

# EYE OF THE CHINOOK

SERIALIZED

A NOVEL

By Homer Kizer

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## Chapter Nineteen

Wind blows tiny ice crystals through the sprung coils of jagged wire as tiny Arctic foxes scamper between the sinister loops like voles in hollow cottonwoods. Where the afternoon sun warmed the mostly bare ground, wind-dried mud sits atop frost, becomes dust and mingles with the ice crystals as the wind moans and wire coils groan and the sun sets so far to the west that it doesn't witness the sin done by men to men.

One helicopter after another lands within the compound, each delivering two or three manacled prisoners. Then, as if ashamed of what they have done, the stinging machines lift off, leaving guards and confusion flirting with the wind that ripples the untracked wilderness stretching as far south as can be seen.

Prisoners are made to sit on muddy frost— they are kept seated on the cold ground by truncheon-wielding guards until they can be brought into the hospital shack where Phil Sharpe lies on a bunk, the bullet tracks through his chest hot and already inflamed.

In the drafty shack, prisoners are stripped, examined, and given a pair of insulated coveralls and a mummy bag. Nothing else. And each prisoner is told that, possibly, boots will be issued in the morning. Escape is strongly discouraged. A cabin is assigned. Then instructions for where to go for chow are given, and each prisoner is lead barefoot into the cold twilight.

The hospital corpsman remains standing, framed in the dispensary's doorway, after the last prisoner is processed. He shakes his head in apparent disbelief.

Phil hollers, "Shut that fuckin' door." Wind chills all of him except the wound tracks, bored trails through him. The entrance holes begin on the upper inside of his liver and go to one perforation a little above his heart. He appears to have been stitched to his bunk.

Stepping to the side of the doorway, the corpsman says, "Should be one more chopper tonight," as he studies the southern horizon. "Yeah, it's on its way in." And he slips his arms in his parka as he steps outside.

Phil hears the helicopter land, then take off. And the shack's door is pushed open by the corpsman, his back to the door, a hand on each side of a litter. A guard has the other end of the litter, on which lies an older man, white beard, white hair, his arms and chest shriveled like dried fish.

"Easy there, Moses. Don't make this tougher than it has to be." The corpsman sets his end of the litter on the examination table, then helps the old man slide off the litter and onto the paper cover. "You aren't hurt as bad as Phil, there, is." The corpsman nods towards Phil.

Old Moses has been shot through his left clavicle. And as his blood soaked shirt is cut from around him, he says, "By damn, at least I got one of you fuckin' bastards."

When the corpsman isn't looking, the guard twists Moses' shoulder until all color drains from his face. But the old man doesn't cry out.

The corpsman turns in time to see what is happening: "You do that again, and you'll be a number not a name in here. Now, get out. There was no call for that."

Phil notices that the old man's muscles are like hard little nuts beneath surprisingly youthful skin.

"You know, Moses. Your life isn't gonna be worth much while you're in here."

"It ain't worth much out there, the way you're lockin' a man outta his own fuckin' country."

Finding something, the corpsman suddenly stops his examination, and leaves the dispensary.

Once the corpsman leaves, Phil asks the old man, "What's goin on? Do you have any idea?"

"The King needs to build more pyramids, and we're in the fuckin' way. Seems we're the landowners where his stone quarries are located. You, me, who all else is here."

That doesn't make sense: "You're daffy—"

"Not me, Son. We're poachin' on the King's land, and right now, the King's angry. Revolution is His Majesty's business, and His Majesty's suppose to spread it to others, not have it done to him." Moses' voice grows so faint that Phil barely hears what he says after *revolution*.

The corpsman returns with a civilian: "This man hasn't received the treatment a mechanic would give a dog hit by a car. There's no excuse for this." He shows the fellow wearing a tweed jacket and dark trousers Moses' wounds.

"What do you want me to do? I see the problem, but everyone in here is *persona non grata*. If we can extend them humane treatment, we will. But we have to work with what we receive."

"Don't expect Moses to leave here."

"No one in here will ever leave. That's why this camp... if anyone gets out, it's all over for us." The tweed man again looks at Moses' shoulder, then slowly shakes his head. "Once we get dissidents already buried in the prison system transported up here, we'll have frozen political unrest in the country." Then taking a third look at the wound, he says, "Do what you can. Use staff as part of your blood bank... how much blood will he need?"

"Probably four units, two units right now. Even drawing from guards, there's not that much AB positive or negative available on-site, might not even be that much A negative."

"I'll have a couple of units brought in, and I'll speak to the Marshals about taking a corpsman with them on their Gravel Creek raid tomorrow." Once again the tweed man inspects Moses' wound. "I don't know why we have to use high-shock ammo. All these damn Frostfaeries have are hunting rifles, and they are reluctant to use them. If we keep this up, they'll start shooting first and that's what we don't want... is there anything more you can do for this man?"

"I can keep him comfortable."

"See that you do. Meanwhile, how's this other fellow?" The tweed man looks at Phil.

"Worried about his son. We left him. Seven years old, or eight, something like that. Left the kid without even a place to get in out of the weather. So how do you think he is?... If he could, he'd kill every damn one of us."

"Then don't give him the chance."

"I don't intend to."

The tweed man approaches Phil and says, "When a machine becomes available, I'll send it to look for your son if you give me your word that I won't have problems with you."

"My mother was half Lakota. Her grandmother was with Red Cloud. You really think I'd believe one fuckin' word fallin' from your face."

"Think about your son—"

"I am. Believe me, I am."

"Well, I'll send a machine when I can." Then returning his attention to Moses and the corpsman, he adds, "We'll have one more flight in before daylight. A woman from Washington, one of the President's advisors turned traitor. She will need to be maintained in the sedated state in which she

arrives. Under no circumstances are you to dialogue with her. She is extremely dangerous, very persuasive, very bright, a genuine troublemaker."

"Will her chart be with her?"

"No. As far as I have been told, we're not even to know we have her so no paperwork. She, well, she is a special case." Then the tweed man tells Moses, "I'm truly sorry you resisted arrest. But hang on. We'll get you the blood you need."

For more than an hour after the tweed man leaves, the corpsman works on Moses' shoulder. The old man's blood as been so thinned with saline solution that he's become breath and salted meat; yet he clings to life as an abalone to a rock.

Phil watches the back of the corpsman. His chance will come. Maybe not tonight. He hasn't the strength, but tomorrow, or the day after, he will escape. *Revenge is mine, says the Lord. Well, that's fine, but there's gonna have to be some sharing 'cause I intend to take some.*

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