

Moriah Bat-Adam and
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Starface



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STARFACE

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Chapter One

The Apparition

Early January, 1984

Along the Moenkopi wash, south of Tuba City, Arizona, a full moon illuminated the colorful midnight desert of the nipping Colorado Plateau. The familiar howling of coyotes beyond the distant towering rocks did not disturb the young Hopi woman who rested motionless on the hand-woven fabric that separated her from the pliant desert sand. A few feet away, a stalwart Navajo Indian stood beside a pile of burning woods. The crackling fire provided little warmth for the silent woman who had given birth only moments earlier. The baby boy, tucked cozily to his mother, was wrapped snugly in a sheepskin blanket.

The man gathered more sticks and bark from adjacent dry shrubs. He piled the woods at different sides, closer to those he cherished, watching the fire rise briskly toward the open sky. The heat radiated summarily in all directions, pushing away the cold surrounding air.

The tall Navajo Indian turned his face. His ears were tuned to the sounds of whispering beetles a hundred yards away but his eyes caught sight of a nearby potential menace. A yellow scorpion crawled from beneath the cold soil. He swiftly reached for the bow, aiming the arrow steadily at the creeping creature. In a split second, the arrow left his fingers, dividing the scorpion in half.

“I provide comfort for my family only. I will protect them even from you, venomous spider of death,” he whispered in Navajo.

The Indian stooped to retrieve his arrow, drawing his bow once more. This time, he aimed the arrow toward the sky above him. The bountiful stars twinkled like sparkling diamonds on dark blue velour.

“By the spirits of my fathers, Hashkeh Naabah, K’uuch’ish and Mocketavato, I release this arrow into the midnight sky, marking the liberation of my bonds with you. You have taught me well but times have changed. My soul shall forever burn by the flames of my Navajo, Apache and Cheyenne ancestors; now that my son is born, he shall be part of the future. I bid you and the reservation farewell, forever.”

The arrow darted in a straight path heavenward. The small wooden missile continued its ascent, disappearing among the distant stars. The Navajo man gazed into the skies, peering through the vast blue-black yonder, wondering whether the stars might have indeed swallowed it. Either way, the arrow did not return.

From among the heavenly bodies, a fiery ball unexpectedly appeared to light the midnight firmament. Racing toward Earth, it fell ever faster unto the silent Arizona desert. It seemed to be heading straight for the Navajo man. Soon, he could distinguish the fiery orb as a huge burning spear, piercing the cold desert soil only inches away from his colorful moccasins.

Behind the burning spear, an apparition of a great Indian warrior took the Navajo man further by surprise. The earthly Indian withdrew a few steps, observing a bare-chested, bald-headed tattooed specter materializing before him. He allowed the fierce look of the phantom to pierce his eyes.

“Who are you?” the Navajo Indian asked, puzzled.

“I am Starface, a Cahokia of the Inoca confederation. I am known as Starface the Cahokia,” he replied, deliberately and in a reverberating voice.

The Navajo man pondered, searching his memories for a man calling himself Starface the Cahokia but he could not recall having ever heard of him.

“My name is Jerome Smallfeather. I am a Navajo from the reservation of this place,” he said.

“I know of you, Jerome Smallfeather, and I speak your language. You have come from many Indian tribes. You are proud and resilient. You are good with your bow. You are sharp and fast but not as fast as I am,” the apparition noted.

“What do you want? I have only this bow...and my family,” the Navajo man said, pointing with his bow at the defenseless mortals on the blanket.

