

REQUIEM OF THE HUMAN SOUL

EXCERPT: REFLECTING WATER

Copyright © Jeremy R. Lent. 2009. All rights reserved.

Reflecting Water

“Now,” Harry said, leaning back in his chair, putting his hands behind his head, so relaxed, “I think it’s time to take a break from the cross-examination and admit into evidence an NVRX. It’s called Reflecting Water.”

Harry got up, walked over to a closet in the conference room and brought out what looked like three motorbike helmets. As he presented one each to me and Naomi, I looked across with total bewilderment.

“NVRX? Reflecting Water?”

Naomi gave me one of her reassuring smiles.

“It’s OK, Eusebio. Just put the helmet on, like this... It’s a Neurographic Virtual Reality Experience. Sit back and let it take you. Don’t try to fight it. Just go with the flow.”

The helmet covered my face completely. Everything was black. But after a few moments, I began to see a complete scene in front of me. Like one of those ancient twenty-first century movies we watch back in Tuckers Corner. Only the scene was all around me and it wasn’t just visual. I could see, hear, smell, feel everything as though it was real.

What I saw was a wide open plain with snow-covered mountains in the distance. The grass around me was blowing with a cool wind but the bright sun warmed my face, peeping above the horizon, rising into a deep blue sky. Over on the left and behind me

were teepees and the buzz of people engaged in everyday activities. I could smell the delicious odor of buffalo meat smoking over a big fireplace.

Buffalo meat? How the hell did I know what it was? I'd never smelled buffalo meat in my life. Then, I began to realize the strangest thing. Thoughts were starting to enter my mind. But they weren't my own thoughts. They seemed to go with the scene. At first, I tried to reject them and then I remembered Naomi telling me "Go with the flow." So, I figured, I may as well.

It's an important day for my big brother, Waking Bear, the thoughts told me. Today, he's going to ride on a full-grown horse for the first time. He's going to get thrown many times. I hope he doesn't break any bones. But he'll do well. I know it. The wakampi are with him.

By this time, I was beginning to let the scene, the feelings, the thoughts wash over me. It was easier that way. Just let myself *be* there.

I'm walking over to the corral with my big sister, Sun Behind Clouds. She's older than me and Waking Bear. She's almost a woman. I saw her kissing a boy the other day at the creek, but she wouldn't talk to me about it. She said I'm too young to understand. But I do understand. One day I'll be big, like Sun Behind Clouds and I'll kiss a boy too.

Sun Behind Clouds is taking me to see Waking Bear become a horse-warrior today. We're going to give him our courage. My mama told me that once, a long time ago, there were no horses, just like there were no white men. But when Wakan Tanka wasn't looking, the white man came to our land. Wakan Tanka felt sorry he'd let that happen, so he gave us horses to make our lives better. Mama shook her head and told me "Better no white man and no horse". I couldn't imagine it.

I see a glinting stone on my right and bend down to pick it up. It's prettier than all the other stones around. I'll add it to my collection.

“Reflecting Water, come on!” Sun Behind Clouds tells me. “We’ve got to get to the corral before Waking Bear begins. We need to give him our courage. He’ll need the courage of three to ride the full-grown horse today.”

There will be hardly any warriors to watch Waking Bear this morning. They’re out hunting along with our friends from the Arapahoe who are staying with us. It’s OK to go out hunting today because our leader, Black Kettle, has made us safe. He’s a great leader. He’s been all the way to the other side of the world to see the Great White Father. He came back with so many special things: metal badges of honor with miniature eagles; important papers with all kinds of white man inscriptions on them; and most special of all, a flag from the White Father with red and white stripes and white stars in a blue sky. A flag with magic powers, Black Kettle told us. Powers from the Great White Father who would always protect us under the flag.

I hear shouting from the teepees. The men who are still in the settlement are mostly the older ones, but they seem very upset.

“Look,” I point excitedly to my sister, “there’s White Antelope. Look how fast he’s riding!” No-one in the Cheyenne is braver and wiser than White Antelope except, of course, Black Kettle.

