrender, Ferrante rewarded Gonzalo by naming him viceroy of Calabria. Then he returned to Naples to marry his aunt by marriage, a niece of King Fernando. I was invited to the festivities, but preferred to stay with Gonzalo who took his army to wipe out the remaining pockets of Frances. Not long after his marriage, plague broke out around Naples claiming Ferrante, who was relaxing in Pozzuoli west of the city, as one of its victims. His uncle Fadrique, the prince of Altamura, an illegitimate son of Ferrante's grandfather, was named successor by the papa. This apparently flew in the face of an understanding that King Fernando would be made king of Naples should Ferrante die without issue. He was furious at the papa's duplicity, but decided to bide his time.

Gonzalo and I knew nothing about this until later, but spent the winter going from one stronghold of the Frances to another, reducing them in turn. For those along the coast, he made use of the squadron of Galceran de Requesens, and so he took Gaeta, Tarento, and Barletta. Then he turned to the inland garrisons and soon reduced Auletta, Nola, and Olivetto. Finally, we were besieging the fortress called Rocca Guglielma, northeast of Gaeta, when Gonzalo received a message from the papa asking him to help him deal with Ostia. The town is at the mouth of the Tiber River, on which Roma is located, and was being used to stop all ships bound for Roma, farther up the river. It seemed that at the behest of Cardinal della Rovere an enemy of the papa, a mercenary named Menaldo Guerri, an Eskualdunac from Viscaino, with his own small squadron of galleys, stationed himself in Ostia and boarded, sacked, and sank any ship trying to reach Roma. Gonzalo lifted the siege and we marched for Roma.

When we reached Roma, Gonzalo and I went to stay with the Spanish ambassador, Garcilaso de la Vega. It was here that we were brought up to date on all the gossip. On the third day, Gonzalo decided his men were rested and made ready to move on Ostia. Before we left, the papa insisted on receiving us in state and leading a service to invoke God's blessing on the venture. He also foisted his son, the duke of Gandia, on the expedition. We finally left that night marching out of the city quietly. As was his wont, Gonzalo rode quietly along the lines, speaking to various of his men, addressing them by their name and encouraging some, joking with others, cheering up others. He seemed to know his men very well.

I rode with the duke of Gandia and tried to take the measure of the man. He betrayed no talent that I could detect. He couldn't tell me any details of his victory over the relief column and blamed all his failures against the Orsini on the duke of Urbino, a vassal of the papa. He could not tell me how the latter failed. He didn't seem to know anything about battle. I suspected his father had sent him on this expedition in the hope that he might learn something from Gonzalo. He had been lightly wounded during his battles with the Orsini, and all he seemed to have learned from his experience was to stay well away from any danger. Since Gonzalo led from the front, Gandia was rarely near enough to learn anything.

Gonzalo had sent the artillery ahead and they were well emplaced when we arrived. He did some rearranging and began to encircle the town with his troops. Shortly after we arrived, de la Vega arrived with some forces he had gathered in Roma. Gonzalo placed them east of the town, nearest to Roma. With everything in place, he waited the rest of the day leaving Guerri to contemplate the trap. Early the next morning, the artillery began pounding the walls. On the third day, the walls still held but a mass assault was attempted. This was thrown back, however. Reconnoitering the town, Gonzalo noticed that there were large cracks in the eastern walls. He concentrated his artillery and most of his troops there, and, calling together his captains, listened to what they had to say, then went over what he expected from them.

He had the artillery concentrate on the cracks until the walls were breached. Then he had de la Vega lead an assault on the breach. Meanwhile he had hidden the rest of his men on the western side of the town, and once they heard the attack begin, he led them over the poorly defended western wall and into the town. Alonso de Sotomayor captured Guerri after single combat and the town surrendered. Gonzalo upbraided Guerri for taking up arms against the papa, but the latter insisted that he had served the man who hired him, as he was honor bound to do.

Gonzalo disarmed the Frances and Italiano forces, then released them. The Spanish, however, were held as traitors. Six days later, we returned to Roma. He arranged the men for his grand entrance. First the infantry, then the men-at-arms, then the jinetes marched accompanied by drums and horns. Then Gonzalo's standard bearer, and flag bearers, then three horn players blasting his own theme, then Gonzalo with the duke of Gandia, the papa's son, on his right. Behind him was Guerri, disheveled and mounted on a sorry-looking nag, but still unbowed and defiant, and followed by the prisoners. Bringing up the rear were the Spanish knights. He had wanted me to ride at his right hand, but I refused, pointing out that since I was not a combatant, I had no business taking part in the triumph. He agreed, but added that I contributed at least as much as the duke had. Since the latter always remained well out of danger, he was probably right.

Conthagah and I rode in the rear with the knights. The streets were thronged with cheering crowds, flowers or colored carpets hung from every window. The volume rose noticeably when Gonzalo rode past and changed to jeering and curses for Guerri only to return to cheers as the knights passed. The procession continued to the official church of the papa, San Pietro, where he and his entourage awaited at the top of the stairs in front of the building. Gonzalo dismounted, walked up the stairs, and knelt down in front of the papa to kiss his foot, as is their bizarre custom. The papa didn't allow it, but raised him up and kissed him on both cheeks. He tried to heap praise on him, but Gonzalo insisted that all credit was due his sovereigns in whose name he accepted it. The papa insisted on awarding him the Golden Rose, which was usually only given to kings who had performed significant service to the Church. Finally he asked if there was any favor he could grant him. Gonzalo asked that the people of Campania, the province that includes both Roma and Ostia, be exempted from taxes for ten years since they had suffered so much loss. He also asked that Guerri be pardoned. Both requests were granted.

Guerri was stunned, but remarked that the load of his bad fortune was lightened by the fact that he had been beaten by the best. He then departed for Francia. I was tempted to speak to him, but refrained. He did not seem to know anything about me.

We stayed again with de la Vega. Conthagah and I looked around the city while the papa feted Gonzalo and the ambassador. It was a strange city, surrounded by a wall and filled with ancient ruins and fallen columns as well as fairly new grand houses and churches and a great many buildings somewhere between these extremes. There were vast tunnels below the city which were considered sacred burial sites and many monuments to various personages from their past.

I noticed Gonzalo was getting increasingly agitated over the next few days, but assumed he was anxious to finish mopping up the Frances and get back home. I also noticed that the mood of the people of Roma had turned against their heroes of a few days before. De la Vega, ever the gossip, told me that Gonzalo was offended by the "tone" of the papa's banquets. Seeing that I was bewildered by that remark, he explained that even though the papa was the "vicar of Christ" and the successor of the "apostles," he did not lead a very moral life, and was wont to flaunt his excesses at his banquets. As a fellow ambassador, he was sure I would try not to be offended by what took place, but Gonzalo, an anomaly among men, actually took his religion seriously and found the papa's behavior reprehensible. I assured him that in my experience, priests were always the most corrupt representatives of any tribe we conquered. He smiled warily, but did not reply.

On the fifth day, Gonzalo announced that he was leaving as soon as possible, and congratulated me on staying away from the papa. I assured him I found the city quite interesting, although it was becoming rather hostile. He agreed and told me he felt the papa and his relatives were stirring up the mob against his men. I suggested that made no sense since he had asked for Gonzalo's help and seemed quite grateful when we returned triumphant. He then told me that the previous Sunday, which was called Palm Sunday, he had been offered a seat below the pathetic duke of Gandia! It was an insult to his sovereigns and his men as well as him. He had refused to take

the seat and had refused a blessed palm frond as well. He added that the papa's secretary had the temerity to come to him and ask why he was upset. Not wishing to discomfort the man, he told him it was a personal difference between him and Gandia. Now he had heard the mob is demanding that his troops, who had just saved them from starvation, be stoned in the streets. On Good Friday of all days!

He left to take his leave of the papa and gave orders for his troops to be ready to leave at first light the next morning. De la Vega went with him trying to calm him down. That was a shame since I wondered what he was talking about. I did manage to corner one of the ambassador's assistants who explained that Palm Sunday commemorated Jesus Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem a few days before he was "sacrificed" on the cross on Good Friday. It seems they call it "Good" Friday because the sacrifice "redeemed" all of us. Well, he added, all of us who are baptized. I decided that was enough information.

The next morning, de la Vega seemed upset with Gonzalo. I heard him say that he had made his job much more difficult. Gonzalo insisted that he had only said what needed to be said, and graciously apologized for any trouble he had caused the ambassador. As we rode out of the city, he rode a little apart with me and told me that he had felt it necessary to upbraid the papa for his scandalous behavior. I nodded, but said nothing. Gonzalo was very devout to his religion and I imagined the lack of even a veneer of morality by its leader was very troubling to him.

We returned to Rocca Guglielma and renewed the siege. During a one-day truce, the commander of the garrison, Andrea Doria, a mercenary from Colon's Genova, was invited to dine with Gonzalo. (I can't imagine any of our Ordu commanders inviting the leader of the enemy to dine.) During the meal, he asked Doria where he should put his artillery. The fool pointed out a nearby copse from where he felt they would do the most damage. Gonzalo then turned to his gunners and reminded them that was the very spot he had told them would be best. Doria turned red, and the surrender came in a few days. The Frances had churlishly destroyed everything they thought might be of use to Gonzalo's men, so he permitted his men to sack the castle in retaliation. With this accomplished, we marched to Naples for another triumphant entry and a warm reception from King Fadrique. This time Gonzalo was named duke of Sant' Angelo and given an estate with three thousand vassals in the province of Abruzzi on the northern border of the kingdom.

While in Naples I polished up my extensive report on the campaign and added some pertinent comments about the various leaders I had met and the quality of the soldiers I had seen in action. I sent the report with Gonzalo's final report, asking King Fernando to send it on to the Khakhan. A few weeks later, dispatches arrived from Fernando. Gonzalo was congratulated and ordered to return to Espanya. I was assured my report had been sent to the Khakhan and was given a single letter from him. In it he mentioned that Colon had learned Mongol, but thanks to my son he was taught it using the Latin script rather than the Uighur script, so it was still possible for us to communicate confidently. He congratulated me on my son and advised me that he was planning to visit me. I could not imagine how John had kept that from me. When we communicated in the dream world, neither he nor his mother had let on. The Khakhan went on to suggest that after the campaign is over, I should wander around Europa a bit and report on what I see.

I gave Gonzalo the news of my orders and thanked him for letting me tag along on his campaign. I urged him to thank his sovereigns for me when he saw them. He thanked me for accompanying him and expressed how much he had enjoyed talking to me, since he felt we had much in common even though we were from different worlds. He added that he would write to Fernando my thanks, since he could not yet leave Naples. We took our leave and promised to meet when we were next in Espanya.

Conthagah and I planned to leave in late spring and ride northwest staying within sight of the coast. Gonzalo had insisted that a squadron of jinetes accompany me, but I pointed out that such a force was more likely to attract hostile attention than a small group. I did ask him if King Fadrique might have someone knowledgeable in the various Italiano dialects and who was aware of which places I should avoid that he could spare for a few months. While I had a fair grasp of the Naples dialect, I was dismayed while at Atella to discover I could not communicate with the Italianos from the north. My request secured me the service of a young man named Giovanni Colonna, a young man related to major allies of the king. He was grateful to me for saving him from

the boring court. He had served in the Napoles army with us for most of the campaign and had conveniently learned the Castellano language.

I chided Carlotta and John for not telling me he was coming to meet me. Carlotta said that it was John's surprise, and he said he was sure I would have tried to stop him had I known. I assured him he was right, and if it wasn't too late, he should turn back. This is a dangerous place for one such as he. He smiled, knowingly, and told me he was already in Europa and had been since the previous fall. I asked him where he was and what he had been doing all that time. He smiled again and replied that he was among friends and had been learning many things. I asked what friends he had in Europa. He reminded me of Luis. So he was with Luis then. He admitted he had been staying with Luis. He added that he would meet me in the town of Baden, near the Rhine River. I remembered the Rhine being a very long river that began near the northern border of the Suizos and debauched into what was called the North Sea. It ran for almost all its length through the empire, but its mouth was in Brabant, a province merely controlled by the emperor. Since the emperor was an ally of Fernando and Isabella, and indeed, had just married his son Felipe and daughter Margarita to the latter's daughter, Juana, and son Juan, it was most likely this would be a safe trip for me.

I asked Giovanni if he knew where Baden was. He said it was in a little valley just east of the Rhine near the northern end of the Black Forest. He suggested that our best path would be through the states belonging to the papa, then through Venetia, a member of the Holy League, then into the empire. It should be a very safe trip as long as we stayed on the main roads, which, he pointed out, we were not doing. I told him we could continue along the coast until we reached Ostia; then we could go on to Roma. After that we would follow his advice. He had some misgivings, but felt we could probably stay in monasterios almost every night along the way. I asked why we would want to do that. He said it was the safest place to stay at night and would give us the opportunity to pray for our safe journey. Conthagah and I exchanged looks, but the young man was so sincere, I didn't say anything more.

We came to our first monasterio well before dusk, but Giovanni insisted we had to stay there. We were welcomed gravely by the frailes and asked if we had anything for the meal. I donated some of my chili, which was received with wonder. The soup we were fed that evening was fairly rich, but I couldn't detect any chili so I added some to Conthagah's and mine. Giovanni asked for the tiniest bit for his soup. The bread we were served was thick and dark and rather tasty. The single goblet of wine was cut with water, but that was likely an improvement, since it was little more than vinegar. We were seated at a separate table from the frailes, but we were in the same room, and throughout the meal one of them read from the Biblia in Latin. It was mostly the book of poems called Psalmos. After the meal we were shown to a common room with rather rude accommodations. To be precise, there was straw strewn about the stone floor and a slop bucket in one corner. The straw was fresh, at least.

The next morning we were led back to the dining room and fed clear broth, bread and water. Again one of the frailes read from the Biblia; this time it was one of the profetas, Isias. After the meal, we were led out of the building, and our horses were brought to us. We thanked them for their hospitality and they thanked me for my generosity. As we rode out of the monasterio, Giovanni asked if I was ill. I replied that I was not, and then he asked why else would I wish to go to Baden. I said to meet someone and asked why a sick person would go there. He said there were several hot springs in Baden that had very good effect on the ill who bathed in or drank them. I remarked that perhaps that would be interesting.

We continued monasterio hopping until we finally reached Ostia. The walls were being repaired, but it was slow work. Otherwise, there were few signs of the recent battle. We thankfully stayed at an inn. The food was worse and the room stank of unwashed bodies, but no one read during the meal. When we reached Roma, I insisted we stay with de la Vega instead of another monastery or inn. Giovanni agreed, but said in large cities we could always find a decent inn. De la Vega was delighted to see me again and told me all the gossip.

It seems the papa's son-in-law, Giovanni Sforza, fled Rome not long after my previous visit. Apparently he had been warned that he would be killed. He rode all the way to Pesaro, about fifty leguas to the north in twenty-four hours. It is said his horse, a fine Arabian, dropped dead when he reached the city gates. He had heard that Lucrecia, the papa's daughter, had warned her husband that he was to be killed after a visit from her brother

Cesar. Then, as is the custom for married women whose husbands abandon them, she had withdrawn from society and gone to the Convent of San Sisto. Now the two brothers, Cesar and the duke of Gandia are furious with each other over their sister's departure, since it is whispered that they both share her bed. My look of shock at this revelation was only hardened when he added that it was also whispered that her father shared her bed. Of course, perhaps it was only lies designed to discredit the family, he added. Anyway, there had just been a secret meeting of the cardinals, and three cities south of Roma, Pontecorvo, Tarracina, and Benevente have been made into a duchy under the duke of Gandia. The papa hopes to eventually place his son on the throne of Naples. He had even canceled the annual tribute Naples pays the papacy to advance his plans. Meanwhile the papa had appointed Cesar as his legate to Fadrique's coronation. That means he and Gandia will be traveling together to Naples. There is some betting whether both will make it there alive. It was a relief to leave Roma the next morning.

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Roma to Frankfurt 129 K

(Rome, Italy to Frankfurt, Germany 1497)

We rode generally north from Roma staying at inns in the cities and monasterios in between. All the towns and cities in Italia had rather musical names. In the small towns there was usually a central plaza where one would find a church that generally was the most impressive structure in the town, and on certain days there would be a small market in the square where local goods were sold and exchanged. Sometimes the town was associated with a monasterio, and there would be no church in the town, and sometimes there would be both a monasterio and a church. The cities often had rather imposing administrative centers on the central plaza across from or next to the church. We would also come upon the occasional castle. This could either be incorporated into the town, on a hill above it, or at a short distance away from it. Almost every town of any size was surrounded by an imposing wall in varying stages of repair.

The mountains through which we passed were rugged, but not so much as those in the south. There were many flocks of goats or sheep and herds of cattle grazing along the way. There was some cultivation, small farms that raised grain, vegetables, fruit and animals. There were also mines and stone quarries. My grandfather would have been most interested in these and no doubt would have stopped and examined everything. But I know nothing of such things except of course that I could tell a mine from a quarry.

Some of the larger cities we passed through in the papal lands included Perugia, Rimini, Ravenna, and Ferrara. While in Ferrara we heard that the duke of Gandia had been murdered and the papa was inconsolable. Suspicion was fairly widespread, since he had no dearth of enemies, including his brother Cesar, but no arrest had been made. Apparently this happened only a few days after we left Roma, but the news took a while to reach my ears. I never would have heard of it had not Giovanni overheard a discussion at the inn. While I had not held Gandia in any regard, I certainly did not wish him ill.

We passed into the territory of Venetia once we crossed the Po River, a little north of Ferrara. Late in the day, we arrived in the city of Padova where a representative of the doge, the ruler of Venetia, met us. He invited us to visit Venetia and I agreed, since I thought it would be a good opportunity to study this maritime power's navy. Still, I asked the man how it was that the doge knew we would be here. He smiled broadly and answered that it was the doge's business to know who was in his lands. We were escorted to the home of the chief magistrate of the city who received us most graciously. This was easily our most pleasant accommodation and meal since Roma.

Of course we were plied with questions about the papa, Gandia, and Cesar as well as Gonzalo, Fernando, Fadrique, and even de la Vega. I was politely evasive, giving no more information than was general knowledge. I then turned the tables and asked about Venetia and its relations with their recent allies, the empire, the papa and Espanya. It was my hosts' turn to be politely evasive. After dinner I was shocked to be offered the services of women for the evening. There were some tribes back home who made such gestures of hospitality, but this was the first time it was so blatantly offered to me in Europa. At least Fernando had been more circumspect. When I politely declined, I was asked if I would prefer a young boy. My look of shock and disgust brought

immediate apologies from my host. When I told my companions what I had just been offered, Giovanni just shrugged, and Conthagah spat in disgust.

The next morning we departed for Venetia. We were taken by coach to the River Brenta and boarded an elaborate barge, which was towed downstream by teams of horses along the banks. We eventually reached a large lagoon separated from the sea by long narrow islands. In the lagoon were over a hundred islands of varying sizes, many with buildings on them. Our barge was met by a modest-sized, although very ornate, shallow draft boat which took my party aboard and rowed us to the most built up of the islands, which might have been two islands separated by a channel, but then the islands were crossed by many canals turning them into a collection of tiny islands much like Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco. We pulled up to a stone quay at one end of a plaza. To the left of the quay was a large very ornate building, which our guide identified as the doge's palace. On its right was an imposing cathedral dedicated to Saint Marco, the city's patron. I was taken to the doge's palace.

