

EYE OF THE CHINOOK

SERIALIZED

A NOVEL

(c) Homer Kizer

Chapter Twenty Eight

Draped white canvas covers most of the Nodwell, and has for a day, causing the vehicle to appear as part of the landscape, melting despite wind driving new snow horizontally across the valley. The storm on its way in will, tonight, drop temperatures and drive snow level the length of the valley. But for now, Lars and Les, bundled in parkas and bunny boots, hammer away around the blossom, their hand drills boring into the stone, forming holes where small charges will separate ore from the rocky float that had once been magma drawn up from the foundations of the deep.

Drifts build, then blow away as the ground seems to crawl as if alive. The holes already drilled fill with flour snow. The wind packs the holes full, then passes on, intent upon erasing all sign of human life from this valley and every other one north of the Yukon. It pushes cold through woven cotton and wool, and deep into fur and down. It hardens engine oil, and makes steel brittle, and tips over tied-down planes. It howls and moans and roars and whistles and rips the rings of their hammer blows from the mushroomed shanks of the hand drills, leaving them to feel their strikes but to hear nothing. It grabs those rings, winnows them, then scatters them across the valley as if broadcasting seed for another revolution, one of elemental force, the whiteness of tomorrow's world.

The wind keeps pushing, keeps coming, keeps going, as if it were without end, as if it always has been, as if it had been waiting to be loosed by the hammering. It rages, and little eddies form behind their hammers, behind them, the Nodwell; eddies that bury their feet, their knees; eddies that pack snow between tracks and boogies, around their two cases of powder, over boulders larger than Forest Service cabins; eddies of granulated snow, unstable as quicksand.

Les feels each hammer blow inside his head. The vibrations come through his fist, up his arm, into his shoulder passing into his spine and up through neck vertebra, into his cortex, then outward, the chemicals of his brain rapidly exchanging electrons as bonds form, then dissolve. Signals are sent to his liver, telling it to find additional sugar, that work is being done, work that needs masked by a blizzard of endorphins, work born again from oppression and well-intentioned tyranny, but tyranny just the same.

He read the underlined and highlighted passages in his Bible, and his notes about those passages. He still doesn't remember writing those notes, but he seems to understand them as if, indeed, he wrote them. Last night he wrestled with all authority being given for good, and he couldn't easily reconcile rebellion with seeking righteousness. Finally, when his body could no longer sustain conscious thought he saw himself standing beside a man of fire and snow, the man's belly surrounded by flames while his hair and beard were white with frost. His legs began to quiver until he couldn't stand, nor could he speak, and he fell onto his face. He seemed to be asleep, but everything was as plain as if the man were alongside the Nodwell with him. And the man said, *Authority has been given to those who fell for a season so that all will believe only Love gives Life.* He wanted to ask, *What authority?* and as if his thoughts were heard, the man added, *The authority to demonstrate each of their ideas of how to rule each other. They learn as they show what works and what doesn't, but for them there is no*

Love. None of their schemes will prevail. But they have fought and will fight again to prove themselves right. Be prepared for some to fight for you, and some against. He wanted to ask, Which side should I be on? but the man vanished as if he had never been there. So as the wind leans against him today, he has hammered away at doubts and compromises. It seems as if he emerged from the sea to be reborn by Raven as the last of the first people, his legacy to be the reassertion of individual liberty over the central authority of the walled cities built to keep God out.

He has been given the knowledge of how to build a bomb, and he'll build one. There is enough raw ore in this bloom for two, maybe more ten-megaton devices. And he won't hesitate to detonate them when the time comes.

He can expect opposition, but he can also count on supernatural help. Let the demons war among themselves. He has a war to fight against other men, a war he will win because he must, a war that will be fought in the margins between superpowers, and it is in those margins where headwater riffles provide the redds in which new cultures are spawned.

He read his essays about free churches, and about keeping the Federal government inside the bag that is the Constitution. He read his essay about the Feds usurping power from the states through their abuse of the interstate commerce clause. He read most everything he has written— and though he doesn't remember writing any of the essays, they are all now part of him. He can argue their nuances. He understands the problem like he probably never had before, for he sees that evil is nothing more than determining what is right for oneself.

There remains his problem: tyranny aside, does he have the right to determine good and evil? Has that prerogative been given to him, or given to Lars? If he can answer yes— and he so wants to answer yes— then whatever must be done is justified.

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