The specter glanced at the mother and her child. “Shooting your arrow into the sky, marking your liberation from your ancestors is a vow of serious discontent,” he remarked. “I was the spirit who grabbed your arrow, turning it with my wrath into this mighty burning spear. Almost six thousand moons ago, an unusual, yet very gratifying marriage took place between me and Malinal, the daughter of Cuauhtémoc, a great Anahuac warrior. She bore us sons and daughters. You, Jerome Smallfeather, are my descendant. We have quarreled with and fought among ourselves throughout this vast land of ours but my most bitter enemy was the white man. They divided the Indians, turned us into unforgiving foes, hunting the Cahokia to extinction. I am Starface the Cahokia, the fastest runner created by heaven. I can outrun horses and leopards and at one time, I even outran death. The flying darts, metals and gunpowder from those white men’s muskets could not catch me. They came from the left and from the right and then...I decided to even outrun myself. That’s when I leaped into the stars, into a different world, a different zone. I left this earth never to be seen again by man but I vowed to return as I am now to take my revenge against the white men who forced me to leave my family behind.”

“So you were shot by the white man, after all,” Jerome Smallfeather ascertained.

“Yes, I was seventy years old at the time but I could have lived many more,” he replied.

The Navajo observed the phantom, inquisitively. “The fastest runners I know are the Rarámuri, also known as the Tarahumara, and you claim to be a Cahokia of the Northeast.”

“Rarámuri, indeed. When a French priest told me the Spanish conquered the Nahua, I decided to see for myself because the Nahua were fierce fighters. Such news was not easy for me to accept. I made a long journey, discovering the truth. However, to my deep disappointment, our brave Nahua brothers were on their knees before the white

conquistadores. That was enough for me to see...especially when I understood that I, myself, was in danger. I could not go back home the same way I came, so I went westward and crossed the Copper Canyon south of here. There, I had my first encounter with the Rarámuri, a separate and unique tribe who lived alongside the fierce and aggressive Nahua. I spoke their language not. Only by signs of our hands did we talk. Among them, I discovered Malinal, the beautiful maiden, daughter of Cuauhtémoc the Nahua, an honorable guest who took temporary refuge at the Rarámuri camp. I loved her at first sight but she was to marry Zolton, the fastest Rarámuri runner alive. Her father told me that if I could outrun Zolton, she would be mine. Everybody laughed, for they thought my competition would be futile. The Rarámuri are a brave nation. Not even the Nahua could rule them.”

“What did you do? Did you confront Zolton?” the Navajo asked.

“My burning desire for that pretty maiden caused me to accept the challenge. Malinal was very lovely. I could feel her desire for me. Zolton was undoubtedly a fast runner and one such as him I had never seen but my love for Malinal was even greater. I suddenly felt the power of the winds whisking me away to become the returning winner. That same night, Malinal and I were joined. She whispered into my ears words of an everlasting bond, ‘You are the man whose face, a bright star in heaven has shown me. Whatever your name was or is, from now on and forever you are called *Citlalli Ixtli*—Starface.’ The next day, I took her back with me to my tribe. Ever since, I have become the fastest runner that roamed this earth. I am Starface the Cahokia,” the phantom said, smugly.

Jerome Smallfeather looked at the ghost for some time. “So you are here because you want revenge against the pale skins? Six thousand moons is a long time, Starface. Everything has changed since then. The wars between them and us have long been over. Today, they have far more superior weapons than when you knew them. They can fly like gods, faster and higher than our mighty eagles, also, they have extended their hands to us. They want us to join them in the destiny of this earth. The only chance of survival is to join them. That’s why I have decided to take my son away from the reservation. I want to give him a new future...a good future.”

“A future with the white man?” the voice of the apparition interrupted.

“The white man has changed too, Starface,” the Navajo said. “They are younger, erudite and purer at heart. Today, millions throughout the land support the well-being of the natives. Go into the reservations, Starface, and see what has become of us. As you can see, I do not even have a horse.”

The specter remained silent for a long while, gazing at the skies above. He then turned back to the Navajo before him. “Jerome Smallfeather, I am only a spirit. I can’t force you to see it my way, so I will do the only thing I can.”

“What will you do, Starface?”

“I will resign myself from the Council of Stars and reside inside the body of your son for the remainder of his life,” the specter replied.

“No, Starface, I...I beg of you. He is only a few hours old. Your spirit may be too strong for him,” the Navajo Indian objected, cautiously.