I was immediately ushered into the presence of the doge, Agostino Barbarigo. He claimed to be honored to meet such a distinguished guest and insisted on taking me personally on a tour of the city the next day. As it was, I must remain at the palace as his guest. There would be a banquet in my honor that evening. I was a bit overwhelmed by all this attention and wondered what he wanted from me, but I replied with all due gratitude and politeness, assuring him that I would report his kindness to the Khakhan. I could see that his attendants were very pleased by my words, but the doge betrayed no emotion except geniality. It was a most studied behavior. I was shown to my room, which was quite well appointed by the local standards, although it was all a bit much for my tastes. When Giovanni visited me, his mouth was agape, and he assured me the king of Naples did not live so comfortably. Conthagah was not impressed and told me in Mongol that the whole place stunk worse than a swamp. He was right, actually, but again, one's nose gets used to anything given enough time.

At the banquet that evening, I wore my uniform. It was quite unimpressive next to all the fancy, fussy clothes the other guests wore, but since I was a foreigner, no one openly looked down on me. Giovanni wore his best clothes, but was no match for the locals. Conthagah insisted on standing behind me fully armed and I passed it off as our custom at banquets. Of course, I can't ever remember a Mongol banquet. The food was mostly fish, shellfish, and fowl of various kinds. Most of it was boiled, but some of the fish was fried. I don't know why they don't broil meat. As usual it was far too much, and I knew I had to eat a little of each course whether I liked it or not. Only pleasantries were discussed at the meal. I excused myself as soon I could without insulting my hosts.

The next day, the moment I opened my door, an attendant was there to lead me to the doge. We gathered up Giovanni and Conthagah along the way. The doge led us next door to the Basilica, as he called the cathedral, to show it off for me. Along the way he pointed out various works of art in his palace. The sculptures are made of a marvelous stone called marmol (marble) in Castellano. It seems like our limestone, but it takes a high polish. Although we could reach the church directly from the palace, he led us outside so we could admire the front. The doge claimed that his predecessors had secured the body of someone called San Marco from Egypt almost six hundred years before and built the Basilica in his honor. I mentioned that it was the Mongol custom to hide burials to prevent desecration, although my family preferred cremation. He told me cremation was usually only practiced during plagues. He added that some people feared it might prevent the resurrection of the body. I remembered that term from the Biblia. I asked what difference it would make if one were reduced to dust over time or over a flame. He admitted that most Church officials were divided on the issue, but agreed it was worth the gamble in plague times. I asked and it seems San Marco was the author of one of the books in the second part of the Biblia. Since Cisneros told me this part had been written about thirteen hundred years ago, I couldn't imagine what the condition of the body was when they purloined it. I didn't bring this up, of course.

The basilica was most ornate. It was hard to follow the lines of it with all the decorations and sculptures. There was a large arch over the main entrance and two smaller arches and entrances on each side of the main one. There was a further arch on each side serving as a buttress. There were five domes each topped with an onion-shaped structure and countless spires on top the building. There were four bronze horses on a terrace above the main entrance. I asked why horses and the doge said they symbolized the power and glory of the Republic. He

added they had been taken from the Hippodrome in Constantinople almost three hundred years ago. I asked, and the Hippodrome was a large enclosed arena where there were races of horse-drawn chariots—that explained the horses. Inside the basilica was rather cavernous, with natural light coming through narrow windows in the five domes. The vault was decorated with a form of art called mosaico, where pictures are made from small colored pieces of tile. The bishop led us around and went on at length about all the various “holy” men and women depicted.

The building was in the form of a cross with the main altar, under which the remains of St. Marco are interred, in the center. There was a separate baptistry through a door in the right aisle. It was here that the rite of baptism was performed, making one a member of the Christian Church. I think the bishop tarried here hoping in vain that either Conthagah or I would volunteer. Apparently the remains of San Isidoro (I didn't ask who he was) were also enshrined behind another altar. Some of the previous doges were buried in the Basilica as well, mostly in the walls of the atrium.

We finally left the Basilica after midday and crossed the square in front of the doge's palace to the quay. There a rather large and garish barge called The Bucintoro was waiting for us. With the doge leading the way, we stepped aboard and were soon rowed into and along what was called the Grand Canal, a wide S-shaped waterway that bisected the island. About midway along the canal was its only bridge, a covered wooden affair with central portion that could be drawn up to allow the taller ships to pass. Along the canal were many great houses, most with façades of marmol carved with floral designs and having inserts of purple-red or green stones. The rooftops had terraces and many chimneys. Some of the houses had ships moored beside them. For some reason, we didn't visit any of the houses, but only stopped at the endless number of churches. I did call attention to a particularly ornate house just beyond the bridge, but the doge just said it belonged to a family named Contarini.

While we were touring the Grand Canal, a light meal was served along with much wine. I asked the doge if I could see his much-admired navy. He replied that a few galleys were in the city, but most of the fleet was at sea. I ventured that I had not seen any warships on my approach or during this tour. He replied that they were in the Arsenale, normally off-limits to outsiders, but he would make an exception for me. However, since it was getting dark we would have to go the next day. We returned to the palace for another banquet in my honor.

The next morning I was again led to join the doge for a morning meal. During the meal, he explained that Giovanni would not be permitted in the Arsenale, but my bodyguard and I would be. Giovanni was disappointed, but not surprised. He told me later that he couldn't believe the doge had agreed to show me the very secret building. I had the feeling expectations had been raised a bit too high. After the meal, Conthagah and I followed the doge back aboard The Bucintoro. This time the ship turned east away from the Grand Canal. We turned up a smaller canal lined by what looked like warehouses. We came to two large towers with a large wooden gate between them blocking the way. We tied up to the quay and disembarked on the left side. We walked up to a high arch of marmol in the form of double columns. On top was a huge winged lion carved into the entablature and surmounting it was a pediment with a statue of Santa Justina (I didn't ask who she was either). Inside was merely an enclosed shipyard, rather less sophisticated than our own. The two galleys in the facility undergoing repairs were little different from those of Espanya, although they were somewhat larger.

Since my host expected me to be impressed, I told him that his facilities were certainly superior to those in Espanya. He asked how they compared with those of the Mongols. I had to tell him that our ships required much larger facilities, although we did not enclose them, nor did we work in secret. He was taken aback and asked if his navy could visit one of our facilities. I assured him I would ask the Khakhan for him, but I didn't think his galleys could make it across the Western Sea. Of course one of our ships could take his people across easily. He suggested that would be most accommodating. We returned after midday. It was not as though the tour was interesting, but the doge kept trying to impress me with their technology and wasted much time explaining the obvious to me.

When we returned to the palace, I asked not to be disturbed for a while and wrote up a description of the arsenale and the warships for the Khakhan. I also passed along the doge's request for a visit to one of our shipyards and the necessity that if he approved, he would have to send a ship since none of theirs would make

it. Once finished I asked a servant to request an audience with the doge. I was quickly led to him. I told him that I had completed the dispatch to the Khakhan and need only have it delivered to the Espanyan ambassador. He said he would be honored to send a fast galley to the court of his ally in the recent war to deliver my note. I thanked him and turned it over, wondering what they would make of the Uighur script, after they surreptitiously opened it. I then thanked him for all his hospitality, but insisted I must continue on my journey. He expressed regret that I could not stay longer but prevailed on me to wait until after breakfast the next day. I agreed.

We, of course, had to endure yet another banquet in my honor. This time various ambassadors were invited and all of them tried to cozy up to me and press me to visit their rulers. I assured them I would go wherever my ruler ordered me to go. The next morning after breakfast, the doge led us to his barge once more to return us to the mainland. The barge delivered us to the river barge, which was towed upstream by the horses. We were met by the magistrate of Padova, who prevailed on us to spend the night with him since it was already late in the day. I reluctantly agreed, on the condition that there would be no banquet in my honor. He seemed a bit disappointed, and tried to convince me to at least stay and see the wondrous works of art in the city, but I insisted we must leave.

The next morning, we left right after breakfast, taking the road heading a little north of west toward Vicenza. I had to firmly turn down the offer of a military escort to the border of Venetia. On the way, I asked Giovanni why no one in Venetia even mentioned the Marco Polo about whom Colon went on endlessly. He replied that Polo embarrassed them because they thought his stories were all lies. Colon was one of the few people who believed any of it. I should have asked Colon for the book, so I could read for myself what he wrote. But I told Giovanni that from what Colon told me, Polo visited the court of the great Kubilai and from what all the old Mongols said, it was quite magnificent, much more so than the Khakhanate or anything I had seen in Europa.

We reached the small city of Vicenza that evening and were again whisked to the magistrate's home. It was more modest than we had recently experienced, but still quite superior to monasterios or inns. Our host prattled on about the place but made no entreaty that we stay and tour. We left a little after dawn on the road to Verona. This road continued somewhat south of west and hurrying along, we reached Verona near dusk. Again we were met by officials and taken immediately to the home of the magistrate.

Verona was a much larger city than Vicenza and apparently much older as well. They were quite proud of dating back some fourteen hundred years to Roman times. They even had Roman ruins including an arena much smaller and more oval than the Coliseum in Roma, but with a similar original function, and a theater. There was also a stone bridge that had been built by the Romans over the Adige River, which bisected the city. This time we were unable to escape a day of sightseeing. Other than the ruins we were again dragged from church to church. It was becoming tiresome, but one could see why they were proud of them—there was an obvious expenditure of time and treasure on the buildings. Even if most of the buildings seemed a bit much, I had to admit the artwork was far more impressive than ours. At least the subjects were more realistic than those of the Mexica or the Maya. Still, the Mexica cities were much cleaner and more colorful, and the Maya exceeded the Mexica on both counts.

After our day in Verona, we left early following the road along the east bank of the Adige northwestward. The river and the road turned gradually north and then a little east of north. There was some barge traffic coming down the river, although it was becoming more narrow and swifter as we climbed up its valley. Just about dusk we reached the small village of Ala and were whisked to a tiny inn. The magistrate from Rovereto had ridden down to meet us and find the best accommodations he could for us. It was obvious that the room had been severely scrubbed and the furniture replaced just for us. I also suspect any other guests had been turned away or kicked out. The extremely uncomfortable innkeeper was most apologetic that he only had two rooms in the whole inn. The magistrate had thoughtfully brought along his own cook and food to prepare a suitable meal for us. I made every effort to assure them everything was just fine.

When we left the next morning, the magistrate and his considerable entourage accompanied us. He regaled us with the marvels of Rovereto, mentioning among other things that mulberry trees had been planted in the nearby Lagarina Valley and silk production was in full swing. I asked how they had smuggled the silk worms out of lands of the Hanjen, but he didn't seem to know. We were stuck with this bore all day until we arrived at

Rovereto. He led us to a rather imposing castle for what was a modest town. We were treated to another banquet with all the influential people of the town. Unlike Venetia, these people asked simple rather stupid questions about us, and betrayed no sophistication or guile at all. Except, of course, for the magistrate, who was from Venetia, as he kept reminding us, and smiled indulgently at some of the more crass questions of the locals. I made every effort to turn around the worst of their queries and was very grateful that Conthagah had no understanding of Italiano.

Before leaving the next morning, our host prevailed upon us to enjoy the view from the battlement of the castle. It was an impressive view, although the nearby mountains made me think one could easily reduce the castle with well-placed artillery. We bid our host farewell and endured an escort to the edge of Venetia territory. It was with much relief that we crossed into the empire, with no attention at all. Giovanni told me that the Alemani (as he called the Alemanes), who made up most of the empire, had too little imagination for intrigue. I had the feeling he was wrong about that. Indeed, we had only been on the road a short while, when a man came seemingly out of nowhere and began following us at a discreet distance. When I pointed him out to Giovanni, he replied that Trento was really an Italiano city, so his sweeping generalization still held.

We, followed by our shadow, arrived in Trento in the afternoon. It was one of the shorter legs on this journey, but it had been mostly uphill. Mountains surrounded the medium-sized town. A cathedral and a castle, the former still being built, dominated the city. There was a guard at the gate to the town, but he ignored us. We stopped at the inn and our shadow went on in the direction of the castle. Giovanni told us that the local prince, Bernardo Clesio, was a noted collector of art. I suspected he would not bother with us, since we weren't artists. I was right. The inn was quite comfortable, though plain, and the food would have been inedible except for my chili.

The next morning we left very early before dawn, since this would be a very long leg and even more uphill. We pointedly avoided riding by the castle. When we arrived at the gate, the guard opened it up for us without comment. We had not gone far before I noticed our shadow again. We kept up a good pace, changing horses more frequently than usual. Our shadow only had two horses, and by midafternoon was falling behind. Late in the day we crossed the Eisack River and moved away from the Adige up the Eisack's west bank. We crossed the River Talfer and arrived at Bolzano just at dusk and the gates were closed behind us. Our shadow didn't make it and must have spent a most uncomfortable night. Giovanni found us a decent inn, much like the one in Trento. He mentioned that Bolzano belonged to Trento. I soon discovered that the innkeeper called the town Bolzen and spoke very little Italiano. Most of the other guests spoke Aleman dialects, utterly indecipherable to me. Fortunately Giovanni could speak enough of the language to get us by. He was, indeed, an inspired addition to our expedition.

On the next leg of our journey, we would continue to follow the Eisack River upstream to the northeast. The road was rougher and steeper, but we didn't have as far to go. Our shadow did not follow us out of Bolzen, and I didn't detect a new one. We arrived at Brixen late, as usual, and this time the guard at the gate demanded our documents. I had been given such by de la Vega and Giovanni had his from the king of Naples, but so far no one had asked to see them. We presented them and he seemed confused and had to consult with his superior. His superior, in turn, had to consult further. Eventually, after the sun had set, we were allowed to continue to the inn and only grudgingly permitted to keep our weapons. It was a rude inn but adequate to our needs. The other guests and the innkeeper viewed us with much suspicion.

The next morning we were met by a town official who wanted to know where we were going. I told him we were on our way to Innsbruck. He nodded and wrote something down on a piece of paper and gave it to us. He said it would make it easier for us to get into Innsbruck. I thanked him and he wished us a safe trip. I couldn't make out the florid script, but Giovanni insisted it was in Latino and simply requested in the name of the emperor that we should be allowed to continue unimpeded as far as Innsbruck. I should have told him we were going to Baden. As we left, I noticed that the streets of Brixen were quite narrow and winding, and some of the nicer houses had painted façades. Once out of the town, the Eisack River turned to the northwest. Eventually we crossed the Eisack and late in the day arrived at Sterzing. We were stopped at the gate and the guard waved us through after glancing at the paper we had gotten in Brixen. Giovanni managed to find an inn, much like that in

Brixen, although the food was even worse. Everyone in the town spoke Aleman, so we were viewed with suspicion again.

We left early and began the climb up to and over the Brenner Pass. It really wasn't much of a climb. There was a good road and we passed quite a few large carts laden with trade goods going in both directions. It was still late summer, but it was cool in the pass. Once over the pass, we moved only somewhat downhill, soon picking up a small river called the Sill, along which the road ran. As usual we arrived late in the day at Innsbruck. Giovanni told me that the last emperor, Frederico, had considered the town home. It was not a large city, but it was a city, with many houses with high sharp roofs and, of course, a gate and guards. The guards waved us in upon seeing our paper and Giovanni found us a rather nice inn. We had just settled in and were eating the usual bland fare, when a well-dressed young man approached us.

The man asked to see our paper. He then asked how long we would be staying in Innsbruck. Through Giovanni, I explained who we were and how we happened to get the paper. He asked if we wished to meet the emperor. I replied that it was not necessary to bother him, but if it was convenient and he was along our path, I would be honored. He asked where we planned to go, and I replied we were on our way to Baden. He suggested that we go by way of Augsburg, Nuremberg, and Frankfurt. It was the safest, most traveled way. We would find many fine inns along the way, and he would inform the emperor of my route should he wish to meet me. I thanked him for his help and assured him that was to be our route. He sat down and wrote out another floridly illegible note for us, and wished us a safe and pleasant trip.

We took a few days to reach Augsburg, enjoying the mountain vistas and stopping for the night in the small towns of Oberau, Shongau, and Landsberg. The inns in the town varied, but the food was uniformly dreadful. I think Conthagah and I would have starved if I hadn't brought along the chili. Augsburg was a bustling town of merchants. Apparently, it was also home to many criminals, whom we found in various stages of decay hanging from gibbets or tied to wheels. I found that a rather disgusting propensity throughout Europa, but usually it would only be a few. It seems the local merchants felt the need to overdo the custom. I suspect they were mostly thieves, drawn to the city by all the wealth. We were challenged by the guards, and even after looking over our paper and conferring with their superiors, they only grudgingly let us pass. I noticed that anyone with a large cart, whether full or empty, was waved through immediately. We wandered around a bit before settling on what Giovanni judged to be the best inn. It was all right, the accommodations were clean and pleasant, and the food was almost edible. I should mention the odd way female servants were treated in most of the inns. They were often groped and fondled publicly and did not seem to be offended by it, nor would anyone leap to their defense. I wondered if they were prostitutes who used serving tables in an inn to line up clients.

While we were eating, several of the other guests tried to trade for or buy my chili, but I explained that I only had enough for us. Besides, every innkeeper so far was very pleased to accept a few in payment for our stay. As we left the city, there were more executed men and even women along the road north of the town. On the way to Nuremberg, we stopped at the towns of Mertingen, Nordlingen, and Gunzenhausen. All of these had the practice of welcoming visitors with a few dead felons, but at least it was only a few. The inns were adequate and the food returned to being wretched.

Nuremberg was a large city surrounded by an imposing wall. Unfortunately, it was another merchant city and rivaled Augsburg in the number of executed criminals on display. Upon reaching the gate, we received the same treatment as in Augsburg. There were many large buildings in the town and many languages could be heard along the streets including Italiano and Castellano. I didn't hear any Euskera, however. Giovanni told me that there were many groups of foreign artisans living in the city. The city also had a very large hospital that I at first took for a cathedral. There was also a massive granary under construction, which I took for a fortress, and wondered why it was being built so far from the wall.

We stopped at the cities of Bamberg and Wurzburg and the town of Aschaffenburg. All boasted large impressive churches, castles, or other buildings. Merchants did not run these, and the guards at the gates and the innkeepers treated us more cordially. We finally arrived in Frankfurt late in the fall. It was an imperial city, and the emperor's flag flew over the city gates. We were waved in immediately with a mere glance at our paper. We soon discovered that we had entered a small walled suburb of the city and had to cross an old stone bridge over

the Main River to reach the city. The river was quite broad here and there were many ships of all sizes tied up at the quay. Giovanni said that the river was not deep here since the city's name meant, "Ford of the Franks." The Franks were an Aleman tribe that prevailed in this area at one time.

We rode past the unfinished large cathedral and soon settled into a fine inn Giovanni found for us. The city had many multistory houses with rather busy façades. I found them distractingly ornamental. The cathedral was made of red sandstone and dedicated to San Bartolomeo (although they spelled it differently). There were several high towers along the wall, the highest, perhaps 150 feet high, was called the Eschenheimer Tower. The city was large and its wall was well maintained. There were also some settlements outside the walls.

We decided to spend a day looking around the city. We reached the castle, which had been built by a long-ago emperor named Frederico Barbarossa. Giovanni said that the man had tried to conquer Italia, but had only succeeded in dividing it into constantly warring factions. While we were looking at the castle, a young man in some sort of livery came up to us and asked if I were the Mongol ambassador. I replied that I was, and he asked me to follow him. Giovanni urged me to agree since the man wore the livery of the emperor. We followed him into the castle and were ushered into an ornate, but cold and damp hall. My companions were asked to wait, and I was led into a small pleasant room with rich furnishings. Here I was introduced to the Emperor Maximilian.