Sun Behind Clouds isn’t happy with what she sees.

“There are white men over there. White Antelope’s riding towards them.” Sun Behind Clouds gasped. “There are so many of them. They’re the Bluecoats. They shouldn’t be here. Oh no!”

“What, sister?”

“Can’t you hear what White Antelope is singing?”

I can barely make out his voice wailing over the field.

“It’s the Song of Death, Reflecting Water. White Antelope’s riding to his death.”

Almost as soon as I hear these words from my sister, I see puffs of smoke coming from the white men in the blue coats and White

Antelope falls off his horse. A few seconds later, and I hear the “putt, putt, putt” of the guns as the sounds finally reach us.

Now my sister is frantic. She grabs me.

“We must run back to the teepees. To Black Kettle’s teepee. To the flag of the Great White Father. His magic will protect us.”

“What about Waking Bear? He’s going to be a horse-warrior today!”

“No time. We’ve got to get to Black Kettle’s flag.”

Now Sun Behind Clouds is dragging me as fast as she can. I’m half running, half flying in her grip. We’re getting closer to Black Kettle’s teepee. But the Bluecoat white men are riding all around us, shooting at people, setting fire to teepees. I see Yellow Flower, my cousin, running towards us and fall down, screaming in pain.

“Come, Reflecting Water, faster, faster!” my sister yells at me.

But, all of a sudden, she’s no longer grabbing me. She grunts and falls on top of me. I think she’s playing a game with me. But she doesn’t say anything more, just makes strange gurgling noises. I feel her warmth all over me. Flowing over me. Her blood is flowing on me. Her body is still. Sun Behind Clouds is no longer breathing. My sister is no longer breathing.

I lie under my sister. Completely still. I hear terrible noises: screaming, tortured yells that I never thought could exist in our world. Everywhere around me is movement, running, horses neighing, white men yelling, my people screaming.

But I remain completely still. The spirit of the stone I picked up earlier has entered me. Still as a stone, I lie under sister’s body, her blood no longer running, but congealing over me. My face is covered in her blood. I lick its salty taste in my mouth, sucking in the spirit of my beloved sister.

Hours pass. My eyes are closed. I hear shooting, wailing, screaming. I smell gunpowder, smoke of burning teepees, and then of

burning flesh. I know it's human flesh I can smell. Slowly, silence returns. Eerie, dead silence.

Then, I hear white men around me, talking in their strange language. One of them comes closer to us. I hear him shouting to the other white men. I smell the sickening smell of alcohol from his breath. I try to stay still. I half open my eyes and I see the world through the red blood of sister. Everything red. The white man pulls my sister up. I remain still. I pretend to be dead. He cuts my sister's clothing open. He's not interested in me. He exposes the bare left breast of my sister. Her breasts that just grew two years ago, that I wished I were old enough to have. He puts his face to her breast and licks it. Then he takes a big knife and starts cutting her left breast. No blood. It stopped flowing hours ago. He cuts at it like a buffalo steak. I hear the tearing sound of my sister's dead flesh. Her breast is no longer soft. It's hard as leather in his hands. He cuts around her breast until, finally, it's separated from her chest. He holds it in his hand. One side still beautiful with my sister's nipple in the middle. The other side ugly and black with congealed blood. He lets out a snickering noise and smiles. He puts my sister's breast in his pocket.

I'm no longer scared. I want to join my sister on the other side. I hope he'll see I'm alive and put his knife through me. But one of his friends calls him and he turns away from us. From me and my sister, Sun Behind Clouds, whose chest is now open to the world with a big, black scar where once her soft left breast had been.

The world suddenly goes black. The thoughts of Reflecting Water vanish from my mind. I realize that I'm all me again. Eusebio. But the experiences of Reflecting Water are still in my brain. They've seared themselves into my memory. I know I'll never forget them as long as I'm alive.

REQUIEM OF THE HUMAN SOUL

EXCERPT: REFLECTING WATER

Copyright © Jeremy R. Lent. 2009. All rights reserved.