

EYE OF THE CHINOOK

SERIALIZED

A NOVEL

By Homer Kizer

Chapter Eight

The dull gray sky above the gray water of Cook Inlet, visible in the open leads of the broken floe of gray ice, darkens more as the sun weakly sets behind the gray mountains across the Inlet. The floe lifts, then settles down heavily as the retreating tide pulls great cakes of dirty ice apart. The floe groans as the cakes of ice grate against each other as the city of Anchorage stands silently by.

Visiting Earthquake Park just to be doing something, Dr. Hans Grewe stands on the fault line at the base of the sheer where, since the quake on Good Friday 1964, the clay of the Inlet has already formed round pebbles. As an educated man, he seeks understanding. Of nature. The human mind. Individual men. There is much he doesn't know about the mind and about humanity, and he feels certain Jones will help him understand how the mind communicates with itself. He knows the root languages from which all spoken words are derived, and he wonders how close those languages are to how the brain communicates with itself. If he is able to demonstrate that Jones' mind was speaking in its own language while Jones was delirious and that Jones' mind was not translating its language into a known spoken language, he might begin to unravel the common vocabulary of all human minds: the brain's language is a pure language. If he can verbalize and transcribe that language, well, his place in history will be secure. Thus, he has asked the Tacoma U. for mid-term sabbatical leave, an unusual request but no more unusual than this case.

He awaits the departure of A.A.I.'s next commuter flight to Kenai—until Zoe Gunnarson called, he had no idea who might have taken Jones or where Jones had been taken. He had vainly spent most of the afternoon trying to persuade police officials to investigate Jones' disappearance. The FBI had been rude. The Alaska State Troopers said something to the effect that this wasn't their problem. And Anchorage officers had been polite, but very non-committal. So he was preparing to return to Seattle when Zoe called. Now, he has questions.

There is plenty of evidence for him to conclude that Jones had been abducted, but police officialdom has been treating the case as if Jones doesn't exist. Who, he wonders, has the kind of power necessary to erase everyone's memory of a person. He knows who. What he doesn't know is why.

The flight borders on being unbelievable: the copilot ties the rear door of the Twin Otter shut with a length of yellow poly line doubled around the back of the nearest seat's headrest. He tries not to look at the rope or to focus on the flying service's maintenance procedures as the dull red Otter taxis into the busy traffic pattern, then launches upward as a puddle duck does immediately after a Air China 747 rumbles past, its turbulence shaking the Otter as its river namesake might shake itself dry.

He keeps looking straight ahead as the copilot, in a voice loud enough to be heard over the engine drone, tells them that they will be landing at Kenai in twenty minutes. Each of those minutes seems long as he worries about what would happen if the rope breaks or

comes untied. The cabin isn't pressurized. Still, because of their speed a difference of air pressure within and without the cabin would cause outward suction. And he keeps his seatbelt buckled until after they land and roll to a stop in front of Kenai's terminal.

No one awaits him.

He didn't really expect Zoe to be here. All she said was that she'd contact him on the Peninsula, that she had reserved him a room at the Sheffield House—

The building creaks and a vacuum cleaner whines as a maid working late pulls tracked-in mud off the dark carpet of the second-story corridor. Through his room's only window, he watches the dark sky lighten when the moon rises over the ice fields. He's hungry. There's a restaurant downstairs. Now that he has his room, he might as well get something to eat. He has no idea of how long he will be here before Zoe contacts him.

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