He was dressed informally in black with gold trimming. He rose to greet me. He was about my height, but more massive in size. He had light brown hair down to his shoulders. His nose was large and hooked and he seemed rather jowly, with a protruding lower lip. He was perhaps ten years my junior, but I think he looked older than me. He was quiet and respectful and very solicitous. He had been told about my route and was desirous to meet me. He had heard about me from Espanya's ambassador to his court. He understood that I had been with the army of Espanya in Napoles and asked me about the campaign. I told him about it, all the time feeling certain none of it was news to him. He asked me how I felt about the performance of the several armies I had seen in action. I told him that Gonzalo was the best leader I had seen in action and Ferrante the worst. The armies tended to reflect their leaders. He then asked if it was the same with the Mongol armies. I replied that the soldiers were always well trained and very skilled, but poor leadership often caused unnecessary casualties. He nodded thoughtfully.

He then asked me if I had heard the bad news from Espanya. I admitted that I had heard nothing. He said that Juan, the only son of Fernando and Isabella, had died of a fever about two weeks earlier. I remembered that he had just married the emperor's daughter, Margarita, and asked if his daughter was well. He replied that she was and thanked me for asking. He added that she was with child so there was still some hope for a male heir. I told him I would like to send a letter of condolence to Fernando and Isabella and he assured me he would be honored to send it on for me. He pressed me to stay in the castle that evening and the next day he would take me along to see a demonstration of the training of a unit of landsknecht, his infantry formations. I had already seen them in action, but I agreed. He invited me to dine with him and had Conthagah and me shown to our rooms while Giovanni went with some of the imperial servants to get our things from the inn.

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Frankfurt to Baden 129–30 K

(Germany, 1497–8)

Our rooms were pleasant, but hardly sumptuous, much to my liking. Giovanni soon returned with our things and made some remark about how only the Italianos knew how to live. I composed my letter of condolence to Fernando and Isabella. My grandfather wrote that the hardest thing he ever had to do was bury his children. Fortunately, I have not had that misfortune, and I earnestly hope I never will. I finished my letter, which I wrote in Latin, and sat back a while and thought about my son. I really missed him and hoped to see him soon. I wondered if he was safe and well.

My reverie was broken when I was called to dinner. We followed the attendant downstairs to a rather small dining room nearly filled by a large table. Places were set at only one end, and there were just five places set. To my surprise, the emperor had only one attendant with him, and the other three places were for my party. His attendant was his private secretary, a man named Joseph Grunpeck, not any kind of advisor. The emperor sat at

the head of the table and had me seated to his right and Giovanni to his left. Conthagah was seated next to me and the emperor's man next to Giovanni. Giovanni was flustered by the honor and had great difficulty saying anything. I was impressed by his lack of pretension.

"I must tell you, sire, you are the first sovereign to dine with me in this way. There have always been a multitude of attendants, requiring me to nearly shout to be heard."

"Attendants can be useful, but they can also be a nuisance. If my reports about you were true, I thought you would prefer your room as you found it, and this meal as I have presented it."

"The reports were correct. I have had an intimate meal with the Khakhan. It left me with the distinct impression that he did not need an army of attendants to convince him he was the ruler. Perhaps that is true of you."

"The difference would be that your Khakhan is indeed a ruler. I am little more than the first among equals. While I do rule my own lands absolutely, I am little more than a figurehead as emperor."

"It is a curious thing, this empire of yours. Was it so designed intentionally?"

"It evolved this way. The first Holy Roman Emperor was Karl the Great. He ruled over France, the current empire and Italia. He was a ruler much like your Khakhan. When he died, his empire was split between his three grandsons, who all together were not half the man he was. Then slowly but surely the local lords assumed more power at the expense of the emperor, so the office is a mere shell of what it was initially. Still, every now and then, a strong man becomes emperor and wields some real power."

"Like you?"

"Perhaps. I am trying to reorganize the empire to make it more efficient. But once my plans are formulated, I will have to present them to the seven electors for their approval. If they do not have the vision to accept my changes, I will have to be satisfied with only making them in my own lands."

"I wish you well with your efforts."

"Thank you. But now what of your Khakhan? Does he plan to treat us as equals, ally himself with us against the Turk, or invade and conquer us? Mongols very nearly did conquer us about three centuries ago. I'd like to think we could have stopped them, but the truth is they stopped on their own."

"That's true. They stopped because the Khan, Ogedai, died. It was the custom in those days for all the Mongols to gather to proclaim the next Khan. They stopped the invasion for that reason. They may have returned to the invasion had not the successor Khan, Kaidu, died after a short reign. After his death, there was quite a fight over succession. As to your other questions, I don't know the Khan's intentions. He has asked me to report as much as possible about Europa, but he has not advised me about his intentions. Our Khanate is still young, just over one hundred years. My grandfather was one of the founders and the first Khan of Anahuac. My uncle was the first Khan of the Clouds. We are still exploring our southern continent, where there is a vast jungle in the center. I suspect that will take us quite a while. It may be many generations before we turn our attention elsewhere. I know the old Mongols dreamt of reconquering the Hanjen, Cathay you call it, but they are all long gone and our attention is more inclined to be at home."

"You sound like a true ambassador. Evade questions at all hazards. But to pursue, you seem most interested in matters military. Is that because you are a military man yourself, or were you ordered to check our defenses?"

"Actually, I am not evading your questions. I really don't know the Khakhan's intentions. While my relatives were rulers, my father was a healer and I have had a rather checkered career, which did include many years in the military. I was called out of exile when Colon was discovered, since I was the only person in the area who spoke Latin. I have been asked to assess the military of Europa, but that is only prudent since one of your countries might think to invade us. I can tell you that if any did, they would be quickly destroyed probably before they landed, and then their country would be reduced to rubble. Every man, woman, child, and animal would be killed and heaped in piles. It seems severe, but we have found it makes people think twice about attacking us."

“And yet, aren't you a Christian, and perhaps even, if I heard correctly, descended from a subject of the empire? You certainly look like one of us.”

“I think I am, technically, a Christian. We were all, in my family, given the ritual called baptism. My long-ago ancestors came from the area called the Black Forest. My fair complexion, however, is most likely a sheer coincidence. There was a colony of Ferengi, far western people, in the old Khanate, to them were added some other nearer western people who also were fair skinned. It happened that my ancestors married among these people, until my parents, both of whom married locals first. None of my siblings look anything like me. Whatever my ancestry, I have been raised a Mongol, and that is how I see myself.”

“And were you impressed by the armies of Europa?”

“No. We could brush them aside easily.”

“Really? Easily? How is that possible?”

“We have better weapons and superior tactics. We also have much larger armies which do not quit if they are not paid.”

“Amazing! How do you keep them without pay?”

“The people of the land are mostly much like the old Mongols. They revel in battle, anxious to cover themselves with glory. We had only to channel that natural inclination to our purposes. For many generations it has been considered an honor to go on campaign even if it takes a year to reach the battlefield. Of course, the men are clothed and fed on campaign, but are only paid when their time is over and they are ready to return home.”

“A year? Just how large is the Khanate? I have heard strange stories from Espanya. I think Colon reported some unbelievable size.”

“It is hard to say, but from what I have seen of your maps, all of Europa would fit four times into the Khanate of the Blue Sky. The Khanate of Anahuac is probably a little smaller than Europa. The other two Khanates are each likely twice the size of Europa.”

“It is really that large? Do you think your Khakhan would accept an ambassador from me?”

“I will ask him. But the man would have to learn Mongol.”

“Of course.”

“Doesn't Fernando send you Colon's reports? I thought you were allies.”

“I get reports, but they are summaries. Allies don't always tell each other everything, you know. But tell me, if another country had reached you before Espanya, would you have accepted their ambassador?”

“I don't know. Much would depend on the demeanor of the explorers. I could not tell the Khakhan that Colon had claimed some of our islands for Espanya. If I had, he and his crew would have been executed for their temerity and we would likely have invaded Espanya. But I realized he had just made a severe blunder, the ramifications of which he could not have known.”

“That was most kind of you. Perhaps you are a Christian.”

“I felt sorry for him.”

“If it isn't impertinent of me, you mentioned you were in exile when Colon arrived in the Khanate. Why?”

“My cousin, the current Khan of Anahuac blames me for his mother's death. He wants me dead, but the Khakhans have always looked kindly on me and would only exile me.”

“Were you responsible for her death?”

“Indirectly, perhaps. She was an evil woman, an embarrassment to Khakhanate. I helped the Khakhan realize that.”

We chatted a little more about more mundane matters, then took our leave for the evening agreeing to meet in the morning for breakfast and then go out to review the landsknechts. I slept quite well for a change. I think it was because it was so quiet.

The next morning after a spare breakfast, we mounted up and rode north away from the river. We were accompanied by a troop of heavy cavalry. The emperor was dressed in an ornate black armor, much like the heavy cavalry wears. His horse was quite a bit larger than ours, but then it had a heavier load to bear. He asked why we did not wear armor. I replied that we sometimes did, but usually found it impractical. We passed the gate tower called Eschenheimer, and rode past some already harvested fields on either side of the road. We rode some distance on the road until we came to an encampment of neat rows of tents. There was a large open field beyond the encampment and there were the landsknechts.

They wore brightly colored clothes with large feathers in their hats. They carried the very tall halberds or pikes much like the Suizos, but they also had some men in the front rank of their formation that were armed with a very long two-handed sword. I was told they were better paid than the rest. They maneuvered around for us and certainly seemed well disciplined and could handle the awkward weapons with consummate skill. They were designed to stop cavalry, but I know our mounted archers would have easily wiped them out. Still, I politely congratulated the emperor on his innovation. Conthagah asked if he could handle one of the halberds. I passed along his request and the emperor agreed. Conthagah jumped off his horse and took the proffered weapon. He had no trouble handling it, much impressing our hosts. Giovanni could not even raise it off the ground, much to everyone's amusement.

We had an execrable meal with the landsknechts and returned to the city. The emperor suggested that I accompany him down the Main River to the Rhine where I could continue on to Baden, unless I wished to go first to his court in Ghent. I demurred on the latter but agreed to go with him down the Main to the Rhine.

The next morning after a light breakfast, we went down to the riverfront where his boat was waiting for us. It was just a good solid boat, nothing fancy like The Bucintoro of Venetia, but it was big enough for the horses to stay belowdecks in relative comfort. As we pushed off from the shore and into the current, the river was full of small fishing boats anchored just out of the current along the banks of the river. The emperor told me we would be stopping at Maintz, a major city just at the confluence of the Main and the Rhine. It was ruled by a bishop on whom he would have to call. If I wished I could go with him to see the bishop, but if I preferred, he would see that I continued on my way and avoid the prelate. I assured him I would prefer that.

We arrived at Maintz late in the afternoon after a pleasant trip. The emperor stayed on deck with us since the sun was shining and it wasn't too cold that day. He pointed out various landmarks along the way. The only thing I remember was a mid-sized town named Wiesbaden, which apparently also has thermal baths. Actually Frankfurt had thermal baths, as did many of the other towns we had visited on the way to Frankfurt. It made me wonder what was so special about Baden. I asked the emperor that question and he assured me that Baden's baths were the best. Besides, there was nothing else to the town besides the baths, except, perhaps, the scenery.

We tied up at the extensive river front quay, and the emperor sent his secretary to find us a ship heading upstream toward Baden. He bade us farewell and went ashore to visit the bishop. Joseph, the secretary, was soon back, and he led us down along the quay to a boat smaller than the emperor's, but it appeared to be in good shape. He introduced us to the captain and told the man we were friends of the emperor. He proceeded to bow and scrape and led us to his best cabin. It wasn't much, but it was adequate. He apologized profusely that the horses would have to be kept on deck, but promised to leave them ashore until we sailed the next morning. I thanked Joseph and once he left assured the captain that I intended to pay him well for his services. He tried to kiss my hand in gratitude. I hate the excessive subservience I have found in Europa.

The captain, himself, brought us our evening meal. Once again he apologized excessively for its simplicity. I had to reassure him that it was quite adequate. It was a sort of fish soup with a large piece of dark bread and some cheese. Once I put some of my dwindling supply of chili into the soup, it was rather good. The next morning, I found we had already left Maintz by the time I awakened. I went out on deck. It was chillier than it had been the day before and the sky was overcast. The horses were in a sort of rope pen near the stern and seemed a bit uneasy. The ship was being towed upriver by a team of draft horses on the shore, and if the wind

was right it had a sail also. The wind was not right. It became obvious that we would have made better time riding ourselves, but I suppose there was no particular hurry.

The trip was endless. We made frequent stops to load and unload cargo and pay tolls. Finally, well into winter we arrived at a spot where a ferry would take us across the Rhine near the mouth of the Oos River, which would lead us to Baden. I thanked the captain and gave him a small bag of chili. He fell on his knees before me and again tried to kiss my hands. I only just restrained him. We gathered our horses and led them to the ferry. The ferry was little more than a large raft, which was pulled back and forth across the river by a heavy rope towed by the large horses. It had grown quite cold during our trip, and there was snow and ice in patches on the ground.

We eventually arrived on the eastern bank of the river and were pointed to the road to Baden. We soon came upon the Oos and followed it upstream along a parallel path for a short time and before long could just see a castle on the east bank of the Oos. Steep, wooded mountains blanketed with snow surrounded the valley of the Oos, and only looking up the river could you see anything ahead. We arrived at the outskirts the town finding it stretched out narrowly along both banks of the river. We quickly found an inn for the night. The innkeeper asked if we were here for the baths and I replied that we were. He explained that since we were obviously men of substance we should use the private baths rather than the public ones. He promised to have his boy lead us to the best one in the morning.

I asked Giovanni about this. He said that the public baths were for the common folk and were usually quite crowded and tended to get fouled. He also thought we should go to the private one. He said it would be inside a building rather than in the open, so it would not be so drafty when we got out. Conthagah and I glanced at each other. We had both gone from steam or thermal bath to cold water most of our lives. The dinner at the inn was ghastly, just barely salvaged by my chili.

The next morning, after a wretched breakfast, the rather stolid and taciturn son of our innkeeper duly led us to a private bath. From the smell of him, he should have tarried in the baths himself. Once inside the building, it was rather warm. We were led to the bath which was a pool built up around a hot spring. In the pool were naked or virtually naked men and women separated by a sort of grill punctuated by windows so they could converse or stare at each other. Above the bath was an actual gallery where some men were sitting watching the bathers and chatting among themselves. Considering how overly modest these Europeos are, I was rather puzzled by this display.

While Giovanni quickly stripped down to his undergarment and stepped into the bath, I inquired of the attendant where the cold bath was. He replied that there wasn't one. I asked if the river was nearby. He pointed out the door through which I could reach it. I thanked him, and Conthagah and I stripped down and went into the bath. It seemed quite hot and rather salty, from the heaviness of it. We kept to ourselves and were not disturbed. After a suitable time, Conthagah and I got out of the bath and went out the door leading to the river. We trotted down to the river and jumped in, immersing ourselves completely. We got back out and returned to the bath to reclaim our clothes. Giovanni was engaged in trying to charm some young ladies and had not noticed that we had gone. I called to him and told him to enjoy himself, we were going to look about the town and would see him back at the inn in the evening.

Conthagah and I wandered about the town. The emperor was right, there was nothing in the town but the baths and the scenery. We reached the public baths. They were much larger than the private, but I noticed there were few people in them and the water looked just as clean as the private baths. I suppose if it hadn't been so cold there would have been more people in the bath. Of course there were also far fewer voyeurs sitting about. We walked to the end of the town noticing the dark dense forest ahead from which someone was emerging and we turned and started back.

"You two don't exactly blend in, do you?" someone said to us in Mongol.

We turned around and saw that the person emerging from the forest was a young man with a beard who looked just like a local. I peered at him carefully. "John?"

“Agidodah. If even you barely recognize me, I must be well disguised.” He extended his arms and we embraced.

“Very well. Conthagah, this is my son John. John, this is Conthagah, my aide. What were you doing in that forest?”

“I have something to show you in there. What did you think of the baths?”

“The water seemed heavier than ours, and we had to trot some distance to the river to cool off.”

“Yes. And I suspect none of the other bathers followed you.”

“No, they didn’t. Why are you dressed like a local?”

“Ever since I arrived here I have had to blend in. These people are very superstitious. They think my healing is witchcraft. I have had to change my appearance and learn the local dialects along the way. I am pretending to be a merchant from the Eskualdunac now, so I don’t have to be fluent in the dialects. It saves time.”

“But why did you come here? And why did you bring me here? Do you think I need the baths?”

“You remember Luis, don’t you?”

“Of course. I’m surprised you remember him.”

“I tend to remember things. Anyway, I came to Europa to visit him.”

“But why?”

“It was necessary, Agi’tsi-i told me to go. She told me I would find the perfect wife among his relatives.”

“And did you?”

“Yes. Her name is Maria. She is a niece of Luis’ wife. We were married last summer.”

“Is she with you? I would love to meet her.”

“I couldn’t bring her. I knew she was with child by fall and after my alarming excursions into Espanya and La France, I decided it wasn’t safe to bring her with me.”

“What happened?”

“As I said, these are very superstitious people. They tried to burn me as a witch, or more properly a warlock.”

“How did you get away?”

“You know I have my ways.”

“Yes, I have heard. Now, why are we here?”

“Do you know what that forest back there is called?”

“No. Does it have a name?”

“It is the Black Forest. This is the town in which our ancestors first lived when they left the forest.”

“Really? I didn’t think it was mentioned in Grandfather’s journal.”

“It wasn’t. But I also found the village from which they originally came. Or, I should say, the site of the village. I thought you might like to see it.”

“I know better than to ask you how you know that. But was this trip worth the risks you have taken to get here?”

“Yes. I had to see you again. I had to be with you at this time. You will soon understand why.”

“Well, in any case. I am delighted to see you again and I have thought of you often.”

“I know. And I have thought of you. What a perfect father you were—never considering me a burden, taking me with you everywhere, accepting me the way I was, and most important, willing to let me go and find my own destiny.”

“Son, you were never a burden. You never complained, got into mischief, or gave me any reason to reproach you. You even led me into the spirit world where I could visit your mother. As to letting you go, I always thought my time with you was borrowed and I accepted as much as was allotted me.”

“Where are you staying?”

“We’re at an inn near the northern edge of the town. What about you?”

“My inn is nearby. Come join me for what passes for a midday meal around here.”

We walked to John’s inn. It was larger than ours, and perhaps a little nicer, but the food was just as vile. Fortunately, John had brought along chili and liberally laced the food for us. It turned out that he had brought along several large bags of dried chili and that was what he was selling as a merchant.

“You wouldn’t believe how many times people have tried to rob me.” He laughed. “The poor things never knew what hit them. I hope it reformed them. I think preying on other people is detestable.”

“So, you have acquired some of Ayun’ini’s skills. Whatever became of him?”

“Some years ago, he told us that he had taught us all he could and we should go our separate ways and teach others what we had learned. Then he disappeared into the mountains in the west.”

“The west? I thought you were in the east.”

“We stayed a long time in the east, but then moved slowly west.”

“And did you learn all you could from him?”

“Almost. I never quite learned his joy.”

“Perhaps you are more aware than he was.”

“No. He was more detached than I am. It was his greatest strength. I am still working on it.”

“Detached? You mean indifferent?”

“Oh no, not indifferent. Detached means you are not affected by what is around you, but you still are aware of it and help when you can. That’s the way he was. There was never any anger or resentment in him. He was always at peace and always involved.”

“I think I see.”

“I have no idea what you are talking about,” Conthagah interjected.

“It is not important,” John replied. “And what does our Hotcangara warrior think of Europa?”

“I detest it. But I very much enjoy the company of your father, and am honored by his trust.”

