

Chapter 4 - Old Dog, Old Tricks

There were a lot of travelers today on the trail between Superior and Duluth. Many were obvious settlers from further East on their way to a new life in the West. Youngblood pondered how many would actually make it. He had lost count of the times he came across abandoned wagons, deserted campfires, and the remnants of hopeful lives cut short by the harshness of the land and the evil of men. He passed a calistoga wagon filled to bursting with all the trappings of a solid and safe life once taken for granted in the East. A young family with three children. Two girls and a boy, all playing happily in the back of the wagon, waving and pointing to all the exciting people and sights, not knowing the hardships that lay ahead. He wondered if he would see again all the trappings of a better life discarded along the trail sometime in the future. It was a shame so many pioneers began this trek absent the slightest notion of what they would really need to survive. He felt like riding up to the man handling the reins and giving him a stark and brutal tutorial of what lay in store for him, his lovely young bride, and his innocent children. He waved as he passed the wagon, shook his head, tipped his hat to the lady, smiled, and continued on.

Youngblood had two goals for his trip today. First the guns he wanted, and second and more importantly, the information from his Shaman friend 'Black Owl' about the status of the Indian tribes further West on the plains. Since the resignation of General E.S. Parker in July of 1871, there was no one person at the helm of the U.S. Bureau of Indian affairs. This was a matter of concern to Youngblood as there were many who wanted nothing more than to exterminate ALL the Indian tribes from North America. The acting Commissioner, Colonel H. R. Clum, was a competent enough man. He lacked a certain resolve of his own convictions which led to the influence of others in his decisions, and not always the most effective or diplomatic. Youngblood was anxious to hear of any news or reply to his letter to Ulysses several months earlier. President Grant was a brilliant warrior who also understood superior firepower did not always provide the clearest path to victory for either side in a conflict. He also was an honest man and stern in his convictions, which puzzled Youngblood as Grant seemed to be overly tolerant of the corruption surrounding him.

Youngblood had first met Grant in August of 1861 just after he was appointed Brigadier General of volunteers by Lincoln, who had been lobbied by Congressman Elihu Washburne to appoint Grant. At the end of August, Grant was selected by Western theater commander Major General John C. Fremont to command the critical district of Southeast Missouri. At the time Youngblood was a successful businessman in the garment industry. He had just recently opened a second factory in St. Louis and had met Grant when he visited the grand opening to review the plant and finalize the government contract for uniforms for the Union Army. Youngblood was originally from Raleigh, North Carolina, and his first factory was just off Fayetteville Street with a handsome storefront on the boulevard, blocks from the government buildings and a short stroll from his fine home in Five Points. Youngblood was good at what he did, and business was good from the start.

There was one business practice that separated him from all others at the time. He respected the black man and felt slavery was an archaic practice. He understood the importance of the slave trade to the plantations and never openly spoke against it. What he did was treat his workers well, and closely watched his foremen to insure none were treated badly. One

instance had always stood out in his mind, and strangely enough he was surprised when Grant brought it up during his visit.

As Youngblood was showing the work floor to Grant, he stopped at the end of one aisle and turned to Youngblood. "I am curious of a story I heard about you from a friend in Raleigh Sir, I wish to confirm the veracity of this story, may I inquire?", asked Grant. "Most certainly General, my life is an open book to you." replied Youngblood. "That, Sir, is a dangerous statement", replied Grant. "And call me Ulysses, please." He continued, "Regarding an incident in your Raleigh plant concerning a foreman mistreating some workers, is it true you had this man whipped by the same men he was abusing?" Youngblood knew this was the question before Grant asked. "Sir, it is true, The man went against my explicit instructions to never mistreat or strike any of the workers in the plant. He violated that by using a crop to 'motivate' the slaves on the floor, as he put it. I asked each of the four men he had whipped to come forward, and each man struck the foreman with that same crop twice on my orders. I told the foreman the first strike was from the man he had struck, and the second was from ME for disobeying my instructions." Grant looked deeply into Youngbloods' eyes and said, "Were you not concerned for your own safety for this bold act?" Youngblood smiled back, "There are some things you just gotta do. The amazing thing was, no-one ever spoke of it outside the plant." Grant turned and replied, "Doing what is just is not always an easy task, let's continue Sir." The remainder of the day was very positive, and Abraham his plant manager, who was one of those four men, talked for months about his shaking hands with the great U.S. Grant.