The ghostly Indian peered into Smallfeather's eyes. "Perhaps, I am mistaken. You are not as strong as your fathers were. You fear too much."

"I fear only for my son, Starface. He is innocent and defenseless. I do not fear for myself."

"What do you call your son?" the spirit asked.

The Navajo man hesitated awhile. "*Hiilchi'i'yá*—Night Sky," he finally disclosed.

"Very well, we shall see if he will carry my spirit. With the eclipse of the last star, if he still breathes, you will know my spirit is in him. Then, you shall call him Starface the Cahokia," the ghostly Indian declared.

"But, what if he dies?" Jerome Smallfeather asked, apprehensively.

"If he dies, I will die with him. Before I go, I will leave this burning spear with you. If you succeed to unearth this powerful weapon, throw it as far as you can with both of your hands..." the apparition said, vanishing slowly along with the spear's flames into the thin air of the cold desert.

The Navajo grabbed the wooden shaft. Unearthing the enormous beam was no easy task. It was buried deep inside the desert sand. The Indian's muscular arm tightened, struggling to remove it from the soil below. He arched backward, as the spear sloped upward, rising above his head.

"This is only a spear. Why is it so difficult to remove?" he muttered aloud.

However, Jerome Smallfeather did not succumb. His persistent pull and strong grip paid dividends. The heavy spear was finally out of the sand, throwing the rugged Indian on his back. With his bruised, bloodied hands, he kept holding on to it. He tried getting to his feet, wondering what kind of wood it was. "This is indeed a heavy one," he murmured.

When he stood up at last, he lifted the weapon slowly and with difficulty above his head. For a while, the weight of the spear seemed too much for him to bear but, with much effort and strength, he threw it only a few feet in front of him.

To his surprise, the spear turned into a graceful, white stallion, standing high and proud before him. Jerome Smallfeather looked in disbelief. "This burning spear is magic," he whispered aloud.

The neighing stallion beckoned the approaching Indian to retain him.

The man gently stroked the horse's nose. "Your name is Burning Spear," he said, clearly.

Holding his mane, he jumped on the animal's back, riding proudly along the outskirts of the Moenkopi Wash.

Three weeks had passed since they left their dwellings, walking the sandy, rocky desert by foot. To Jerome, the new stallion he rode was an esteemed commodity. When he returned to the resting Hopi woman, her eyes were open.

"We have a horse," he told her.

"I have seen it all," she whispered.

“Are you able to continue the journey?”

“I will tell you after the eclipse of the last star,” she replied, turning to the infant beside her.

Dawn came slowly; when it came, the cry of the boy was heard, again.

The man took the child into his hands. “My son, he lives,” he told the smiling Hopi woman.

“Yes,” she whispered. “His name is now Starface—Starface the Cahokia.”

Jerome Smallfeather looked despondent. “No,” he protested. “Somewhere along the line of history I may have some Cahokia blood, and his spirit may be that of Starface, yet he is no Cahokia. He is Navajo and Hopi. We shall call our son Starface Smallfeather.”

That same morning, at the appearance of the first rays of sun, the Indians continued their journey westward. Riding Burning Spear, their handsome white stallion, they crossed the Little Colorado River at a wooden junction. They then traversed a magnificent forest, finding shelter among the tall, green trees. The fresh waters of the river quenched their thirst during the day, while the abundance of wildlife satisfied their hunger at night.

Burning Spear led his masters through the Coconino Plateau, on the south rim of the majestic Grand Canyon, climbing the impossible steep slopes of mighty rock cliffs. Surprised by Burning Spear’s spontaneous mountaineering, Jerome Smallfeather squeezed the horse’s body tightly with his straddled legs while seizing the animal’s mane firmly in his right hand. His wife and child were securely strapped in front of him. He held them snug by his left arm.

“Burning Spear...turn back,” the Indian ordered but the white horse kept climbing the steep rock-face with magical capabilities until he finally reached the top of the plateau.