“And I am honored to have you as a friend,” I added.

After we finished our meal, we went to John’s room and chatted away the rest of the afternoon. He wanted to know of our adventures and we asked about things back home and his adventures in Europa. He had been to the court of the Khakhan but had not noticed much since it didn’t interest him. He had cured one of the Khakhan’s children, for which he was most grateful. He was vague about his adventures in Europa, probably so I wouldn’t worry about him. The truth is I never had to worry about him, but, of course, I did. As it grew dark, he accompanied us to our inn, and when we arrived, he told us to meet him the next morning at his inn and he would take us to the ancestral village.

We entered the inn and sat down to supper. Giovanni soon joined us. He was a bit depressed since he had no success with the young ladies. He was certain that it was because he was not as well dressed as the other young men. I pointed out that no one was dressed in the bath. But he insisted that they had all noticed him undress and so knew that he was not wealthy. I told him we had met my son and he was taking us into the forest to show us something. There was no need for him to join us if he wanted to try another bath. He just barely remembered to

ask if I was sure I wouldn't need him. I told Conthagah he could stay behind if he wanted, but he was looking forward to a walk in the forest.

"There might be game or even better, brigands." He almost smiled.

The next morning we joined John and he led us into the woods along a well-worn path. It was rather cold and the sky was leaden, but it was not snowing, and there was little snow in the woods. John said that it would not snow until the next day. We rode at a good pace for some distance, and then late in the morning, we turned aside along a very vague path away from the Oos River along a stream into the mountains. After picking our way along this path for a short distance, we had to dismount and lead the horses. Finally we reached a spot in no way distinguishable from the rest of the forest. John told us that this was the site of our ancestors' village. There had been at most a dozen houses here all made of wood. He pointed out a few piles of stones, which he said were the hearths and he showed us one pile, which he said was that of our ancestor.

He went on to say that the ancestor's family had fled here from Baden when a tribe called the Alemani destroyed the city. They survived here in the woods for centuries, until our ancestor left to return to Baden. He worked as a wood carver for a monastery that owned the area. This was in the time of the Franks.

I asked that since they had originally lived in Baden, was Grandfather's assertion that our ancestor who had crawled out of the forest was a half wild primitive perhaps off the mark. But he said that the centuries of isolation in the woods had greatly reduced the sophistication of his people and he would have seemed rather primitive to the people rebuilding the town to support the monastery. Indeed, if he hadn't been such a skilled wood carver, he would have been chased back into the woods.

Since he seemed to know so much about the subject, I asked to what tribe our ancestors originally belonged. He smiled and said that if one goes back far enough into our ancestry we would find many tribes, but most of them would be various Celto and Aleman tribes. I wondered how far back he could go. He reminded me that the further back you go, the more ancestors you have. I asked if they were always named Waldman. He said no, that name did originate with the first Karl, just as Grandfather had said. Before that, there was no surname.

After a while, John said that we should return so we wouldn't be getting back after dark. As we returned I thought about the first Karl leaving all he knew to start a new life in what was for him a new world. Then I thought of how the other Karls had done the same thing. Until me, that is. I really hadn't done much of anything accept return to our starting point. As we reached the town just after dusk, John insisted that we move into his inn. I felt rather tired, so he insisted that I stay in his room while he and Conthagah went to the other inn to gather our things and Giovanni.

I am tired, but can't sleep so I brought my journal up to date while waiting for John. I feel a sort of heaviness in my chest. Perhaps, I've caught that respiratory ailment so prevalent here. Still, I'm not coughing or sneezing and don't have a fever. I suppose I should stop writing and lie down for a while.

I see that Agidodah has maintained his journal. Conthagah has given me the rest of it and I will put it with the part he sent me long ago. But first I will finish it for him. When I got back to him that night he was very weak. I told Giovanni that he was dying and he could return home if he wished, but he wanted to stay. Agidodah lasted another day, then died that evening holding my hand. He had a wonderful smile on his face when he died and his last word was "Carlotta." I know he is with Agi'tsi-i now for I have seen them together. They are both so happy it fills my heart. I sent Giovanni home with a letter to his sovereign assuring that he had honorably served the ambassador and earned his gratitude. I sent with him also a letter to King Fernando explaining the death of the ambassador to his court and another letter to the Khakhan explaining the natural death of his ambassador and telling him that I would return home with Conthagah as soon as possible. I hope he doesn't need me for anything else. Finally, Conthagah and I took Agidodah's body with us and left Baden. We crossed the Rhine and continued on into La France until we reached the Garonne River.

I bought a large pile of wood and laid it on a large stone along the shore. I had seen this spot on my way to meet Agidodah, and I knew it was perfect. I placed his body on the pyre and set it ablaze. A gentle breeze rose up and fanned the flames. When it had burned down to ashes, Conthagah and I gathered them and poured them into the river where they would wash out into the Eastern Sea and join Agi'tsi-i and together sail the sea forever.

When we finished, Conthagah returned with me to the Eskualdunac province of Donostia where my wife was waiting for me. As soon as she is delivered of our son who we will name Karl or Carlos, as she pronounces it, we will return home, back where we belong. I will keep this book for my son to read. Perhaps he will one day take up the narrative.

Appendix 1

Dramatis Personae

Book 2

Acapipioltzin—older natural son of Nezahualcoyotl, served as regent for Nezahualpili. A historical figure who serves the same role in the book.

Ah Chel—Maya—grizzled veteran Karl meets in Yucatan and again while on campaign.

Ah Poot—Maya—fisherman and philosopher Karl meets in Cozumel on way to his first campaign.

Ah Tatal—Maya—commander of the jagun in which Karl served during his first campaign.

Aju—(b. 1452) eldest son of Karl's sister Mathilde and Aspenquid.

Alcolmiztli—former head of Khan Henry of Anahuac's Palace Guard who runs a training school for army recruits.

Amana—Taino—aunt of Behechio sent by him to care for Karl during his third exile.

Arneekwes—Leni lenape (Delaware)—merchant who knows Karl's mystery girl and helps him find her.

Asgaya'Galuladi—name of Ani' Yun'-wiya (Cherokee) creator god.

Aspenquid—(d. 1485) Pesmokanti (Passamaquoddy) husband of Mathilde, Karl's half-sister, (d. 1486).

Ayun'ini—wandering mystic who becomes a teacher for Karl's son John.

Azcalxochitzin—wife of Nezahualcoyotl.

Aztahua—Texcallan yam keeper who connects Karl with the Mexica revolutionaries.

Ba-ahnoce—Inuna-ina (Arapaho) wife of George the Smith.

Baidar—commander of the Ocelotl Ordu during the Tenocha Revolt.

Balam—nom de guerre of Huasteca rebel leader who captures Karl.

Beedut—successor of Watomika as governor of Northeast Province.

Behechio—Taino Cacique in Western Boriquen (Puerto Rico) whose life Karl saves and who later repays the debt.

Berke—youngest son of Kujujuk, lived like a hermit in the west.

Bisdah—Kadohadacho (Caddo) second commander of Karl's tumen during his first campaign.

Buzun—high-ranking officer during Karl's second campaign.

Carlos Ausarti—Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy (1467–77).

Carlotta—Karl's mystery girl and one true love (1443–74).

Cautantowit—name of the Wampanoag God.

Chabi—wife of Khan George II of Anahuac, daughter of Khakhan Kujujuk, mother of Khan John II of Anahuac, (d.1476).

Chalchiuhtona—Alcolhua—wife of Khan Henry of Anahuac, sister of Nezahualcoyotl, mother of Khan George and Theodore.

Charles VIII—king of France, (r. 1483–98).

Chen Huan—Chinese—shipbuilder who builds Kujujuk’s fleet.

Chimalpopoca—third Tlatoani (Speaker) of Tenochtitlan.

Chipilotl—daughter of Karl’s sister Sarah, (b.1450).

Chowa—Governor of the Taino and Lucayo Islands.

Chumuncaur—Chimu—son of Minchancaman. He is made governor of the Chimu under the Khanate of the Clouds.

Cimnashote—Ani’ Yun’-wiya (Cherokee) “brother” of Karl, son of Iskagua and Ghigooie, Karl’s guardians in Itsati. He becomes a soldier rising through the ranks to Ordu commander.

Citlalcoatl—grandson of Smoking Mirror, also Governor of the Maya (1404-60). He was a cousin of Metztlaconac.

Conthagah—Hotcangara (Chiwere Sioux) escort for Karl in Europe.

Cosa, Juan de la—Basque officer on Columbus’ expedition.

Crow—nickname of Karl, author of Book 2, grandson of Karl the Raven, author of Book 1, (1440-98).

Cuauhcoatl—Speaker of Cuauhnahuac, husband of Christina, Khan Henry’s daughter.

Cuauhpopoca—commander of the training Ordu in the Khanate of the Clouds during Karl’s first campaign.

Cuauhtzin—blue and gold macaw, pet of Karl, the Crow.

Dehahuit—advisor to Henry during Karl’s first campaign. He actually commanded the campaign and was despised by Henry.

Deus—Latin word for God.

Dominus—Latin word for “The Lord.”

Egwani—Ani’ Yun’-wiya girl who Karl encounters in the Shenandoah Valley.

’Enri—son of Leo, youngest son of Mathilde and Seagull (b. 1438).

Esaugetu Emissie—Kofitachiki (Creek) name for God.

Fernandez de Cordoba, Gonzalo—Spanish—Great Spanish military leader during the Italian campaigns. A historical figure who becomes a friend of Karl in the book.

Fernando (Ferdinand) of Aragon—joint ruler of Spain with Isabella of Castile (1479–1504)—regent of Castile and king of Aragon (1504–16).

Ferrante II—king of Naples (r. 1495–8).

Ganook—’Lingit—shaman, brother of Kudeitsaakw.

Gatagewi—Ani’ Yun’-wiya older son of Iskagua and Ghigooie. He becomes a shaman like his father and succeeds him as shaman of Itsati.

George—(1407–70) son of Theodore and second Khan of the Clouds—(r. 1453–70).

George (the smith)—great-grandson of Henry, Karl the Raven’s brother.

George II—Khan of Anahuac (r.1460-8).”

Ghigao—name Cimnashote gave to a Tamoyo girl he met and with whom he fell in love while on campaign in the Khanate of the Green Mist.

Ghigooie—Ani’ Yun’-wiya wife of Iskagua.

Goa—Coosa (Creek) wife of Karl’s half brother Ignace, (d. 1473).

Gualchovang—principle goddess of the Tairona.

Hayjaay—Hotcangara (Chiwere Sioux)—commander of the Maya Tumen in which Karl served during his first campaign.

Henry—third Khan of the Clouds, commander of Karls first campaign, (1430–95, r. 1470–95).

Hiacoomes—Wampanoag—merchant great-grandfather of Karl’s mystery girl, Carlotta.

Hutulu—grandson of Juchi, second Khan of the Green Mist (r.1426–35).

Icpitl—son of Karl’s sister Sarah, (b. 1453).

Ignace—oldest son of Theodore, first Khan of the Clouds. He was killed by a poison dart while on campaign.

Ignace—oldest son of Karl’s father by Metztlaconac, (1421–73).

Ignace—second son of Khan George of the Clouds, (1433–81).

Isabella—queen of Castile (1474–1504), joint ruler of Spain (1479–1504).

Iskagua—Ani’ Yun’-wiya (Cherokee) shaman of Itsati, guardian of Karl for much of his youth. He was a nephew of Karl’s father’s first wife, Metztlaconac)

Iztacyochitl—son of Karl’s sister Sarah, (b.1456).

Jimenez de Cisneros, Francisco—Spanish—Franciscan priest, confessor of Queen Isabella. A historical figure.

John—son of Karl’s sister Sarah, (b.1458).

John II—sixth Khan of Anahuac, son of Khan George II and Chabi, (b. 1467).

John—son of Karl, the Crow and Carlotta, (b. 1474).

Kababonkaug-g—Anishinabe (Chippewa)—the north or winter sky.

Kineu—shadowy agent of the Khakhan who leads Karl to the St. Lawrence River.

Kiskap—Siksika—trapper and kinsman of Karl the Crow in Kuriltaibalikh.

Klah—Thilanottine—guide who leads Karl out of the Khakhanate into the north during his second exile.

Kudeitsaakw—‘Lingit—wife of Karl’s half brother Sealh.

Kujujuk—sixth Khan and third Khakhan of the Blue Sky, (r.1457–84).

Llapchillulli—Chimu—interpreter assigned to Karl’s jagun after the conquest of his people during Karl’s first campaign.

Luis—young Basque fisherman who speaks Latin and becomes the agent of the Khakhan in Europe.

Macon—Taino—uncle of Behechio sent to take care of Karl during his third exile.

Mahwissa—Dzitsiista (Cheyenne) wife of Theodore, Karl’s half brother.

Mathilde—daughter of Karl’s mother and her first husband, (1431–85).

Maximilian—Holy Roman Emperor, (1493–1519).

Minchançaman—king of Chimu at the time of Karl’s first campaign. A historical figure who was actually conquered by the Inca.

Moctezuma—fifth Tlatoani (Speaker) of Tenochtitlan. A historical figure quite revered in Aztec history. In the book his fate is a bit different.

Napi—Siksika (Blackfoot)—“Old Man” the creator god.

Naymlap—legendary ancestor of pre-Chimu dynasty along Lambayeque River, which is said to have arrived on rafts.

Necowee—Ani’ Yun’-wiya (Cherokee) brother of Ghigooe, who tells Karl about campaigning in The Clouds.

Nezahualcoyotl—Speaker (Ruler) to Texcoco. A historical figure most distinguished in Aztec history. In the book he has an important role to play as well.

Nezahualpili—youngest son of Nezahualcoyotl, succeeds him as Speaker of Texcoco. A historical figure also distinguished in Aztec history much like his father.

Ngenechen—name of Re Che God.

Nunne Hi—spirit people of Ani' Yun'-wiya (Cherokee) myth.

Oganaya—Ani' Yun'-wiya old soldier who regales the young Karl with tales of his campaigns and has an unfortunate influence on him.

Oztooa—Tenocha—sandal merchant in Tlatelolco who is Karl's contact among the rebels.

Pachacamac—creator god of the people along the Peruvian Coast.

Pachacutec—the Inka reigning at the time of Karl's first campaign. A historical figure who greatly expanded the Inka Empire.

Paula—daughter of Mathilde and Aspenquid, (b. 1454).

Paula—daughter of Ignace, brother of Khan Henry of The Clouds, marries Khan John II of Anahuac (b.1464).

Qualiameyatl—Chalco teacher who taught Karl Nahual and Maya writing.

Sacook—Leni lenape—son of Watomika, mapper in South America.

Sarah—daughter of Karl's father by Metztlaconac, 1423–74).

Sealth—oldest son of Karl's mother by her first husband, (1421–80).

Sejong—king of Chosin (Korea) (1418–50).

Selu—earth mother goddess of the Ani' Yun'-wiya (Cherokee).

Silpitocle—Kakan—serves as spy for Karl during Re Che Campaign.

Simahi—A'palachi—wife of Karl's half brother Taiwit, (d.1472).

Suchix—Mixteca—commander of the minghan in which Karl served during his first campaign.

Suyeta—Ani' Yun'-wiya—wife of Gatagewi, serves as wet nurse for Karl's son John.

Taiwit—second son of Karl's mother by her first husband, (1425–71).

Tatevari—Sun god of the Ralamari.

Tepeyolotl—Chalca merchant who marries Karl's half-sister Sarah, (d.1473).

Tes Disora—Ralamari young man Karl finds and helps near Cuauhnahuac.

Tetl—Otomi servant of Karl's household in Cuauhnahuac (Cuernavaca).

Teypachtli—daughter of Karl's sister Sarah, (b. 1448).

Theodore—second son of Karl's father and Metztlaconac, (1425–86).

Theodore—second son of Khan Henry of Anahuac (b.1440).

Tlacaelel—half-brother of Moctezuma and Snake Woman (High Priest) of Tenochtitlan. A sinister historical figure in Aztec history, he meets a rather sinister fate in the book.

Tlapac—great-grandson of Smoking Mirror, son of Citlalcoatl, (b. 1437).

Tlauquechol—head of Palace Guard in Tlatelolco.

Tloque Nahuaque—Toltec god who is non-corporeal.

Toragana—younger son of Khakhan Kujujuk.

Waikiyaf—Re Che—war chief during the campaign.

Watomika—Leni lenape (Delaware) first Governor of the Northeast Province of the Khakhanate.

Wiracocha—name of Inka sun god.

Wodziwob—Nuwu (South Piute) shaman who intercepts Karl and warns him of a trap.

Woey—widow Cimmashote marries when he returns to Itsati after the Re Che Campaign.

Wzokhilain—Pesmokanti (Passamaquoddy) nephew of Aspenquid, with whom Little Carlotta goes to live for a few years.

Yunwi Tsunsi—little woodland people of Ani' Yun'-wiya (Cherokee) myth.

Zheng He—Chinese admiral of the “Treasure Fleet” that traveled all the way to the West African coast during the early Ming Dynasty.

Zhu Di—Ming emperor of China (r. 1402–24). Ordered Zhen He's expedition.

Zhu Zhanji—Ming emperor of China (r.1425–35). Ended the naval expeditions and began the ruinous isolationist policy.