Youngblood had taken a bold step in his St. Louis plant and was preparing to take an even bolder step in Raleigh. The plant manager in St. Louis was a trusted man who had been with him since the beginning, and knew the working of the clothing business and the Raleigh plant inside and out. He was trustworthy, loyal, hardworking, and a Negro. Abraham Oaks was a 25 year old light skinned black man who had arrived at Youngbloods' doorstep nine years earlier. At 6' 1" and 210 lbs., he towered over most white men, and had soft spoken demeanor. He had the ability to motivate men of all colors, which was a truly unique talent. Abraham had taught himself to read and took every opportunity to do so. What impressed Youngblood was he had read everything available written by his namesake, Abraham Lincoln, and was now studying everything he could about the visitor from the military that day, Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant. He was thrilled beyond description at the chance to meet Grant in person. Youngblood had thought at the time Abraham had not slept for a week before that day.

The other bold move was one few, hopefully, would ever know about. With the Civil war now in full swing, he suspected the General was interested in his ties to the Confederacy and knew of his contracts to supply them with uniforms for the military. Youngblood smiled to himself thinking back to that day. Through complete chance, he was one of the few who legitimately prospered from both sides of that horrible conflict. He did not profit nearly as much as many thought, much of the funds went to assist families on both sides of the war. He had made many lifelong friends, valuable alliances, had cultivated few true enemies during that turbulent time in his life. He was proud of what he had accomplished back then, and knew he would allowed at least a short trip to Heaven before meeting the card dealer and having to settle up for all the other things he had done. The factory in Raleigh was sold after the war to the employees that worked there, 75% of whom were ex slaves. The plant thrived today because of men like the towering Mr. Oaks.

Youngblood spied a produce wagon at the side of the road as he approached the fork in the trail. He stopped before heading into Duluth and his meeting. He had a sudden urge for apples and corn, and he knew Black Fox would enjoy some as well. So far today was a good day, but that had never stopped the day from changing abruptly before.

Shortly before noon Youngblood was at the village of Black Owl about 3 miles South of Duluth. To him THIS was Duluth, not the bustling settlement further North. This is the way trappers saw this land years before, and the people who lived their lives here. A group of young braves greeted him as he rode into the village, whooping and hollerin' somethin' fierce. The young boys were happy ta see Youngblood as he usually had something new to show them or a small gift to please them, and today was no different. Today the gruff trapper had treats for their palettes, a new confection from across the world. Chocolate! The crowd grew as news spread of the arrival of Ska Sunghidan (White Fox). The gathering crowd began to silence as the group began to spread open at the far end. Sapa Hinhan (Black Owl) was approaching with his 'entourage', a group of three braves, the chief, and two of his many squaws. Black Owls' hands were spread wide and there was a grin as big as the Mississippi on his face.

"Hou Koda, Toked ya un he". (Hello Friend, how are you?) said Black Owl. "Was'te waun". (I am Fine) replied Youngblood. One of the braves took Youngbloods horse and led him off for a good feed and a rub down as the group made their way back to the medicine lodge. The Dakota Sioux had experienced a violent chapter in their history with the arrival of the White man years earlier. Many were still looking for a way to garner revenge and a return to the dominance they once had in these valleys.