They stood high at the peak of a grand precipice, overlooking the beauty and grandeur of the awesome Grand Canyon. The cool breeze awoke their senses, refreshing their faces to unexpected delight. They watched several eagles fly above and below only to disappear into the depths of the abrupt ravines.

“It is a beautiful country,” Jerome spoke into the wind.

“It is a magical land,” his wife whispered.

Three miles down, on a small mound surrounded by ponderosa pine, David McDane, a National Park Ranger, spotted the Indians and their white horse. At first glance, the tall, blond ranger thought he had slipped into an imaginary world. He removed the binoculars, rubbing his eyes.

It can't be true, he thought. He peeked through the lenses again, focusing them to a crystal clear image. He saw them once more.

“God almighty, how did they get up there?” he mumbled.

Jorge Sanchez, another park ranger, stood beside him. “What is it, David?”

“Look over there.” David pointed to the distant ridge overlooking the canyon.

Jorge scanned through his own field glasses.

“Do you see them?” McDane asked, eagerly.

McDane’s associate kept peering through his scope, ignoring the question.

David became impatient. Lowering his binoculars, he turned to Jorge, grabbing his shoulders. “Do you see them, George?”

“Magnificent. They are breathtakingly magnificent,” the ranger replied.

“What is so breathtakingly magnificent, George?”

Jorge removed the binoculars slowly from his face, smiling at David. “Those Indians on their white horse.”

“Yes. Well, I’m glad you see them, too.”

“And why wouldn’t I see them?” Jorge questioned.

“Why? Well, for being so indifferent. Has it ever occur to you how they managed to get up there?”

“If you were up there, Dave, it would make me wonder,” Jorge jested.

“All jokes aside, big G, only a helicopter would be able to place them on top of that towering rock,” David declared.

“Not necessarily. From what I see, they’re Indians through and through...” Jorge surmised.

“Oh, come off it, George. They’re human just like everybody else. Save me those legendary stories for another time,” David interrupted.

Jorge’s smile faded, as he looked earnestly at his friend. “What I’ve told you about these Indians is true. They’re great, spiritual people and, in a land as enchanting as this, anything is possible,” he said, firmly.

“I’m about to hear you say their white horse flew them up there,” David replied, with laughter.

“That could be, Dave. Yes, that could very well be.”

“Oh, come off it. What makes you an authority on Indians anyway, Sanchez? You’re of Mexican ancestry. Your people don’t believe in those Indian tales any more than I do,” David charged.

“You’re right, David. I’m of Mexican blood, which means part of me is Indian,” Jorge revealed.

David strode down the hill. Below, an Arizona ranger’s wagon was parked on the side trail. His friend followed briskly behind him. David reached for the mike beneath the dashboard.

“Ranger Control...Ranger Control...this is unit ten...over,” he announced, placing the hand-piece close to his mouth.

“Unit ten, this is Ranger Control. What’s up, Dave?” came a swift and familiar response.

David laughed. “What’s up is the right question. I’ve got something here to blow your top...” Observing the pensive look on Jorge’s face, David cleared his throat. “...but big G, here doesn’t find this case particularly unusual...”

“Why don’t you try me? I’m all ears,” the voice responded.

Shaking his head, Jorge placed his hand on the mike. “Let it go, Dave. They’re part of this unexplainable beauty. They’re part of nature,” he said, trying to persuade his friend.

“But...we’ve got to report it. It’s part of our job,” David protested.

Jorge withdrew his hand from the mike. “OK, pal, it’s all yours. Report it if you must. Just think what purpose will be served by your report.”

David pondered on the words of his friend but the voice from the citizens band kept interrupting.

“Unit ten...unit ten...this is Ranger Control. Are you still with me, over?”

David seemed to have made up his mind reporting his sighting to Ranger Headquarters.

It took only moments for a surveillance helicopter to hover above the erect standing horse and the travelers he carried.