Appendix 2

Glossary

Book 2

acali—(Nahual)—name of small boat used to fish on Lake Texcoco

agidodah—(Cherokee)—father

agidu'tsi—(Cherokee)—uncle

agilisi—(Cherokee)—grandmother

agit'tsi-i—(Cherokee)—mother

agoli—(Cherokee)—perch (the fish)

aillo—(Quechua)—bolo

Aitasaindutzza—(Basque)—the papacy

Aitasantu—(Basque)—pope

ajo—(Spanish)—garlic

almirante—(Spanish)—admiral

anana—(Taino)—banana

arsenale—(Italian)—arsenal

atun—(Spanish)—tuna

auto da fe—(Spanish) public punishments during the Inquisition

-balikh—(Mongol)—suffix for city

bao chuan—(Chinese)—treasure boat

batatas—(Taino)—sweet potatoes

bohio—(Taino)—large house of the chieftain

boniata—(Taino)—sweet yucca (a tuber)

Bucintoro—(Italian)—name of the doge of Venice's barge

cabuya—(Muisca)—plant, its fibers were used to make hats
cactli—(Nahual)—sandals
calmecac—(Nahual)—school for upper-class Aztecs
calpa—(Quechua)—ceremony reading entrails of a llama to predict the future
camohtli—(Nahual)—sweet potatoes
caney—(Taino)—type of hut in which the Taino lived
chilan—(Maya)—seer
centli—(Nahual)—corn (maize)
chiconcuetzalin—(Nahual)—blue and gold macaw
chungke—skill game among Southeastern Indians in which they tried to hit a rolling disc-shaped stone with a lance
chun~o—(Yunga)—potatoes
conuco—(Taino)—field of mounds on which the Taino cultivated manioc
cuauhmecaezotl—(Nahual)—vanilla bean
cuetzpalin—(Nahual)—iguana
cuntur—(Quechua)—condor
ector—(Taino)—corn (maize)
Eskuldunac—(Basque)—their name for themselves
espingarderos—(Spanish)—harquebusiers
etl—(Nahual)—beans
Euskera—(Basque)—their name for their language
fuchuan—(Chinese)—Fuchai's boat
galera—(Spanish)—galley (boat propelled by oarsmen)
gerege—(Mongol)—tablet of authority from the Khan
gongchuan—(Chinese)—supply ship
guama—(Taino)—village headman
guayava—(Taino)—guava (fruit)
higuaca—(Taino)—Puerto Rican Amazon (parrot)
huehxolotl—(Nahual)—turkey
huinca—(Mapuche)—foreigner
jinete—(Spanish)—light cavalry
Jin-pen—(Chinese)—word for Japan
kaseke—(Taino)—chieftain of a province
kheree—(Mongol)—crow
koga—(Cherokee)—crow
kotsune—(Cherokee)—sycamore

kvtli—(Cherokee)—raccoon
lama—(Quechua)—llama
la'o—(Chinese)—tuberculosis
legua—(Spanish)—league—about three miles
li—(Chinese) distance measurement (about 1/3 mile)
Mairu—(Basque)—Moor
machi—(Mapuche)—shaman
machuan—(Chinese)—horse boat
makailo—(Basque)—cod (the fish)
mapachin—(Nahual)—raccoon
marmol—(Spanish)—marble
Martxoa—(Basque)—March (the month)
matzachtli—(Nahual)—banana
metate—(Nahual)—flat stone used for grinding corn
mosaico—(Spanish)—mosaics
Musulman—(Basque)—Moslem
nacamalli—(Nahual)—tamale
naipes—(Yunga)—small flat copper pieces used as “coins” by the Chimu
oca—(Yunga)—sweet potato
oliva—(Spanish)—olive
orlok—(Mongol)—governor or Ordu commander
p'ai-tse—(Chinese)—gerege
ponokamita—(Siksika)—horse (literally “elk-dog”)
papa—(Quechua)—potatoes
pehuen—(Mapuche)—Chilean pine or Monkey Puzzle Tree
puna—(Quechua)—high dry grassland
puya—(Quechua)—century plant
Quechua—language of the Inka and many other tribes in the mountains of Peru
quetzalitzli—(Nahual)—emeralds
rongyun—(Chinese)—troop transport
ruka—(Mapuche)—type of house in which the Re Che lived
shachuan—(Chinese)—sand boat
siquutsets—(Cherokee)—opossum
tecuancoatl—(Nahual)—rattlesnake
teoxihuitl—(Nahual)—turquoise
tezontli—(Nahual)—porous red volcanic rock used for building

tlacaztali—(Nahual)—albino

tlachtli—(Nahual)—Meso-American ball game

tlaxcalli (Nahual)—tortilla

tomatl—(Nahual)—tomato

tupi—(Tupian) toucan

Uillac Uma—(Quechua)—high priest

utso'nati—(Cherokee)—rattlesnake

virrey—(Spanish)—viceroy

woorari—(Arawakan)—arrow poison, source of curare

yek—(Tlingit)—name for a spirit helper used by a shaman to contact the spirit world

yoce—(Taino)—manioc plant

Yunga—language of the Chimu

Appendix 3

Tribal Names

In the book I have tried to use the names the various Aboriginal American tribes actually called themselves. This is not always possible since some of the names have been lost and many of the tribes referred to themselves by the name of their village or current chief. Most of the names we have grown familiar with were corruptions of the (often unflattering) name used for a tribe by a neighboring tribe. I have taken some liberties with some of the names, but the following list should help clear up any confusion. There is no unanimity of opinion as to where these tribes were in the late 14th century, but I have placed them based on the best information I could glean combined with a bit of speculation based partially on legendary native movements and partially on where they were at first contact. The Aboriginal Americans were not a static people, but migrated to a greater or lesser degree for a variety of reasons. It should also be pointed out that there was a massive die-off in the southeastern U.S. after the incursions of several Spanish expeditions (Pardo, Narvaez, de Leon, and De Soto) because of the diseases they brought with them. This greatly changed the native people of that area making it rather speculative as to what they were really like at the time of the book. As to the Asian tribes, where possible I have used the names they called themselves, but where that was not available I have used the name we now have for them.

A'-a' tam—the Piman tribes of the Uto-Aztecan language family. This would include the Pima and Papago. I have placed them from the lower Salt and middle Gila rivers in Arizona south to the west coast of the Sea of Cortez north of the Yaqui River. They were an agricultural people that originally lived in Pueblos.

Abenaki—generic name used by the Algonquin-speaking tribes to identify those of their people that lived along the New England coast.

Absaroke (Crows)—a Siouan people who split off from the Hidatsa and were at the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers at the time of Book I.

Akawai—a Cariban-speaking tribe (Acawai) found inland from the Locono from eastern Venezuela to eastern Guyana.

Acuera—a Timacua tribe, which I place in central Florida between the Oklawaha and St. John's rivers.

Ahitchita—a Muskogean tribe (Hitchiti) originally living around a town by the same name on the Chattahoochee River in Western Georgia. The remnant of the tribe became part of the Lower Creeks.

Ainu—a Paleo-Asiatic people that are the original inhabitants of the Japanese island of Hokkaido and also Sakhalin Island to the north. At the time of the books they were still in power on their islands.

Ais—a Timacua tribe, which I place on the east coast of Florida roughly between Melbourne and Fort Pierce.

Alba ayamule—a Creek town near Montgomery, Alabama, whose survivors are sometimes called the Alabama. In the first book the town controls most of southern Alabama.

Alcolhua—An Oto-Manguan people that lived on the eastern side of Lake Texcoco in the Valley of Mexico and had Texcoco as their capitol. At the time of the books they were still a power. Historically they were conquered by the Tepanecas and then joined the Mexica in overthrowing the Tepaneca and forming the Triple Alliance that became the Aztecs.

Algonquin—a language group of tribes found along the east coast from North Carolina to Newfoundland and inland to the Rockies in Canada but only in a narrow band along the U.S. coast, including all of Delaware, New Jersey, and New England and Eastern North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York. In general they were of hunter-gatherer inclination, although the more southern groups all raised crops and tended to be fairly sedentary. Their tribal organization tended to be loose and their society fairly egalitarian.

Alnanbai—an Algonquin-speaking tribe (Abnaki) that lived in the western Maine valleys of the Kennebec, Androscoggin, and Saco rivers.

Alsi—a Yakonan tribe (Alsea) that lived along the Alsea River on the Oregon Coast.

Altamaha—a town in Central Georgia along the lower Ocmulgee River. It was likely the chief Yamasee town.

Amani yukhan—a Siouan people who ultimately became the Virginia Sioux tribes (Manahoac, Monacan, Moneton, Nahyssan, Occaneechi, Saponi, and Tutelo). At the time of the books, I place them in the upper Ohio Valley from near Cincinnati to near Pittsburgh. This would make them neighbors of the Dhegiba Sioux and would place their migration east later than some authorities maintain.

Anishinabe—an Algonquian tribe (Chippewa) who lived around Lake Superior especially on the northwestern and southern shores in Ontario, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

Ani' Yun'-wiya—an Iroquoian tribe (Cherokee) whom I place in the Southern Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountains and the surrounding Piedmont from the New to the Hiawassee rivers. This is a little north of their position at first contact. In Book II they spread east and south.

An'kalym—a part of the Paleo-Asiatic people (Chuckchi) that lived on the Chuckchi Peninsula in Northeastern Siberia. This was the group that lived off the sea rather than by herding reindeer.

A'palachi—a Timacua tribe (Appalachee) whom I place on the lower Apalachicola and Ochlockonee rivers.

A'shiwi—a Pueblo people (Zuni) that I place along a narrow band from the Tomochic River in Western Chihuahua to the area around Flagstaff, Arizona.

Atavillo—a tribe of unknown language that lived in the upper Rimac Valley in southern Peru.

Athabaskan—a language group of tribes that at contact was found mostly on the northwest corner of the North American continent (Alaska and Central West Canada), except for the coast. There were also isolated tribes in Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and California as well as the southwestern U.S. and northern Mexico. At the time of the first book, only the last group (northern Mexico) is not in place, but is on its way.

Atirhagenrat—an Iroquoian tribe (Neutrals) that I place on both shores of the eastern end of Lake Erie. This is somewhat east of their location at contact.

Aymara—language group spoken by twelve related tribes that lived on the high plain around Lake Titicaca in southern Peru and northern Bolivia. In the books it is the name given to all of these tribes.

Ayrate—the Ani' Yun'-wiya (Cherokee) dialect that predominated in the eastern piedmont area of the southern Appalachians from north central Georgia to north central North Carolina. The dialects were quite different, but just mutually intelligible.

Awenro'ron'non—an Iroquoian tribe (Wenrohronon) that I place along the upper Allegheny River in northwest Pennsylvania. This is well south of their contact location.

Ayawak'a—Quechua name for the tribe living south of the Calua in northern Peru. It is uncertain what they called themselves. The name means "shrine of the corpse."

Ben Zah—an Oto-Manguetan tribe (Zapotecs) that lived in most of the Mexican state of Oaxaca. They are an old civilization that had been invaded by the Mixtecs first and later by the Aztecs. At contact they still controlled the southern half of their land.

Beothuk—the now-extinct tribe that lived on Newfoundland. They and their language appear unrelated to their neighbors.

Bi' Ixula—a Wakashan tribe (Bellacoola) living around the area of King Island in western British Columbia.

Borum—a tribe (Botocudo) that lived originally inland in the mountains of southeastern Brazil but moved to the coast to raid. They were very warlike attacking all their neighbors and eventually the Portuguese settlers. In the books they are along the coast south of Rio de Janeiro.

Caddoan—a language family that lived from the Red River in Louisiana to the Kansas River in Kansas including much of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma and parts of Texas and Kansas. They were a sedentary and agricultural people of varying degrees of social stratification and religious complexity. Many of them engaged in human sacrifice.

Calua—small tribe (Calva) of uncertain language that lived in northern Peru around the modern city of Suyo.

Calusa—the tribe of no certain linguistic affinity that lived in the Everglades of south Florida and in the Keys.

Canari—a tribe that lived in southwest Ecuador on the coast and inland from the Gulf of Guayaquil in the area of Cuenca. Their language was not preserved and their descendants speak Quechua.

Casca-yunga—tribe that lived south of the Chacha on the upper Marañon River near the Chillao.

Catlo'itx—a Salishian tribe (Comox) living along the eastern coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, between the Puntlatch and Kwakiutl.

Cayapo—a large Ge tribe living in the Mato Grosso area of southeastern Brazil in the southern part of the state of Goiás, the western part of the state of Minas Gerais and the northern part of the state of São Paulo.

Chacha—a tribe (Chachapoya) living on the middle Marañon River Valley. They were said to have unusually light skin.

Chahiksichahiks—a Caddoan tribe (Pawnee) whom I place in eastern Nebraska and Kansas along the North Loup, middle Platte, Republican, Smoky Hill and Kansas rivers.

Chalca—a city state in the Valley of Mexico at the southeastern end of the original lake. It was thought to be ruled by descendants of the Toltecs. At the time of the first book it was allied with Huexotzinco and being attacked by the Tepaneca. At contact it was ruled by the Aztecs.

Chango—the Atacama people that lived in isolated villages along the Chilean coast from the Atacama Desert to perhaps as far as the Maule River. They spoke a dialect that might be related to Kakan.

Charrua—a Chana-speaking people that lived in all of modern Uruguay as well as parts of bordering Brazil and Argentina. At some point they were split into five subtribes, the Yaro, the Guenoa, the Bohane, the Minuan and the Charrua.

Chavchuvat—a part of the Paleo-Asiatic people (Chuckchi) that lived on the Chuckchi Peninsula in Northeastern Siberia. These were the ones that lived by herding reindeer. The Koryaks that herded reindeer also sometimes called themselves by this name.

Cheroenhaka—an Iroquoian tribe (Nottoway). In the books I use the name for the Nottoway, Menherrin, and Tuscarora tribes, which I place in central and southern Virginia, still united as one tribe. This is northwest of their contact positions. Their dialects are similar enough that it is likely they were still united at the time of the books.

Chichimeca—the various Oto-Manguen tribes living north and west of the Valley of Mexico as unorganized bands. They would periodically spill into the valley and mix with or displace those they found. At first this would be the Otomi who are likely the original inhabitants of the valley, but later other similar groups who had been variously civilized. The Aztecs are the most well known such group.

Chikasha—a Muskogean tribe (Chickasaw) whom I place in north central Mississippi. This is a small area within their location at contact. At the time of the first book they had fairly recently split off from their original tribe—most probably the Choctaw.

Chillao—tribe that lived south of the Chacha on the upper Marañon River near the Casca-yunga.

Ch'i-tan—a Mongol-speaking people (Khitans) that conquered part of North China and established the Liao Dynasty (916–1125). They refused to be Sinacized and treated the Chinese as inferiors. They were overthrown by the Jurchen.

Chiwaro—a linguistically isolated tribe (Jivaro) living in a large area of southeast Ecuador and north central Peru in the jungles of the eastern foothills of the Andes. They are famous in recent times for shrinking heads and killing missionaries. They resisted conquest into modern times except for their westernmost divisions, the Palta and Malacata, who had moved into the mountains.

Chono—the Chilean tribe just south of the Re Che. Their language and culture were nothing like that of the Re Che. They are likely related to the Alacaluf and the other tribes farther south. Their language has been almost completely lost.

Chontal—a people living in north central Guerrero whose language is hard to classify. At contact they were subject to the Aztecs.

Chumash—a Hokan-speaking tribe living along the coast, the off-shore islands and the mountains from Moro Bay to just north of Santa Monica in southern California.

Ciboney—an Arawakan people that along with the Guanahatabey had been displaced from most of the Greater Antilles by the Taino. They still existed at contact in the western tip of Hispaniola and in the cays of southern Cuba. They were a primitive people who lived off the sea.

Coixca—a Uto-Aztecan people living in northern Guerrero on both sides of the upper Balsas River. At contact they were subject to the Aztecs.

Colli—tribe living in the lower and middle Chillón River Valley just north of modern Lima, Peru.

Conchuco—Quechua name for the province and perhaps the tribe living on the west bank of the upper Marañon River in central Peru.

Coosa—an ancient Muskogean town of a people whose remnants became members of the Upper Creeks. It was situated along the Coosa River in northern Alabama.

Cuitlatec—a people of uncertain language that lived in western Guerrero between the Petatlan and Coyuca rivers from the mountains to the shore. At contact they had been conquered by the Aztecs.

Cusabo—a possibly Muskogean group of tribes that lived on the coast between Charleston, SC and the Savannah River. This group included the Combahee, Edisto, Etiwaw, Kiawaw, St. Helena, Stono, Wapoo and Westo tribes. In the books I am intentionally vague about them.

Da-a-gelma'n—a Penutian tribe (Takelma) forming their own language isolate (Takilman). They lived along the middle portion of the Rogue River in southern Oregon.

Dinne—the name of the Athabaskan tribes that migrated from Canada into the Southwestern U.S. and became known as Apache and Navaho. In the first book they are still scattered between southern Montana and the Four Corners area with a few isolated related groups in Idaho, Oregon, and California.

Dzitsiista—an Algonquian tribe (Cheyenne) whom I place around the Minnesota and Red rivers in western Minnesota and eastern North Dakota.

Eskualdunac—a people of uncertain language classification (Basques) living in north central Spain and southwestern France on both sides of the Pyrenees Mountains. There is ample evidence that they were fishing for cod off the coast of New England long before Columbus.

Etchareottine—an Athabaskan tribe (Slaveys) that live west and south of Great Slave Lake in Canada's Northwest Territories.

Etnemitane—an Athabaskan tribe (Umpqua) that lived along the upper Umpqua River in Southern Oregon. They lived off the river and were not as developed as their neighbors.

Euzkadi—Basque name for their homeland.

Even—a Tungus people that live along the northern shore of the Okhotsk Sea in Eastern Siberia and well inland along the Omolon River. They appear to be a combination of a people very like the Evenks and the original people of the area, the Yukaghir. At the time of the book this process was well under way, but not yet complete.

Evenks—a Tungus people that live along the western shore of the Sea of Okhotsk and far inland into Siberia.

Genakin—a tribe (Puelche) that lived in the northern Pampas of Argentina from the Rio de la Plata to the Rio Negro and west to the Andean foothills. Historically, as in the books, they fought desperately for their freedom. Their language does not seem related to that of their immediate neighbors except the tribal fragments called the Pampas, Serrano, and Querandi, who do not appear in the books and were all likely originally part of the Genakin.

Great Bay Tribes—a term used in the books for the Algonquian tribes living around the Chesapeake Bay. This would include the Nanticoke, Conoy, and Powhatan.

Great Sound Tribes—a term used in the books for the Algonquian tribes living along the mainland opposite the Outer Banks of North Carolina. This would include the Pamlico, Weapemeoc, Moratok, Machapunga, Hatteras, and Chowanoc tribes.

Guanahatabey—an Arawakan people living in western Cuba where they were pushed by the Taino. They were quite primitive, living off the sea.

Guarani—a large language family extending from southern Brazil to the Parana Delta. In the book the name designates the small isolate in the Parana Delta.

Guayana—a Ge-speaking tribe (Caingang) that lived in the area of Sao Paulo in southeastern Brazil.

Hais—a Caddoan-speaking tribe (Eyeish) with a dialect rather distinct from other Caddoan tribes. They lived in the area of eastern Texas to northwest Louisiana at the time of the books.

Halkome'lem—a Salishian tribe (Stalo) that lived on the lower Frazier River in southwestern British Columbia. In the books they are combined as one tribe with the Cowichan who lived on the southeastern coast of Vancouver Island.

Hamakhava—the California Shoshonean name for the Tzinama-a.

Han—the dominant Chinese ethnic group. From an amalgam of the tribes subject to the Han Dynasty in the 3rd and 4th century AD, and not jealous of their separate identity, they have gone on absorbing neighboring people so that they make up about 94 percent of the Chinese population today. Even so, there are some fifty minorities still identifiable in China. The Han state was between the Yangtze and Yellow rivers and spread south to Hainan Island, west to part of modern Sinkiang Province, north into Manchuria and Korea and east to the China Sea.

Hasinai—a Caddoan confederacy of related tribes that centered on the Hainai tribe. They were in the northeast Texas area, from Dallas to the Red River.

Haush—a tribe living on the southeastern tip of Tierra del Fuego (off the southern tip of Chile). They are related to the Shelknam and likely migrated from Patagonia before them. They speak a dialect of the Tshon family, which is just intelligible to the Shelknam.

Hewaktokto—a Siouan tribe (Hidatsa) which I place on the Missouri River between the Little Missouri and the Knife rivers.

Hobe—a Timacua tribe historically located in the Palm Beach area of the southeastern Florida Coast.

Hopitu-shinumu—a Uto-Aztecan tribe (Hopi) living in the 14th century along the Colorado and the Little Colorado rivers in north central Arizona.

Hotcangara—a Siouan people that in the books represents the Winnebago and Chiwere Sioux (Oto, Iowa, and Missouri) tribes. Most evidence suggests that the people that occupied the great city now called Cahokia, near East St. Louis, Illinois, were a Siouan tribe. A process of elimination tends to make this group of Sioux the likeliest candidates. The languages of these tribes are mutually comprehensible, so their separation was fairly recent and perhaps incomplete at the time of the books. The name “Hotcangara” means “people of the parent speech” and was used, in contact times, to refer to the Winnebago.

Hsiung-nu—Altaic-speaking nomads from Inner Mongolia that coalesced into a powerful tribe dominating Mongolia and Chinese Turkistan. They raided the northern frontier of the Han Dynasty for centuries, finally conquering and displacing them as the Chao Dynasty (AD 304–52). They ruled over most of north China but were under constant pressure from all sides and fragmented in small states until they were unified under the Chinese Sui Dynasty (AD 581–618).

Huacrachucu—Quechua name for a province and possibly a tribe on the east bank of the upper Maranon River in central Peru.