The original Dakota people migrated north and westward from the south and east into Ohio then to Minnesota. The Dakota were a woodland people who thrived on hunting, fishing and subsistence farming. Migrations of Anishinaabe/ Chippewa people from the east in the 17th and 18th centuries, with rifles supplied by the French and English, pushed the Dakota further into Minnesota and west and southward, giving the name "Dakota Territory" to the northern expanse west of the Mississippi and up to its headwaters. The Western Dakota obtained horses, probably in the 17th century, and moved onto the plains, becoming the Lakota, subsisting on the buffalo herds and corn-trade with their linguistic cousins, the Mandan and Hidatsa along the Missouri. In the late 1800's the railroads began their expansion West in earnest. They hired hunters to exterminate the buffalo herds and to control the Indians' primary food supply by reducing their hunting areas, and enlisted the aide of the military to seize land and trade routes. All this to force all tribes into sedentary habitations. The Dakota and Lakota were forced to accept white-defined reservations in exchange for the rest of their lands, and domestic cattle and corn in exchange for buffalo, becoming dependent upon annual federal payments guaranteed by treaty.

In 1862, after a failed crop the year before and a winter starvation, the federal subsistence payment was late to arrive. Local traders would not issue any more credit to the Dakota and the local federal agent told the Dakota that they were free to eat grass. This did not sit well with the Dakota and Lakota. On August 17, 1862, the Sioux uprising began when a few Dakota braves attacked a white farmer, igniting further attacks on white settlements along the Minnesota River. The U.S. Army put the revolt down, then later tried and condemned 303 Dakota for war crimes. President Lincoln remanded the death sentence of 285 of the warriors, signing off on the execution of 38 Dakota men by hanging on December 29, 1862 in Mankato, Minnesota. This

was to be the largest mass execution in US history. Many of those pardoned warriors were part of this tribe, and Black Owl in particular, was one of those spared.

Black Owl pulled back the hide opening his teepee to Youngblood and waved him in. The other members of his group remained outside. The women set about preparing a meal while the warriors stood guard over the two warriors inside. The teepee was warm and bright inside, something that was surprising to Youngblood. Black Owl usually liked the gray of the pipe smoke and kept the light low, much like a wise owl. The two men took their places near the small fire at the center of the teepee. Black Owl selected a long ornate pipe from his uniquely 'White' pipe stand, took a long draw from it, then passed it to Youngblood with a smile. "This my friend is a suitable way to begin our conversation, it will please the spirits and give pleasure to us both." Youngblood took a long, slow draw on the pipe and was greeted with a flood of pleasant memories tied to the taste of the tobacco within. "I am anxious to hear of your family, the tribe, and our brothers further West. I understand you may also have some items left for me by others."

Black Owl looked at Youngblood and sighed deeply. "My family is healthy and my squaws are strong, they treat me far better than I deserve. My tribe does not fare so well, there is trouble further West. I have a message from Standing Buffalo for you that will tell all with few words". He reached behind his blanket to his right and retrieved a canvas pouch about 8" long and a few inches wide. He handed this to Youngblood and said "Standing Buffalos message". Youngblood took the pouch, laid it on his lap, and opened it. His heart sank as he looked into the pouch. Inside was a finely carved and adorned Lakota Peace pipe. He recognized it as Standing Buffalos' most prized pipe. It was broken in two...

Before he could speak one of the warriors from outside entered. He whispered something to Black Owl and left. "The treaties have all been broken. Standing Buffalo sends word there is to be a tribal council in six weeks at his village outside Cheyenne. Red Cloud has called the council to forge an alliance for a final stand to preserve the Sioux nation. He has also invited Sitting Bull, who is now the leader of the most rebellious of the Sioux. He has not replied." Youngblood knew what the message was and what he would be asked to do without a word being said. "I will head West tomorrow. Send a runner to standing Buffalo with this message, 'I will return my lost brothers to the table for the final meal.' I have a few people to see before I leave, so I am afraid I must cut our visit short." Youngblood began to close the pouch when he saw something else. He reached in and found an envelope. Inside was a hand-printed manuscript titled:

"REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS" DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

OFFICE INDIAN AFFAIRS

November 15, 1871.

He glanced through it briefly and found one section underlined:

No serious difficulties have arisen with them during the past year, and their conduct has been quite commendable. It is believed the visit of several of their prominent chiefs to this city last spring had a great tendency to conciliate the disaffected of the tribes, and will doubtless be productive of a better understanding of their treaty obligations, and tend to convince them that a strict and faithful compliance therewith will be to their best interests.