“This is surveillance chopper NAR three. I’ve spotted them. I’m going in for a closer look,” the pilot reported, flying his machine around the towering cliff. The pilot observed them close up, while snapping a few pictures.

“Ranger Control, this is surveillance chopper NAR three,” the pilot furthered. “I’ve covered this mammoth five times. I just don’t see how they made it up here. None of the slopes leading to the plateau are less than eighty degrees. To get to the top table...it’s...it’s just impossible to do it by climbing up there. All slopes have acute angles for at least seven feet. The only explanation I can offer is...eh...it may be a stunt...some wise guy in a chopper somehow lifted them to this place...over.”

“Surveillance chopper NAR three. How many are there, over?” the voice from Ranger Headquarters came through.

“I see a man, a woman and a suckling on a splendid, stupendous white horse...but...they ought to get down immediately. The winds are strong at this moment and may certainly get the better of them, over.”

“Copy that, NAR three. We’re dispatching paramedics...over and out.”

The pilot hovered for a final look at the miracle below him. His camera clicked with another set of close-ups, catching the sharp, confident looks in the Indians’ eyes.

The Navajo man looked up, pointing his finger at the chopper. “That’s the mighty white man’s eagle, Starface,” he whispered into his son’s ears. “One day, you too, shall fly that mighty bird. The world is yours, Starface...all yours.”

Burning Spear rose in neighing agreement, as the helicopter returned to base with its final pictures.

When the paramedics arrived at the scene, the Indians and their horse were no longer there. The paramedics and the pilots requested more information.

“This is NARP one. We’ve no visual on reported Indians, over.”

“Search ‘til you find them,” Ranger Headquarters instructed the pilots.

The pilots swooped as low to the canyon as they could.

“NARP one, this is Base Control. Did you spot them, over?”

“Negative...negative...who did the initial surveying, over?”

“Our very own...Captain Anton Mooreson, over,” Base Control responded.

“Ask Anton to give us more exact coordinates, or we may think he had one too many, over,” the pilots responded.

“Those are his coordinates, over.”

“Put that old timer on, over,” one of the pilots requested.

“No can do. He’s at the lab developing the pictures, over.”

The pilots and the highly trained paramedics inside the helicopter laughed. “We sure would like to see what turns out on those pictures besides his empty bottle, over,” they jested.

Moments later, Captain Mooreson returned from the laboratory to converse with Chopper NARP one. The dialogue turned serious.

“My God,” the captain exclaimed. “They must’ve fallen off somehow. There’s no way they could’ve gotten down that rock by themselves. Go down to the bottom of that canyon...and...please find them, over.”

“Anton? Are you sure you spotted Indians on a white horse, over?” the pilot questioned.

“The entire staff, including Colonel Tappers, is right here, looking at the pictures I developed. I assume...that if they’re on these pictures...they were there,” the captain replied.

“All right, Cap. They aren’t here now but we shall go down these cliffs once more, all the way down to the bottom of this ravine, over and out.”

After an exhaustive and futile search, the pilots were ordered to return. By then, Burning Spear and his masters had already traversed the lowlands.

When night came, distant sounds of music and flickering firelights attracted Burning Spear to the dark, cool valley below. Vacationing campers from all walks of life came from different states and even from other countries across the oceans. Their tents and campers were located near the tall cypress, fir and oak trees. The men, women and children frolicked around the fire, playing their instruments, singing and dancing to the tunes of various songs until the very edge of midnight.

Unattended, a three-year-old, away from the crowd, toddled to the rattling sounds of a brown, venomous killer. A fourteen-year-old teen noticed the snake approaching the tyke,

ever closer. She screamed.

The music stopped. The alerted parents of the child along with thirty others watched in agonizing panic as the rattler made its final stance against its innocent victim. The snake leaped with its fangs clearly exposed, when an arrow, faster than lightning, pierced the rattler's head only inches from the child's face. The sharp arrow sent the snake summersaulting, killing it instantly. With gasps and screams of some onlooking adults, the toddler returned to his parents' arms in tears.