Huamachucu—Quechua name for the people living just south of the Q’asa-marka, to whom they were related. They too were allied to the Chimu.

Huancavilca—a tribe living on the Santa Elena Peninsula in southwestern Ecuador, around and west of Guayaquil. Their language was lost but thought to be distinct from that of their neighbors.

Huasteca—a Mayan people (Huastecs) who lived in northeastern Mexico between the Vinazco and the Soto la Marina rivers encompassing the southern parts of Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon, Northern Vera Cruz, Hidalgo, and Queretaro and most of San Luis Potosi. In contact times they had been driven a little east and had lost some cities to the Aztecs.

Huexotzinco—a city-state in the Valley of Puebla, Central Mexico. At the time of the first book it was the ascendant city in the valley, dominating its neighboring cities and intruding itself westward into the Valley of Mexico. By contact times it belonged to Texcalla.

Iliniwek—an Algonquian tribe (Illinois) which I place at the southern end of Lake Michigan from Grand River in Michigan to the Illinois-Wisconsin border, including much of northwestern Indiana and southwestern Michigan.

Inka—the dominant tribe (Inca) of Peru at contact. Its empire stretched from southern Colombia to northwest Argentina and northern Chile at the time of the conquest. In the second book their expansion was just beginning.

Inuit—the Eskimo people that live along the shore of Northern and Western Alaska and Northern Canada.

Inuna-ina—an Algonquian tribe (Arapaho) which I place on the Assiniboin River in southern Manitoba, Canada.

Ipai—a Yuman-speaking people (Digueno) that lived in modern San Diego County, California.

Iroquoian—a language family of tribes ranging from the Saint Lawrence River south through New York, Pennsylvania, and along the Blue Ridge Mountains to North Carolina. They were sedentary and agricultural, but often warlike.

Ishak—(Atakapa) a separate linguistic group (sometimes they are considered a Macro-Algonquian language isolate). I place them in a narrow band along the Gulf Coast from Vermilion Bay, Louisiana, to the Brazos River, Texas.

Itza—a Maya people allegedly connected to the Toltecs. They set up a Toltec-like city in northern Yucatan (Chichen Itza) which was eventually overthrown and its survivors fled south to Lake Tayasil where they still were at the time of contact.

Iyehyeh—name used in the book for the various Siouan tribes that lived in the Carolinas (Catawba, Cheraw, Sugaree, Waxhaw, Congaree, Santee, Winyaw, Etiwaw, Sewee, Waccamaw, Wateree, Cape Fear, Keyauwee, Sissipahaw, Adshusher, Shakori, Pedee, Wocoon, Saponi, and Eno).

Jurchen—a Tungus-speaking tribe (Jurchids) that originated in the forests and mountains of eastern Manchuria. They went on to become horsemen and soon were threatening both the Ch'i-tans and the Koreans. In 1115 their ruler declared himself emperor of the Chin Dynasty (1115–1234) and began to overrun the Ch-i-tan lands. By 1125 the Ch'i-tans were scattered and the Jurchids began spreading south and eventually ruled most of the Yellow River Valley. They were, in turn, brushed aside by the Mongols under Chingis and Kubilai (1212–34).

Kadohadacho—a Caddoan tribe, the leading or most distinguished tribe of the Hasinai Confederacy of Caddoan tribes. I place the Kadohadacho along the lower Canadian and Cimarron rivers, and the Arkansas River from the Nebraska border to the Neosho River in eastern Oklahoma.

Ka-i-gwu—a tribe (Kiowa) and linguistic family probably related to Uto-Aztecan that lived at the headwaters of the Missouri River.

Kaina—a division (Bloods) of the Siksika (Blackfoot). At the time of the first book this division was probably just developing.

Kakan—the name of the language of the Diaguita tribe of northern Chile and northwestern Argentina. The tribe apparently expanded into Chile at some point. The language is an isolate, probably related to Argentinean language groups.

Kalapowah—a Penutian tribe (Kalapooian) that lived in the watershed of the Willamette and Umpqua rivers and in the Willamette Valley above the falls, Oregon. They hunted and dug up roots.

Kanale—a possible Zaparoan-speaking tribe (Canelo) that lived in the jungles of the eastern foothills of the Andes in east central Ecuador north of the Chiwaro.

Kanastoge—an Iroquoian tribe (Conestoga or Susquehanna) that lived on the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania and Maryland.

Kaniengehaga—an Iroquoian tribe (Mohawk), the easternmost of that language group that lived along the middle Mohawk River in Central New York. They were one of the Five Nations of historic times.

Kasihta—a town on the banks of the Chattahoochee River a few miles below Kawita, Georgia. The inhabitants later became Lower Creeks.

Kawchodinne—an Athabaskan tribe (Hares) who lived between the Mackenzie River and Great Bear Lake in Canada's Northwest Territories.

Kawesqar—a tribe (Alacaluf) living along the coast and on the islands of southern Chile, south of the Chono. They were much like the Chono in culture and likely spoke a similar language.

Kensistenoug—an Algonquian tribe (Cree) who were found in Canada in a broad band from central Saskatchewan to Hudson Bay, including most of central Manitoba and much of Ontario.

K'eres—a linguistic family of Pueblo Indians (Keresan) living west of the upper Rio Grande in West Central New Mexico around Acoma.

Khitans—a Tungus people that consolidated into a federation of tribes in Eastern Inner Mongolia in AD 905. In 926 their Khan (Yeh-lu A-pao-chi) declared himself emperor and adopted the dynastic name, Liao. By 937 they controlled the Beijing area and continued to rule the northeastern tip of China as the Liao Dynasty until 1125 when the Jurchen overthrew them. Some of them fled west among the Uighurs and formed the state called Kara Khitai, which was later conquered by the Mongols.

Kicho—a Chibchan-speaking tribe (Quijo) living in north central Ecuador. They are likely related to the Chibchan-speaking tribes to their west in the mountains (the Panzaleo), with whom they were friendly and shared many traits.

Kigzh—a Uto-Aztecan-speaking tribe (Gabrielinos) that lived in what is now Los Angeles County, California.

Kitikiti'sh—a Caddoan tribe (Wichita) which I place along the middle Arkansas River, the Neosho River and Osage River in southeastern Kansas and southwestern Missouri.

Kituhwa—the Ani' Yun'-wiya (Cherokee) dialect spoken along the Tuckasegee River in western north Carolina around the principle city by the same name. This may have been the original language, since Kituhwa was considered by many of the Cherokee to be their first town, but it is uncertain.

Kiwigapawa—an Algonquian tribe (Kickapoo) whom I place in eastern Michigan from Saginaw Bay to Lake Erie and in the tip of Ontario between Lake Huron and Lake Erie.

Koasati—a town probably on Pine Island in the Tennessee River whose remnants became Upper Creeks. In the book they are among the few future Creeks who join the Mongols.

Kofan—a tribe (Cofan) of uncertain language that lived in south central Colombia and northeast Ecuador in the jungles of the eastern foothills of the Andes just east and northeast of the Kicho.

Kofitachiki—a Muskhogean tribe (Cofitachiqui) whose survivors became part of the Lower Creeks. It was a large chiefdom located along much of the Savannah River to the Wateree River except for the coast.

Kusa—a Penutian tribe (Kusan) that lived along the Coos River and Bay as well as the lower Coquille River in southeastern Oregon. They were sedentary and agricultural.

Kutchakutchin—an Athabaskan tribe (Kutchin) that lived on both banks of the Yukon River between Birch Creek and the Porcupine rivers in Northeastern Alaska.

Kutonaqa—a tribe (Kutenai) and a distinct language family possibly related to Algonquian that lived in the Rockies from southeastern British Columbia to northern Idaho and the northwestern tip of Montana.

Kuweveka paiya—a Yuman tribe (Yavapai) that lived in the northwest quadrant of Arizona perhaps as far east as the Rio Verde and the Salt River, but east and south of the Colorado River.

Kwakiutl—Wakashan tribe (actually an amalgam of small related bands) that lived on both shores of Queen Charlotte Sound and northern Vancouver Island in southwestern British Columbia, Canada.

Kwawia—a Uto-Aztecan-speaking tribe (Cahuilla) that lived in the desert area south of the San Bernardino Mountains and north of the Santa Rosa Mountains in southwestern San Bernardino County California, south of the Takhtam (Serrano).

Kwenetchechat—a Wakashan tribe (Makah) that lived on Cape Flattery in northwest Washington. They exploited the sea much like their relatives farther north.

Kwenio'gwen—an Iroquois tribe (Cayuga) one of those that became the Five Nations. At the time of the first book, they are still not united to the other tribes and were found around Lake Cayuga in West Central New York.

Kwichana—a Hokan tribe (Yuma) that lived along the lower Colorado River around its junction with the Gila River.

Lacandon—a Mayan tribe that lived along the Usumacinta and Pasion rivers in Chiapas Mexico and Guatemala. They have remained rather primitive, unlike their relatives.

Lalacas—a Latuami tribe (Modoc) that lived in northeastern California and south central Oregon.

Lampa—tribe living in the upper Chillan and Chancay valleys in southern Peru near the Ocro, with whom they were usually fighting.

Latacunga—tribe living in north central Ecuador around Quito. Also called the Panzaleo or the Kito.

Leni lenape—Algonquian tribe (Delaware) that lived in eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey and southeastern New York.

‘Lingit—an Athabaskan tribe (Tlingit) located along the Alaskan panhandle from Prince William Sound to Dixon Entrance.

Locono—general name the Arawakan tribes along the north coast of South America from eastern Venezuela to western French Guiana used for themselves.

Lucayo—the Taino bands living on the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos Islands north of the Greater Antilles.

Lygitann’ytan—the Koryak name for the Chuckchi.

Macuni—a Mashacali-speaking tribe that lived in the mountains in the eastern part of the state of Minas Gerais in southeastern Brazil.

Mahican—an Algonquian tribe that lived in the upper Hudson River Valley extending a little into Massachusetts and Vermont.

Mashacali—a separate linguistic family that lived along the Mucuri River in southeastern Brasil.

Matlatzinca—an Oto-Manguean people that lived in the Valley of Toluca west of the Valley of Mexico. At contact they were subject to the Aztecs.

Maya—a people with a long history of development. They began in the highlands of Guatemala, then gradually moved north into the Yucatan peninsula. They left behind ruins of many great ceremonial centers. They wrote many books in their picture language but only a few survived the conquest. They fought against themselves frequently and were unable to form any sort of empire. They spread north as far as Tamaulipas, Mexico (the Huastecs), but otherwise dominated the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico along with most of the states of Tabasco and Chiapas and also Belize, Guatemala, and part of Honduras and El Salvador.

Mayapan—a Maya state centered on the city of Mayapan that controlled much of Northern Yucatan at the time of the first book. At contact it was just another Maya city.

Mazahuaca—an Oto-Manguean people that lived just north of the Matlatzinca in the Valley of Toluca and the hills north of it. At contact they were subject to the Aztecs.

Menominiwok ininiwok—Algonquian tribe (Menominee) living along both shores of Upper Lake Michigan from Green Bay and the Leelanau Peninsula to just before Mackinaw Island and including most of the habitable islands in that region of the lake.

Meritong—a subdivision of the Coroado tribe, a Puri-Coroado-speaking people that lived inland north and west of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. At the time of the books, the Puri and Coroado were still one tribe.

Merkits—a Tungus tribe living near Lake Baikal. They were often at odds with the Mongols but united with them under Chingis and remained an integral part of them.

Mexica—the probably Oto-Manguean people that took up Nahuatl, a Uto-Aztecan language at some point before contact. At the time of the first book they were subjects of the Tepanecs living on two islands near the western shore of Lake Texcoco, Tenochtitlan, and Tlatelolco. Historically they joined in a revolt that overthrew the Tepanecs and formed part of the Triple Alliance that became the Aztecs.

Mingue—one of the Algonquian terms for the Northern Iroquois.

Minuan—a subtribe of the Charrua that lived in northeastern Argentina between the Uruguay and Parana rivers.

Mocozo—a Timacuan tribe that I place in an extended area around Lake Kissimmee in south central Florida.

Mongols—a Tungus people originally from the forests and mountains south of Lake Baikal. They migrated south to the Onon River around AD 900, and there formed a number of tribes most of whom were herdsmen. These continued in obscurity used as pawns by the Chinese, Khitans, and Jurchens until they consolidated under Chingis in 1203. He was named Khan in 1206 and began to form one of the largest empires in history. His

grandson Kubilai conquered the rest of China and founded the Yuan Dynasty (1264–1368). The Mongols were eventually driven back to Mongolia by a popular Chinese revolt that led to the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644).

Moyopampa—Quechua name for the tribe living in a low extension of the Andes northeast of the Chacha. The name means “round valley.”

Muskhogeans—a language family (sometimes classified as Macro-Algonquian) found mostly in the southeastern U.S. from the Mississippi River to the Georgia Coast, from Southern Tennessee and South Carolina to the Gulf and including most of Florida. They tended to be a sedentary people living in towns and villages and cultivating extensively.

Nahani—Athabaskan tribe that lived in the Rockies from northern British Columbia to the Yukon Territory, Canada.

Na-I-shan-dina—an Athabaskan-speaking tribe (Kiowa Apache) that attached itself to the Kiowa. I place them along the Yellowstone River in south central Montana and the upper Belle Fourche River in western South Dakota.

Nanai—a Tungus people of apparently mixed background living on the middle Amur River in northeast China and southeast Siberia.

Narragansett—Algonquin-speaking tribe that lived in Rhode Island from Providence River to Pawcatuck River. In historic times they first grew large with refugees from other tribes, then were destroyed during King Philip’s War.

Natchez—a Muskhogeans tribe that lived along the east bank of the Mississippi River in the area of Natchez, Mississippi.

Nausets—an Algonquin-speaking people living on Cape Cod, Massachusetts east of Bass River. They were either part of or subject to the Wampanoag. In historic times they were peaceful and helped the Pilgrim Colony.

Ne-e-noilno—an Algonquin-speaking people (Montagnais) that were found in southeastern Quebec, Canada, north of the St. Lawrence River and east of St. Maurice River. In the books they would be one of the Northeastern Bands.

Newe—a Uto-Aztecan-speaking people (southern Shoshone) who were around and to the south of the Great Salt Lake in Utah at the time of the books.

Niantic—an Algonquin-speaking tribe occupying the coast of eastern Connecticut and western Rhode Island from Narragansett Bay to the Connecticut River. In historic times they were divided into two by the Pequot Tribe. They were generally allied with the Narragansett Tribe.

Nicarao—a Nahual-speaking people that migrated in the 11th century to the area between Lake Nicaragua and the Pacific Ocean.

Nimipu—a Sahaptian tribe (Nez Perce) who lived along the Salmon, lower Snake and upper Columbia rivers in Idaho, Washington and Oregon. In the books I include most of the Sahaptian tribes under this name.

Nivkh—a Paleo-Asiatic people living on the lower Amur River in southeastern Siberia.

Nomo—a Uto-Aztecan-speaking people (northern Shoshone) which I place in southern Idaho, especially along the Snake River and from northern Utah to northwestern Wyoming. This would be the northern end of their location at contact.

Nonoalco—a possibly mythical people of great artistic talent whom the legends credit for building all the great cities in the Valley of Anahuac and the surrounding areas.

Northeastern Bands—the name used in the book for the Algonquin tribes living largely as scattered bands in New England and eastern Canada. This would include the Nipissing, Temiscaming, Abittibi, Algonkin, Nascapée, Montagnais, Mistassin, Bersiamite, Papinachois, Micmac, Malecite. Passamaquoddy,

Arosaguntacook, Sokoki, Penobscot, Norridgewock, Pennacook, Massachuset, Wampanoag, Narraganset, Nipmuc, Montauk and Wapinger.

Nukfila—the “Creek” name for either the Utina or all the Timacua-speaking tribes.

Numakiki—a Siouan tribe (Mandan) that lived along the middle Missouri River, from the Knife to the Cheyenne rivers in central North and South Dakota. An isolated group lived near the confluence of the Belle Fourche and Cheyenne rivers in south western South Dakota.

Numu—a Uto-Aztecan-speaking tribe (Northern Paiute—Mono) living in the mountains of central eastern California and western Nevada.

Nuwu—a Uto-Aztecan-speaking tribe (Southern Paiute—Chemehuevi) that lived in the deserts and mountains of central and eastern San Bernardino County, California. At some point after the time of the books they moved east to the Colorado River displacing the Yuman-speaking people there.

Nymil’u—a Paleo-Asiatic people (Koryaks) living north of and on the northern neck of the Kamchatka Peninsula in eastern Siberia.

Ocale—a Timacua tribe that lived in central Florida between the Withlacoochee and Oklawaha rivers.

Ocheti shakowin—a Siouan tribal group (Dakota), which went on to separate into Santee, Yankton, and Teton Sioux. In the first book they are still united and live a sedentary life in a large part of Minnesota from the Mississippi River to the Duluth area.

Ocro—tribe living in the upper Chillan and Chancay valleys in southern Peru near the Lampa with whom they often fought.

Ojibwa—the Cree name for the Anishinabe (Chippewa).

Okimulgis—an old Muskhogean town (Okmulgee) located on the east bank of the Okmulgee River south of Macon. Its people were probably Hitchiti.

Olmecca—a largely Zoquean-speaking people that were a mixture of the various tribes in the area. They were not the same Olmecs who flourished in the area long before. They were called Olmecca because “oli” or rubber could be found in the area, and gave their name to the earlier civilization.

Oneniute’ron’non—an Iroquoian tribe (Seneca) that lived between Seneca Lake and the Geneva River in West New York. Historically, they were one of the Five Nations.

Ononta’ge—an Iroquoian tribe (Onondaga) that lived along Onondaga Creek and Lake and north to Lake Ontario. They were one of the Five Nations.

Otomi—an Oto-Manguean people that lived in and north and east of the Valley of Mexico. They were probably the original inhabitants of the valley. At the time of the books, they dominated the northern shore of Lake Texcoco as well as most of the states of Hidalgo and Queretaro, along with parts of Tlaxcalla, Puebla and Vera Cruz. At contact they were mostly under the Aztecs.

Ottare—Ani’ Yun’-wiya (Cherokee) dialect spoken by those living in the Smoky Mountains (southern Appalachian) from northwest Georgia to southwest Virginia, except for the area of the Tuckasegee River in North Carolina. It was different but just mutually intelligible to the others.

Ozita—a Timacua tribe that lived along the southern shore of Tampa Bay in western Florida.

Pache—a Chibchan-speaking tribe (also Panche) that lived along the upper reaches of the Magdalena River in south central Colombia.

Palta—a division of the Chiwaro that moved into the mountains from the jungles to the east. They lived in southern Ecuador around Loja southward into northeast Peru near Jaen.

Panai’ti—a Shoshonean people (Bannock) that lived in the eastern parts of Shoshonean lands. It is not clear if they were separate at the time of the books, and I make their distinctness vague.

Pansfalaya—a Muskogean tribe (Choctaw) that held sway over all but the northern tip and the northwest edge and the coast of Mississippi.

Pantch—a possibly Muskogean tribe (Chitimacha) that was located along the Mississippi Delta in Southern Louisiana.

Pashohan—the Caddoan name for the “Hotcangara” Sioux.

Patasho—a possibly language isolate, they were found inland from the coast of Brazil around the 17° S parallel.

Paya—a possibly Chibchan-speaking tribe that lived along the northeast coast of Honduras.

Pensacola—a Timacuan tribe that lived along the lower Escambia and Yellow rivers and around Pensacola Bay.