Also of the Sioux Nation, in Dakota Territory, comprising a number of powerful bands, heretofore formidable in their opposition to the Government, it may be observed that they are in a good degree peaceable. Those upon the reservation selected for the whole nation are quiet; many of them are friendly-disposed, and evince a willingness to abandon the hunter-life and become tillers of the soil. While the Government continues to provide for the wants of the Sioux, feeding and clothing them – means by which they are kept in a better humor than they otherwise would be – no outbreak or disorder of any extent need be apprehended.

Some trouble is anticipated on account of the suspicion with which some of them look upon the projected Northern Pacific Railway being run through what they claim to be their country; but as yet no decided demonstration of opposition has been made by them. The Sioux of the band under the noted chief Red Cloud have for the time being a temporary location north of the Platte River, about thirty miles south of Fort Laramie, Wyoming Territory. It is intended, when it can prudently be done to establish them at an agency somewhere within the limits of the reservation designated for the whole nation.

Part of this band, dissatisfied with Red Cloud, and refusing to recognize him as their leader, have gone into Montana, having for their chief Sitting Bull. Unless carefully managed, these seceders, reported to have eight hundred lodges, may cause great trouble to the Government. Besides these Sioux roaming in Montana, without constraint, there is another large body of them in the same Territory, living in the neighborhood of their hereditary enemies, the Gros-Ventres and Assina-boines. They were, at the massacre in Minnesota of 1862, driven from that State, belong to no agency or reservation, and claim the right to follow the buffalo wherever they can find it.

By the judicious management of the Department and its officers in Montana these Indians have been thus far kept quiet. They are apparently determined to remain upon the reservation provided for the Gros-Ventres and Assina-boines, and, so long as it is expedient to allow them to be there, must be supplied with the necessaries of life, or difficulties with them will inevitably follow. It is earnestly recommended that Congress should make the requisite appropriations for their proper care and subsistence by the Department. It may be well here to give the military view as to the disposition of the Sioux Nation, and especially the wandering portions of it, and as to the care to be exercised over them.

One of the highest of the authorities in that branch of the service is of the opinion that, unless the civil Department can control the Sioux, hostilities will be again renewed, which the military may not be able for the time being to repress, with the limited power at its command; and it is suggested that a conciliatory course, under the circumstances, be pursued, and a liberal provision made for the wants of these Indians.

“Nothing like knowing what the opposition has planned”, thought Youngblood as he rose to leave. “White Fox, there is someone here to see you, he is outside.” Black Owl parted the skins at the teepee entrance and walked out. Youngblood followed. Standing near the teepee was a strapping young brave, almost six feet tall, and very muscular. He wore a broad grin and carried a bundle of fur pelts. “Ate’ (Father) was the only word he spoke. Youngblood had already recognized him. even though he had not seen “Two Hearts” since he was four years old. “Mic’inks’i” (son) was all Youngblood could say as he embraced his now 16 year old native son. “I think he needs a good knife.” he thought to himself. Dammit this was a good day, and it was only half over...

After a long heartfelt embrace, Youngblood stood back to gaze upon his adopted son, Two Hearts. He was a bit surprised to see him this far East. Two Hearts was part of the Lakota tribe

and his village and mother were settled in South Dakota near the mining town of Deadwood. Two Hearts was young yet wise beyond his years and had become involved in the governance of his village even at the young age of 14. He looked good and both spent a short time catching up on family events while Youngblood walked toward the corral for his noble steed. He learned tensions had been increasing lately among the local tribes and the white settlers, mainly due to the introduction of strip mining for gold in the black hills. Tribal leaders were angry over the blatant desecration of 'Mother earth' and raping of the soil that gave life. There had been several instances where shots were exchanged resulting in an increase of the U.S. military presence in the area. Neither side was happy about this development. Two Hearts explained he had been sent by the tribal council to request aid from the Eastern tribes to make a final stand for their homeland. Youngblood knew this was inevitable and would ultimately spell destruction for the tribes and their cultures. He knew he had to try to resolve these issues before many lives were lost, on both sides.