An observant seven-year-old boy followed the arrow's path, catching a quick glimpse of the white horse and the Indians. A few others too had seen the Indians swiftly disappear into the dark woods of the forest.

A young couple from neighboring Utah had seen the Indians clearly. They hurried to their parked camper.

The young man placed the microphone of his CB close to his mouth. "This is Double MU, the Magical Mormon from Utah. I have an important question for any Arizonian out there...come in."

He repeated the message several times before turning the dial to a different frequency.

"This is Double MU, the Magical Mormon from Utah...any Arizonian out there... please respond," he tried again.

Five miles away, on Highway 66, a heavy-duty truck driver received the message from Double MU.

"Well, halloo there, Magical Mormon. This is Wild, Wild Roger. You're coming in loud and clear. I'm no Arizonian but I carry this rig of mine through this state every week. How can I assist?" the trucker offered.

"I need to know about wild Indians. Do they still roam freely around these areas? We're about twenty-five miles southwest of the national park and Grand Canyon Village, south of the great Colorado River," the Mormon documented.

"Wild Indians, huh? You're in the middle of Indian country, all right. There're Indian reservations north, south, east and west of you, son but the only wild one around here is me—Wild, Wild Roger. What you need, son, is a good night's rest," the driver suggested, with a great burst of laughter.

That same night, Arizona police and the National Park Rangers carefully interviewed the travelers. Their description of the white horse and the Indians satisfied Captain Mooreson. He showed one of the developed pictures to the seven-year-old boy.

"Is this what you saw, son?" he asked.

The boy, shy and confused, nodded, holding on to his parents. "Yes, yes, exactly them," he finally uttered.

At the end of the table, the dead rattler, pierced by the sharp arrow, had been laid out for inspection.

Ranger McDane stood tall, questioning Barbara Wayne, the fourteen-year-old who had first seen the poisonous snake approach the toddler.

“Everything happened so fast,” she explained. “I was sure the snake was going to strike little Bobbie, when suddenly, out of nowhere, came that arrow.” She paused, pointing at the arrow on the table. “It saved Bobbie’s life. Then, I turned into the direction it came from. I briefly saw a tall, rugged looking Indian sitting on a big white horse. A woman holding a baby tight to her chest was sitting in front of him.”

“Did you see him shoot that arrow?” the ranger asked.

“No, I didn’t. I barely saw their faces when they disappeared,” the girl explained, with emotion.

“What do you mean by ‘disappeared’?” McDane pursued. “Did they vanish like magic? Poof, as a ghost?”

“No. That Indian I told you about made his horse turn, retreating into the dark forest,” Barbara replied, with a smile.

McDane took out a picture marked “For Circulation.” He pushed the picture beneath her nose.

The teen glanced at the picture, responding without more ado. “Yes, that’s them. So you know them,” she quipped.

David McDane turned briefly to Jorge Sanchez who stood by his side.

Jorge smiled. “I told you to let this go but you insisted on reporting it,” he whispered.

“Sooner or later, this would be reported anyway,” McDane whispered back.

“What are you two saying?” the girl asked, impatiently. “You do know them, don’t you?” she persisted, with annoyance.

Taking a deep breath, McDane narrowed his eyes, peering at the teen. “Isn’t it obvious to you that if what’s on this picture is the same thing you saw, and you did not snap this shot, then someone else must’ve seen them, too?”

Barbara Wayne lowered her head, embarrassed by the tall ranger’s logic. “Yes, Sir, I was only concerned for their safety, being homeless and all...”

“That’s mighty nice of you, young lady,” Jorge hurried to reply. “They’ll be all right. We’ll take care of them.”

The rangers and the policemen thanked the teenager as she left, along with the rest of the vacationing party.

The Mormon couple had the closest and possibly the longest encounter with the Indians, yet they testified briefly and left hurriedly. They parted from everyone else, driving northward to the campfire site of the night before.