Pesmokanti—Algonquin-speaking tribe (Passamaquoddy) part of the Abenaki Confederacy. They were found along the St. Croix River between Maine and New Brunswick. In the books they are one of the Northeastern Bands.

Piegan—a division of the Siksika (Blackfoot). At the time of the books this division was probably just beginning.

Pinco—a tribe living at the headwaters of the Marañon River in south central Peru.

Pioje—a Tucanoan-speaking tribe, the eastern division of the Encabellado tribe living in north central Ecuador in the jungles of the eastern foothills of the Andes.

Potano—a Timacua tribe that lived in northern Florida from the Santa Fe River to Orange Lake and west to the Suwannee River (the Gainesville area).

Potawatamink—an Algonquian tribe (Potawatomi) that I place from Sault Ste. Marie and Manitoulin Island in Lake Huron to the headwaters of the Mattagami River.

Purepecha—a people (Tarascans) whose language forms an isolate. They lived in most of the state of Michoacan, Mexico, and were still an independent entity at contact. At the time of the first book, they were just becoming an “empire” and only dominated a small area around Lake Patzcuaro. It is unclear where they came from.

Puruha—the tribe occupying central Ecuador around Riobamba and Guano.

Putun Maya—a group of Maya that lived along the coast just east of the Yucatan peninsula in the Mexican states of Tabasco, Campeche, and Chiapas. They were formidable traders ranging all along the Atlantic coasts of Mexico and Central America and probably to many of the westernmost Caribbean islands (Cuba, the Caymans, and Jamaica).

Q’asa-marka—the Quechua name for a powerful state (Caxamarca) allied to the Chimu Empire. They lived around the city of Cajamarca in northern Peru. It is not known what their original name was. The name means “town in a ravine.”

Qin—a Chinese-speaking northwestern Chinese tribe and state (Chin) that overthrew and replaced the Zhou Dynasty in 221 BC. It greatly expanded and consolidated China, but only lasted until the death of the first emperor in 210 BC, after which civil wars broke out again. The Western name for the Middle Kingdom (China) comes from the name of this state.

Ralamari—a Uto-Aztecan tribe (Tarahumare) that lived in the mountains of north central Mexico in most of the states of Zacatecas and Coahuilla and in parts of Jalisco, Guanajuato, and San Luis Potosi. They were still independent at contact.

Re Che—the tribe that lived in middle Chile. They used to be called Araucan but more recently are called Mapuche, the name of one of their divisions. The other divisions are Picunche, Wiyiche, and Chilote. Long after contact, a group crossed the Andes into Argentina. In the book they are all still west of the Andes between the Limari River and Chiloe Island. Their language is an apparent isolate.

Saktchi Huma—a Muskogean tribe (Chakchiuma) that was closely related to the Choctaw and Chickasaw. In the book they are a small tribe in northwestern Mississippi, near the Yazoo River.

Salishian—a language family of tribes found in the Northwest. It includes the Flatheads, Spokane, Kalispel, Cour d' Alene, Piquow, Sinkiuse, Methow, Okinagan, Shuswap, Ntlakyapamuk, Lillooet, Bellacoola, Comox, Cowichan, Squamish, Songish, Nisqualli, Twana, Chehalis and Tillamook.

Salst—a Salishian tribe (Flathead) that lived in northeastern Washington, northern Idaho, and just into Montana. In the books all the Salishian tribes are called Salst.

Saturiwa—a Timacuan tribe that lived along the lower St. Johns River in northeastern Florida.

Sekani—Athabaskan tribe living along the Rockies from west central Alberta to east and central British Columbia, Canada.

Shagero—an Algonquian tribe (Yurok) that lived along the mouth of the Klamath River in northern California.

Shahi'yena—Sioux name for the Dzitsiistas (Cheyenne).

Shang—a Chinese-speaking north China dynasty (and possibly the name of their tribe) that ruled over part of northern China (most of the Yellow River Valley) from 1500 to 1122 BC. It was overthrown by the Zhou Dynasty.

Shastika—a Hokan tribe (Shasta) living in Northern California.

Shawunogi—an Algonquian tribe (Shawnee) that I place in Central Indiana. This is west of their contact location (Central Ohio).

Shelknam—a tribe living on most of Tierra del Fuego (island off the southern tip of Chile and Argentina). Their language belongs to the Tshon family and they most likely migrated from Patagonia in two waves at some point after their relatives the Haush. The northern and southern Shelknam have different dialects and culture and were often at odds. They and the Haush were called Ona by the Yamana and some books refer to them by that name.

Siksika—an Algonquian tribe (Blackfoot) whom I place roaming the prairies of Southern Alberta and Saskatchewan along the Saskatchewan River. At the time of the first book the Bloods and Piegans were still united with the Blackfoot.

Siouan Tribes—an agricultural people of decreasing sophistication from south to north. They were at the time of the book in a broad band from Minnesota to Missouri, into the Central Plains along the Missouri River, and east along the Ohio River as far as the Pennsylvania border. They also had an isolated group in much of the Carolinas. At the time of contact, the northern groups had moved into the plains (Dakota and Chiwere) or up the Missouri (Dhegiba) or down the Mississippi (Quapaw and Biloxi) and the Virginia Sioux were in place in much of Central Virginia.

Southeastern Cities—a term used in the books to refer to the cities of the Muskogean people that refused to join the Mongols. After contact the remnants of these people greatly reduced by plagues became the Creeks.

Surreche—a Timacuan tribe that lived between Cape Canaveral and the upper St. Johns River on the central east coast of Florida.

Taino—an Arawakan people that lived mostly in the Greater Antilles (Cuba, Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica), but also in the Western Lesser Antilles. They migrated up from Venezuela and gradually displaced the Ciboney an earlier migratory group from the same area. They, in turn, were displaced from the Southern Lesser Antilles by the Caribs, yet another group from the same place. They were very agricultural and traded extensively.

Takhtam—a Uto-Aztecan-speaking people (Serrano) living in the southwestern part of San Bernardino County, California.

Tamien—a Penutian-speaking people who belonged to subgroup called Costanoan and lived in modern Santa Clara County, California.

Tamoyo—a Tupian-speaking tribe that lived in the area around modern Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Like all Tupian tribes, they migrated from the interior displacing the original tribe, the Tapuya.

Tanish—a Caddoan tribe (Arikira) which at the time of the first book was divided into two groups along the mid Missouri River. One was near the White River in central South Dakota and the other was between the Niobrara and the Big Nemaha rivers in eastern Nebraska.

Tarama—Quechua name for a tribe living along the Montoro River south of Lake Junin in central Peru. At the time of the second book, they were subject to the Inka.

Tatars—a Tungus tribe that split off from the Mongols at the Onon River. They were heavily embroiled as mercenaries and ill-used the Mongols frequently. Once the latter got the upper hand under Chingis, the Tatars ceased to exist as a separate tribe. He killed all their men and incorporated the women and children into the Mongols.

Tatsanottine—an Athabaskan tribe (Yellowknives) that lived northeast of Great Slave Lake in Canada's Northwest Territories.

Taunika—a Muskhogean tribe (Tunica) that lived along the West Bank of the Mississippi River from the Red River to the Arkansas River and on the East Bank over to the Yazoo River.

Tekesta—a Timacua tribe that lived in the Miami area of southeastern Florida.

Tepaneca—an Oto-Manguetan-speaking people that lived on the western shore of Lake Texcoco. At the time of the first book, they were beginning to dominate the valley. Historically they conquered most of it before falling to the Triple Alliance that became the Aztecs. They were still under the Aztecs at contact.

Tepuztec—a people in the northern part the Mexican state of Guerrero between the Balsas River and the mountains to the south. Historically they were conquered by the Aztecs and remained under them at contact.

Texcalla—an Oto-Manguetan-speaking city state (Tlaxcalla) in the Puebla Valley that at the time of the first book was dominated by Huexotzinco. Historically, they came to dominate the Puebla Valley and remained independent of the Aztecs. At contact they first fought, then joined Cortez.

T'han-u-ge—a group of Pueblo tribes (Tano) that form their own language group with the Tewa, Jemez, Tigua, and Piro tribes (Tanoan). I place them on the upper Rio Grande around Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Thilanottine—an Athabaskan tribe (Chipewya) that lived in Northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan and Southeastern Northwest Territories of Canada.

Tiionen'iote'—an Iroquoian tribe (Oneida) that lived in the area south of Lake Oneida in Central New York. They were one of the Five Nations.

Timacua—a language family whose members lived in most of Florida. Some authorities refer to the Utina tribe as the Timacua proper while still using the name for all the Florida tribes. They were all agriculturally active, often planting two crops a year. The individual tribal names used in the book are at best suspect. There is very little reliable information on their language or what the various "city states" called themselves.

Tinneh—an Athabaskan family consisting of the Hares, Yellowknives, Beavers, Slaveys, Dogribs, and Chipewya tribes of Northwestern Canada.

Titskan Wa'titch—a difficult-to-classify group (Tonkawa) that forms its own language group (sometimes they are considered Macro-Algonquian). They occupied much of central Texas and lived a mean hunter-gatherer life.

Ti'wan—a group of Pueblo tribes (Tigua) of the Tanoan language group. I place them along the Upper Rio Grande from Taos to Socorro.

Tlalhuica—a Uto-Aztecan people that lived south of the Valley of Mexico, in the states of Morelos and Mexico. At contact they were under the Aztecs.

Tlapaneca—a Hokan people that lived in eastern Guerrero, western Oaxaca and southern Puebla in southern Mexico. At contact they were under control of the Aztecs.

Tocobaga—a Timacua tribe that lived along the Gulf Coast of Florida between Tampa Bay and the Withlacoochie River.

T'o-pa—a Turkic-speaking people from Mongolia that conquered part of North China forming the Northern Wei Dynasty (AD 386–534). They adopted Buddhism and became Sinicized and absorbed by the Sui Dynasty.

Totonaca—a Penutian-speaking people (Totonacs) that lived on Mexico's Gulf Coast between the Cazonas and Papaloapan rivers in the states of Vera Cruz and Puebla. At contact they were tributaries of the Aztecs. Cortez landed in their territory.

Tremembe—a tribe living on the northeastern Brazilian coast from the Tury River to the Baia de Marajo. Their language is unknown, but it was not Tupi-Guarani.

Tsalagi—the Muskogean (Creek) name for the Ani' Yun'-wiya (Cherokee).

Tsattine—an Athabaskan tribe (Beavers) found in northern and central Alberta, Canada. The Sarci were a splinter group in southern Alberta, north and east of the Siksika (Blackfoot).

Tsimshian—a Salishian tribe living along the lower Skeena River and the adjoining coastal area in western British Columbia, Canada.

Tsinuk—a Penutian people (Chinooks) that lived on the lower Columbia River along the Washington and Oregon border.

Tsoyaha—the name used in the book for the Yuchi, a difficult-to-classify tribe (usually considered Macro-Siouan) that I place in central Tennessee along and between the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers, a little west of where they were found at first contact.

Tungus—the Altaic-speaking people of eastern subarctic Siberia. The term is sometimes used for all the Altaic people living in bands in Siberia.

Tupinamba—a Tupi-Guarani-speaking tribe that lived along the coast of Brazil from the Amazon River to Sao Paulo with some interruptions from other tribes. They had migrated from the interior in waves displacing first the original inhabitants and then each other.

Twanhtwanh—an Algonquian tribe (Miami) that I place in the northwest quarter of Ohio at the time of the first book. This is east of their contact position.

Tya Nuu—a Mixe-Zoquean people (Mixtecs) that lived in the mountainous areas of Southern Puebla and Northern Oaxaca. They are an old civilization that may be the descendants of the builders of Teotihuacán. They began conquering the Zapotecan lands only to be attacked themselves by the Aztecs and largely absorbed except for the state of Teotitlan, which was considered an ally. That was the situation at contact.

Tzinama-a—a Yuman-speaking tribe (Mohave) living along both sides of the lower Colorado River between Needles and Black Canyon, on the border of Arizona and California.

Ukwunu—a Muskogean tribe (Oconee) that lived along the Oconee River in east central Georgia. They were probably related to the Hitchiti and followed them to become the Lower Creeks.

Urriparacushi—a Timacuan tribe that lived in Central Florida in the area between Winter Garden and the Withlacoochee River.

Ute—a Uto-Aztecan tribe that I place roaming the Great Basin including Southeast Oregon, Nevada, most of Utah, and part of Wyoming, Colorado, Arizona, and California. They were hunter-gatherers who eked out a precarious existence in a hostile environment. At contact they had split into the Paiutes and Utes and shared much of their area with the Shoshone.

Utina—a Timacuan tribe that lived in north central Florida between the St. Johns and upper Santa Fe rivers.

Wacata—a Timacuan tribe that lived along the southeast coast of Florida in the Fort Pierce area.

Wahili—a Muskogean people (Guale) whose remnants probably became part of the Lower Creeks. They lived at the mouth of the Altamaha River in Georgia.

Wako—14th and 15th century Japanese pirates that plundered merchant shipping in the East China Sea, Yellow Sea, and Sea of Japan. They would also attack port cities and sack them. The disorganized Japanese authorities winked at their privations, while the Chinese and Koreans struggled to suppress them with varying success. Once trade became important enough to the Japanese, they were stopped.

Wampo—Quechua name for the tribe (Huambo) that lived south of the Wanka-pampa in northern Peru. It is uncertain if this is the name of the tribe since the word means “boat.” The Inka province was also called Cutervos, which might be the actual name of the tribe or perhaps there were two tribes in the province. In the book I call the people in this area Wampo.

Wanka—Quechua name for the tribe (Huanca) that lived between the cities of Huancayo and Jauja in southern Peru. The name means “field guardian.” At the time of the second book they were already subject to the Inka.

Wanka-pampa—Quechua name for the tribe (Huncapampa) occupying the area around the modern city of Huancabamba in northern Peru. It is not known what they called themselves. The name means “valley of the field guardian.”

Wappinger—an Algonquian-speaking tribe related to the Mahicans and the Delaware and living in southeastern New York (around Poughkeepsie) and western Connecticut. In historic times they formed a confederacy with related tribes from the east bank of the Hudson River (from Poughkeepsie to Manhattan) to the Connecticut River.

Waylya—Quechua name for a tribe (Huayla) that lived along the Huaylas River in west central Peru. The name means “meadow.”

Wazhazhe—a Siouan people that eventually became the Dhegiba Sioux (Ponca, Omaha, Osage, Kansa, and Quapaw). In the books they are found still united in the middle Ohio Valley from the Wabash to a little beyond Cincinnati. The traditions of these tribes put them in this general area at the time of the books.

Welel—a Hokan-speaking tribe (Esselen) living in the rough coastal country south of Monterrey Bay, California.

Wendat—an Iroquois tribe (Huron) living along the St. Lawrence River from Lake Erie to Montreal.

Xa’ida—a Skittagetan-speaking tribe (possibly Athabaskan) (Haida) living on the Queen Charlotte Islands off the coast of British Columbia.

Yamana—a tribe (also called Yahgan) living on the islands along the southern coast of Tierra del Fuego (southernmost Chile). Their language is an isolate. It appears they may have either displaced or replaced the Alacaluf in their territory.

Yamasi—a Muskogean tribe (Yamasee) living along Coastal Georgia at the time of the book. Historically they disappeared into the Seminoles after much warfare.

Yanktonai—a Siouan tribe (Yankton), a division of the Lakota. In the book the term is used for the Assiniboin that are thought to have broken off from the Yankton and moved to southeastern Manitoba, where they emulated the Cree.

Yatasi—Caddoan tribe found in northwest Arkansas, southwest Missouri, and eastern Oklahoma at the time of the book.

Ychma—a tribe living along the lower and middle portions of the Rimac and Lurin Valleys in southwestern Peru around and south of Lima.

Yenresh—an Iroquois tribe (Erie) whom I place in a thin band along the southern shore of Lake Erie from the middle of Ohio to the New York border. This is a little west of their contact location.

Yokut—a Penutian-speaking people living all along the San Joachin Valley of Southern California.

Yope—a people that lived along the Papagallo River and its tributaries in Southern Guerrero, Mexico and spoke a difficult language to classify. At contact they were still independent, although almost surrounded by the Aztecs.

Yuit—the name the Inuit (Eskimos) of Siberia call themselves.

Yukaghur—a Paleo-Asiatic people that lived in the area north of the Sea of Okhost. They were generally absorbed by the Evens, a Tungus people that moved into their area from the west.

Yupigyt—the name the Chuckchi called the Eskimos.

Yustaga—a Timacua tribe living between the Aucilla and the Suwannee rivers on the Gulf Coast of Florida.

Zhou—a Chinese-speaking northwestern Chinese tribe and dynasty (Chou) that overthrew the Shang Dynasty in 1122 BC and greatly expanded their territory over all of North China and even into the Yangtze River Valley in the south. Around 500 BC their authority began to wane and it was finally overthrown by another northwestern state, the Qin.

Appendix 4

Geographical Names

It was only logical that the Mongols would not name geographical features the same as generations of European explorers. Like the latter some of their names would reflect their ancestral homeland and heroes. Also like the latter some of the names would be those used by the local inhabitants, or the name of a nearby tribe or village. Where possible, the local names were used. Below are the names used in the book coupled with the names found on modern maps.

Absaroke River—Yellowstone River, NW Wyoming to NW North Dakota.

Ahatam River—Gila River, SW New Mexico to SW Arizona.

Aiti—Hispaniola Island, West Indies (Haiti & Dominican Republic).

Albamyale River—Tallapoosa and Alabama rivers, EC to SW Alabama.

Alnanbai River—Kennebec River, WC to SE Maine.

Alsi River—Alsea River, W Oregon.

Amgun River—Amgun River, SE Siberia.

Amona Island—Mona Island, between Puerto Rico and Hispaniola.

Anahuac—“the One World” the Nahuatl term for the Valley of Mexico.

Andahuayla—also called Chanca, Inka province west of Cuzco in SC Peru.

Andahuaylas—capital of Andahuayla province. It is still so named and is in SC Peru.

Angara—Inka province south of Wanka on lower Montero River in SC Peru.

Apurimac River—major river in C Peru.

Aralbalikh—port near site of Port au Prince, Haiti.

Ashiwi River—Salt River, SC Arizona.

Atacames—principle city of the tribe now called Esmeraldas just east of the town of Esmeraldas in NW Ecuador.

Bayern—the German word for Bavaria a state in S Germany.

Bear River—James River, E North Dakota to E South Dakota.

Beaver River—Silver Creek, W Montana.

Bio Bio River—large river in C Chile.

Bira River—Bira River, SE Siberia.

Boriquen—Puerto Rico, West Indies.

Black Hill River—Cheyenne River, W South Dakota.

Bright Burning River—Blackfoot River, W Montana.

Caiyukla River—Siuslaw River, W Oregon.

Capawake—Wampanoag name for Martha's Vineyard, SE Massachusetts.

Cara—Trinidad, West Indies. The name means "Land of Hummingbirds."

Cathay—Medieval European name for China.

Cautin River—river in S. Chile, flows into the Imperial River.

Cayambe—town NE of Quito, Ecuador. It was the principle town of the Cara tribe.

Champa—ancient kingdom in southern Viet Nam.

Chan Chan—capital of the Chimu Empire, near Trujillo, NW Peru.

Chesapeak—Great Bay Tribe (Powhatan) town in south Norfolk, Virginia.

Chicama River—NW Peru.

Chingis River—Delaware River, E Pennsylvania.

Choapa River—C Chile.

Chosin—name of Korea under the Yi Dynasty (1392-1910).

Chot—(or Chotuna) Chimu city near modern Chiclayo, NW Peru.