Gabrien Smoot stopped the camper, turning to his wife, Shanlee. During the shimmering light of dawn, the dense forest into which the Indians disappeared, stood before them. They recalled vividly the Indians on their white horse. Gabrien pushed his foot slowly on the gas pedal, moving the big car carefully into the woods. The terrain was hardly passable for human machines, least of all for their big camper. Nevertheless, nature seemed to have been kind to them, facilitating their passage with ease.

The stern look on the Indian's face haunted the couple, pulling them ever deeper into the forest. Passing the squirrels, beavers and bears, they pushed against the evergreens and Ponderosa pine for two hours before reaching a wide, open plane. They continued driving as far as the land would permit. Gabriel turned the engine off. They could not drive any further, for deep below, the Colorado River rumbled. Walking toward the edge of the terrain, they observed the forceful waters gushing through the enchanting territory that had once exclusively belonged to the Indian nations. They gazed extensively at their surroundings, hypnotized by the marvel of the great land. Holding each other, the couple kissed and returned to their camper for a snack.

Astonished, they saw the Indians and their white horse, awaiting them from a distance.

The neighing stallion moved slowly forward. Majestic and rugged, yet ordinarily human, the Indian got off his horse, standing tall. The woman, holding the baby remained firmly on the horse. The couple observed the robust, bare-chested Indian approach them. The arrows inside his quiver were firmly tied to his left side, while his bow was strung across his shoulder behind him. The Indian raised his right hand.

“*Yá’át’ééh,*” he greeted them.

Shanlee Smoot was cautious, holding tightly to her man.

“Don’t be frightened,” Gabriel whispered. “He won’t harm us,” he added, allaying her fears. He then stepped forward a few paces. “Hello,” he said, returning the Indian’s greeting. “I’m sorry we don’t speak your language. Do you know English?”

“Not very good,” the Indian replied. “We come from reservation. We learn speak English little but reservation not good for *ah-wayh’*.”

“Reservation no good for *ah-wayh’*? Who or what is *ah-wayh’*?” Gabriel asked.

The Indian took the baby from his mother, showing it to the young couple. “This is *ah-wayh’*.”

The young couple approached the baby boy, observing him tucked in his cozy blanket. Shanlee took an immediate liking to the baby.

“His name is *Ah-wayh’*,” Gabriel said but Shanlee shook her head, looking up at the mother who sat on the horse not far from them.

The Hopi woman chuckled, shaking her head as well.

“I think *ah-wayh’* means ‘baby,’” Shanlee said, looking at the woman on the horse again.

The mother nodded her head.

“Yes.” Shanlee smiled back. “*Ah-wayh’* means baby...but...what is his name? What is he called?” she asked the woman.

Jerome Smallfeather turned briefly to his wife who simply kept smiling. “His name is Starface,” he replied. “I want you help little Starface get education.”

Gabriel looked a bit confused. “Like I said, I don’t speak your language but you speak plenty English,” he said, getting off subject. “We saw what you did down in the valley.

You saved a little boy from a snake,” the Mormon reminded.

“Aoo’, I kill snake but reservation no good,” the Indian reiterated.

“I understand,” Gabriel said. “You don’t like reservation. So, you want us to educate Starface?”

“Aoo’, I want Starface to have good education,” Jerome Smallfeather said.

The young couple glanced at each other.

“All right, it’s not a problem,” Gabriel assured him. “We’ll take you to the proper government body that takes care of Indians who want to leave the reservation. Many Indians go to public schools these days.”

The Navajo man returned a firm response, “*Doh-tah*’. No government. First, Starface live with you. When Starface big, Starface go to government school,” he suggested.

Surprised, the young couple looked at each other.

“We live in Salt Lake City,” Shanlee explained, “in the state of Utah, across the big mountains, way beyond this big river, far away.”

Jerome Smallfeather insisted. “You go to Utah; Starface go, too.”

“No, we can’t take Starface with us,” Shanlee said. “It’s not as simple as you think. People would ask many questions but, I have an idea.”

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