Chuncumayo—Almodena River—larger river south of Inka Cuzco into which the Huatanay and Tullumayo rivers flow. It is a tributary of the Urubamba River.

Churning White Water River—Clearwater River, N Idaho.

Cincay Qoca—Inka province just south of Huanuco around Lake Junin in C Peru.

Cincay Qoca Lake—Lake Junin in C Peru. The name means "Lynx Lake."

Cipango—Medieval European name for Japan.

Coal River—Powder River, NE Wyoming to SE Montana.

Coaxomulco—Coajomulco—town on road from Mexico City to Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Column Tower River—Belle Fourche River, NE Wyoming.

Concon River—Aconcagua River, C. Chile.

Coosa River—Coosa River, NW Georgia to C Alabama.

Cozumel—large island off the NE coast of the Yucatan Peninsula in SE Mexico.

Cuauhnahuac—Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico.

Cuautla—town about 25 miles ESE of Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Cuba—Cuba, West Indies.

Cusabo River—Chattooga, Tugaloo and Savannah rivers, Georgia—So. Carolina Border.

Cuttatawomen River—Rappahannock River, N Virginia.

Cuzco—the Inka capital, still so named in S Peru.

Daagelman River—Rogue River, SW Oregon.

Dark Boiling Creek—Donaker Creek, W Montana.

Deep Cut River—Hay River, NW Alberta, Canada.

Dehcho River—Mackenzie River, W Northwest Territories, Canada.

Donostia—Basque name for San Sebastian in NC Spain.

Dsidsila'letc—Salst (Duwamish-Salishian) village on site of modern Seattle, WA.

Duwamish River—flows through Seattle, WA.

Dzilam—Dzilam Gonzalez—small town near NC coast of the Yucatan Peninsula in SE Mexico.

East Chesapeak River—East Branch Elizabeth River, SE Virginia.

East Tsoyaha River—Cumberland River, SE Kentucky, N Tennessee to NW Kentucky.

East Union River—Black Warrior River, W. Alabama.

Estatoe—Ani' Yun'-wiya (Cherokee) town below junction of Chattooga and Tallulah rivers in NW South Carolina.

Etiwaw River—Wando River, SE South Carolina.

Etnemitane River—Umpqua River, SW Oregon.

Feather River—Rosebud Creek, S Montana.

Fujian Province—province in SE China across the Taiwan Strait from Taiwan.

Fuzhou—port near Charleston, South Carolina.

Gaztela—Basque name for the province of Castile, C Spain.

Georgbalikh—port on site of Lima, Peru.

Gichigami Lake—Lake Superior.

Gipuzkoa—Basque name for the province of Guipuzcoa, NC Spain.

Great Bay—Chesapeake Bay, Virginia and Maryland.

Great Falls River—Sun River, W Montana.

Great Open Place Among the Mountains River—Big Hole R., W Mont.

Great Sea—the Asiatic term for the Pacific Ocean.

Great Sound—Currituck, Albemarle, and Pamlico Sounds, North Carolina.

Guanahani—Lucayo name for “San Salvador” Columbus' first landfall.

Guaura River—Huaura River, WC Peru.

Haton Xauxa—capital of the Inka province of Wanka, modern Jauja in SC Peru.

Hehlashishe River—Wabash River, W Indiana.

Henribalikh—port on site of Valparaiso, Chile.

Hewaktokto River—Little Missouri River, SW North Dakota.

Higuey—province in SE Aiti (SE Dominican Republic).

Hokomawanank River—Roanoke River, S Virginia to NE North Carolina.

Hopitu River—Colorado River, Colorado to Baja California, Mexico.

Hormuz—Arab city on the north shore of the Strait of Hormuz SW Iran.

Horn River—Tongue River, NC Wyoming to SE Montana.

Huanuco—northernmost Inka province at the time of the second book, 1460. It was centered around the city of the same name in C Peru.

Huatanay—western of two rivers that framed Inka Cuzco.

Huasteca River—Tamesi River, Tamaulipas, Mexico.

Huaxtepec—(Oaxtepec) town 21 miles E of Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Huaylas River—the Santa River in WC Peru.

Huichahue River—S Chile, flows into the Tolten River.

Ignacebalikh—port on site of Puerto Montt, S. Chile.

Imaklik—Big Diomedes Island, Bering Strait.

Inaklik—Little Diomedes Island, Bering Strait.

Inuit Bay—Hudson Bay, NC Canada.

Inuna-ina River—Assiniboine River, S Manitoba, Canada.

Ipai Bay—San Diego Bay, SW California.

Isadowa River—Canadian River, NE New Mexico, NW Texas to C Oklahoma

Ishak River—Sabine River, NE Texas to SW Louisiana.

Itsati—a Cherokee town (Echota) located on the south side of the Little Tennessee River below Citico Creek in Tennessee (Monroe Co.). Several other Cherokee towns shared the name but this one was the first and most important in the time frame of the books.

Itsati River—Little Tennessee River, SW North Carolina to E Tennessee.

Kaachxana-aakw—Tlingit village—modern Wrangel, AK.

Kadohadacho River—Arkansas River, SE Colorado to SE Arkansas.

Kaidubalikh—port on site of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Kalinta River—Salinas River, WC California.

Kalinta-ruk—village near mouth of the Salinas River, WC California.

Karakorum—the old Mongol capitol, in NC Mongolia.

Karamuren River—the Mongol name for the Amur River, SE Siberia.

Karamuren River – the Rio Negro in central Argentina.

Kasihta River—Chattahoochee and Apalachicola rivers, W Georgia to NW Florida.

Kayung—Haida village on Graham Island, BC, Canada.

Kensistenoug River—Sheyenne River, E North Dakota.

Keowee—Ani' Yun'-wiya (Cherokee) town near Port George, South Carolina.

Keowee River—Keowee and Seneca rivers, NW South Carolina.

Keres River—San Jose River, WC New Mexico.

Khanate River—Athabasca River, WC to NE Alberta, Canada.

Khanbalikh—the Mongol name for Tatu (later Beijing), the Yuan Dynasty Capital of China. In the books it is also the name of the capital of the Khakhanate of the Blue Sky, in the area of Sioux City, Iowa.

Khartsgaibalikh—(Hawk City)—town that evolved from the old Hawk Ordu, near Riverdale, ND.

Khereekhot—(Mongol for Crow Town) Baie St. Paul, Quebec, Canada.

Khilbalikh—(Mongol for Boundary City) settlement on site of modern Brownsville, TX.

Khon Khereeбалikh—(Mongol for Raven City) port on site of San Francisco, California.

Kimooenim River—Snake River, NW Wyoming to SE Washington.

Kitikitish River—Neosho River, E Kansas to NE Oklahoma.

Kituhwa—the principal city of the Cherokee. It was on the Tuckasegee River near Bryson City, North Carolina. Although the individual Cherokee towns were independent, this one held a sort of primacy of dignity if not authority. It was held to be their first town in the area after they migrated from the north.

Kitwilksheba—Tsimshian village at mouth of Skeena River in WC BC, Canada.

Koryo—old name for Korea.

Koryo River—Sutton Creek, W Oregon.

Kubilai River—Susquehanna River, C Pennsylvania.

Kujujuk—port near Houston, Texas.

Kuli—now Calicut, a Medieval kingdom on the SW coast of India.

Kuriltai Balikh—(Kuriltai City)—village that was founded on the site of the proclamation of the Khanate of the Blue Sky about 9 miles NNW of Blue Ridge, AB, Canada.

Kusa River—Coos River, SW Oregon.

Kutchа River—Porcupine River, NE Alaska, N Yukon Territory, Canada.

Kwakwakas—Kwakiutl village on west coast of Guilford Island, SW BC, Canada.

Kwesh River—Brazos River, C Texas.

Kytmin—Inuit name for a mountain on Cape Dezneva, NE Siberia.

Laha River—Laja River, C Chile. It flows into the Bio Bio.

Lambayeque River—the Chancay River, NW Peru.

Lanka—Sinhalese name for Ceylon, modern Sri Lanka.

Lapurdi—Basque name for province of Labourd, SW France.

Leni Lenape River—Hudson River, E New York.

Liamuiga—St. Kitts, West Indies. The name means “The Fertile Island.”

Liao River—Liao River, S Manchuria.

Limari River—N Chile.

Little Sungari River—Milk River, NE Montana.

Lollehue River—S Chile.

Longjiang—port and shipbuilding center in north Norfolk, Virginia.

Madinina—Martinique, West Indies. The name means “Island of Flowers.”

Mahican River—Mohawk River, C New York.

Malacca—Medieval kingdom on site of modern Melaka, Malaysia.

Malindi—Medieval kingdom on site of modern Malindi, Kenya.

Manta—principle town of the tribe called Manta on NW coast of Ecuador.

Maricao River—W Puerto Rico.

Mataquito River—C Chile.

Mathilde Lake—Sutton Lake, W. Oregon.

Maule River—C Chile.

Maullin River—S Chile.

Merkit River—Madison River, W Montana.

Mexcala River—Balsas River, Southern Mexico.

Michigamaw Lake—Lake Michigan.

Mingue Lake—Lake Ontario.

Missi Sipi River—Mississippi River, NC Minnesota to SE Louisiana.

Mixquic—town 7 miles SW of Chalco now on the SE edge of Mexico City, Mexico.

Moche River—NW Peru.

Mongol River—Missouri River, SW Montana to EC Missouri.

Montauk Island—Long Island, New York.

Murenbalikh—“Cahokia” near East St. Louis, Illinois.

Nanih Waiya—sacred place of the Choctaw, now a historical site in EC Mississippi.

Naishandina River—Bighorn River, N Wyoming to S Montana.

Nanjing—port and shipbuilding city near Everet, Washington.

Nansamund River—Nansemund River, SE Virginia.

Naparoo—Basque name for the province of Navarre, NC Spain.

Nashanekammuck—small Wampanoag village on Capawake (Martha’s Vineyard), in SW part of island.

Nauset Peninsula—Cape Cod, E Massachusetts.

Nikwasi—Cherokee town on site of Franklin, North Carolina.

Nimipu River—Salmon River, N Idaho.

Nitsiza River—Liard River, SW Northwest Territories, Canada.

Nomo River—Boise River, C Idaho.

North Aniyunwiya River—Shenandoah River, WC Virginia to NE West Virginia.

North Branch River—Henry’s Fork, S Idaho.

North Chahicks River—North Platte River, SW Wyoming to E Nebraska.

North Chesapeak River—Lafayette River, SE Virginia.

North Dzitsiista River—Red River, W Minnesota to S Manitoba, Canada.

North Numakiki River—Knife River, C North Dakota.

Ocheti Lake—Mille Lacs, E Minnesota.

Onawmanient River—Chickahominy River, C Virginia.

Onon River—NE Mongolia to SE Siberia.

Ottawa Lake—Lake Huron.

Otumba—town 8 miles east of Teotihuacán, Mexico.

Owl River—Republican and Kansas rivers—E Colorado, S Nebraska to NC Kansas.

Pachachaca River—a tributary of the Apurimac River in SC Peru. It formed the eastern border of Inka Andahualya Province.

Pah-Chu-Laka Falls—Shoshone Falls, SC Idaho.

Palta River—the Huancapampa River between the Chotano River and the Maranon rivers in NC Peru.

Pacatnamu—Chimu city near mouth of the Jepetepec River, modern Pascamayo, NW Peru.

Pachacoto River—small river emptying into the upper reaches of the Santa River in WC Peru.

Pansfalaya River—Pearl River, CS Mississippi.

Panuco River—Panuco River, San Luis Potosi to Vera Cruz, Mexico.

Paula River—Judith River, C Montana.

Paulpa—Digueno village on site of San Diego, California.

Peaku River—Pecos River, E New Mexico to W Texas.

Pensacola River—Conecuh and Escambia rivers, S Alabama to NW Florida.

Pioje River—Napo River, NC Ecuador to NE Peru.

Pissasec River—South Anna—Pamunkey River, C Virginia.

Plains Oxen River—Elkhorn River, NC to E Nebraska.

Posol-mi—village at south end of San Francisco Bay, WC California.

Potomac River—Potomac River, N Virginia.

Powhatan River—James River, S Virginia.

Pyeyek—Inuit name for Cape Prince of Wales, W Alaska.

Red River—Red River, N Texas to E Louisiana.

Ruin River—San Juan River, WC New Mexico to EC Arizona.

Sabino—Abnaki village on west bank of the Kennebec River near its mouth. Home village of Aspenquid, brother-in-law of Karl (the Crow) in Book 2.

Saint Jean de Luz—coastal town in SW France.

Salmon Sound—(Tsagaalz in Mongol)—Puget Sound, NW Washington.

Salst River—Flathead, Clark Fork, Pend Oreille and Columbia rivers, W Montana to W Oregon & Washington.

Salt River—Saline River, S Arkansas.

Saturiwa River—St. Johns River, NE Florida.

Seagull Lake—Mercer Lake, W Oregon.

Secotan River—Pamlico River, E North Carolina.

Seet Kah—Tlingit settlement at modern Petersburg, AK.

Setacoo—Cherokee town near Decatur, Tennessee.

Sewee River—Santee River, Congaree—Santee River, C South Carolina.

Sharbalikh—(Ox City)—town that evolved from the old Plains Oxen (Bison) Ordu, near Culbertson MT.

Sharitarish River—Smoky Hill River, W to C Kansas.

Sharp Bitterroot River—Bitterroot River, W Montana.

Shining River—South Fork and Sun rivers, W Montana.

Siksika River—South Saskatchewan River, S Alberta to C Saskatchewan, Canada.

Sitka—Tlingit village on Baranoff Island, SE AK.

Small River—St. Regis River, W Montana.

South Aniyunwiya River—Hiawasse River, N Georgia to SE Tennessee.

South Chahicks River—South Platte River, SW Wyoming to E Nebraska.

South Chesapeak River—South Branch Elizabeth River, SE Virginia.

South Dzitsiista River—Minnesota River, SW Minnesota.

South Fork River—Clark Fork to Flathead River, W Montana.

South Numakiki River—Cheyenne River, W South Dakota.

South Salst River—Coeur d'Alene—Spokane rivers, N Idaho, E Washington.

Sparkling Cold Seeking River—South Fork, Flathead River, NW Montana.

Stampede River—Muddy Creek, SC Nebraska.

Stikine River—(Great River in Tlingit) from NW BC, Canada to SE AK.

Stono River—Cooper River, E South Carolina.

Sungari River—Sungari River NC Manchuria.

Tacatacuru Island—Cumberland Island, SE Georgia.

Tamalameque—capital of Khanate of the Clouds, between modern towns of Mata de Cana and Regidor on east bank of the Magdalena River in NC Colombia.

Tamoan Chan—Southern Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico.

Tatar River—Gallatin River, W Montana.

Tauxenent River—Bull Run Creek—Occoquan River, N Virginia.

Tegulunbalikh—port on site of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Tenayuca—town at the end of causeway leading NW from Tlatelolco. It is now part of Mexico City, Mexico.

Tenochtitlan—the southern of two island cities in the WC part of Lake Texcoco, settled by the Mexica, leading tribe of what became the Aztecs. It is now part of the center of Mexico City, Mexico.

Teotihuacán—ruins of a large ancient city about 32 miles NE of Tenochtitlan, with well-preserved pyramids and other structures. The name means “City of the Gods” and the site was revered in precontact Mexico.

Tepeapulco—town 26 miles ENE of the site of Teotihuacán, NE of Mexico City, Mexico.

Tepexpan—town 24 miles NW of Tenochtitlan (center of Mexico City, Mexico). It was near the NW shore of Lake Texcoco.

Tepeyac—town on mainland connected to Tlatelolco by a causeway leading NE of the city. Now it is part of Mexico City.

Tepozteco—mountain just north of Tepoztlan, Mexico.

Tepoztlan—town NE of Cuernavaca, Mexico. It is the legendary birthplace of Quetzalcoatl.

Tezontepec—Villa Tezontepec, a town about 50 miles NE of Tenochtitlan (center of Mexico City, Mexico).

Thanuge River—Rio Grande NC New Mexico to SE Texas.

Theodorbalikh—port on site of Talcahuano (near Concepcion), Chile.

Titskan River—Atascosa River, S Texas.

Tlacotenco—town about 25 miles SSE of Tenochtitlan (center of Mexico City, Mexico) just north of the Tlaloc Volcano and just west of its extensive lava beds. It is now part of Mexico City.

Tlahuac—town on southern shore of the peninsula jutting into Lake Texcoco from the east. It is now part of Mexico City.

Tlatelolco—northern of two island cities in the WC part of Lake Texcoco, settled by the Mexica, leading tribe of what become the Aztecs. It is now part of the center of Mexico City, Mexico.

Tlayacapan—town about 20 miles ENE of Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Tolcayuca—town about 50 miles NNE of Tenochtitlan (center of Mexico City, Mexico).

Tolten River—S Chile.

Tonggye—town on western side of Mobile Bay, south of Mobile, Alabama. It was named for a province on the NE coast of Korea from which most of the Korean immigrants in the books came.

Tonggye Bay—Mobile Bay, SW Alabama.

Tsimshian River—Skeena River WC BC, Canada.

Tugaloo—Cherokee town now under Lake Hartwell in NE Georgia.

Tullumayo—Rodadero River—eastern of two rivers that framed Inka Cuzco.

Tulancingo—town about 70 miles NE of Tenochtitlan (center of Mexico City, Mexico).

Tultepec—town 15 miles north of Tenochtitlan (center of Mexico City), Mexico. It is now part of Mexico City.

Tulyehualco—town on southern shore of Lake Texcoco at the southern terminus of the causeway to Iztapalapa.

Tunessee—Cherokee town north of the junction of the Tennessee and Little Tennessee rivers.

Tungus River—Marias River NC Montana.

Tutalosi—Kofitachiki town near Augusta, Georgia.

Tuxla—Putun Maya settlement at site of Santa Marta, Colombia.

Twanh Lake—Lake Erie.

Ukwunu River—Oconee River, C Georgia.

Uluumil Kutz—Northern Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico.

Union River—Tombigbee River, W Alabama.

Urubamba River—a major river in C Peru.

Ussuri River—Ussuri River, SE Siberia.

Vilcas—Inka province SE of Angara around modern city of Ayacucho in SC Peru.

Viru River—WC Peru.

Wahili River—Altamaha River, E Georgia.

Wampo River—Chotano River in NC Peru.

Wan~ka-pampa River—Huancabamba River, NC Peru.

Warao River—Orinoco River, S to NE Venezuela.

Wazhazhe River—Ohio River, SW Pennsylvania to S Illinois to W Kentucky.

Wendat River—St. Lawrence River, E Ontario & Quebec, Canada.

West Tsoyaha River—Tennessee River, NE Tennessee to W Kentucky.

White Mountaintop River—North Fork, Salmon River, C Idaho.

Winnipeg Lake—Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Winyaw River—Yadkin and Pee Dee rivers, NC North Carolina to NE South Carolina.

Wooded Lake—Lake of the Woods, Minnesota, Ontario and Manitoba.

Xaymaca—Jamaica, West Indies.

Xequetepeque River—Jequetepec River, NW Peru.

Yagueca—town and province in W Boriquen (Puerto Rico).

Yaguez River—W Puerto Rico.

Yangzi—port on site of Boston, Massachusetts.

Yauhtepec—town about 15 miles ESE of Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Yecapixtla—town about 17 miles E of Yauhtepec, Mexico.

Yukanah River—Yukon River, Central Alaska, Yukon Territory, Canada.

Yumabalikh—port on site of Baranquilla, Colombia.

Yuma River—Magdalena River, SW to NW Colombia.

Zheng He—port at site of S Manhattan Island, (New York City) New York.