

I am a mouse in the corner, a spider on history's wall whose once steel-strong web time has turned flimsy as gossamer. I am also an annoying reminder of an untold past and its affect on the present. I have waited and waited, and then waited some more for the right moment to speak...to speak of injustices buried so deep they have all but been forgotten. To speak of an unforgivable genocide that destroyed an entire culture...simply for the sake of destruction.

While God may pardon all sins, and I wish I could be more God-like, I cannot forgive so easily.

So I reckon it's time I put to use some of that good college education I received, and set the record straight.

—*Samuel Everett Heateson*

1943

Prologue:

Sam Heateson stood in front of his bedroom window dressed against the cold. He wore a thick gray cardigan sweater and dark wool slacks, his feet encased in flannel-lined slippers; he stood gazing out at a late season blizzard that whipped shards of sleet against the glass like frozen needles in search of a vein. Sam reached his time-wrinkled, age-spotted hand to his head and massaged the thin gray crew cut. Anticipation of his self-imposed task loomed before him, caused an involuntary shiver to rake his spine like a frozen mallet on a xylophone.

Behind a mournful sigh, he turned from the window and shuffled across the room on hesitant, unsteady steps; walking no longer an easy task since a second stroke in as many months had all but sapped his strength...not to mention his will to live.

Last week during his weekly house call, Doctor Diminio informed RoseAnne, Sam's daughter, there was nothing more he could do for her father, and that in all likelihood: "Mr. Heateson will suffer a debilitating, if not fatal spell in the not too distant future."

Of course RoseAnne did her best to hide the inevitable from her father, but Sam knew he was dying, and that was exactly why he'd chosen to spend his final weeks seated, for long exhausting hours, at the writing table he'd asked moved to a corner of his cozy bedroom.

Sam shuffled to a stop in front of the dark walnut roll-top desk, where he supported himself heavily on the back of a tapestry-upholstered chair, and then after a few moments rest, dragged the chair out from under the table and dropped his time-weary frame (none too gracefully) to the seat with a hollow thud. He clicked on the brass reading lamp and watched the pull chain wriggle a hula for a few moments, and then reached for one of three fountain pens lined up next to the lamp, dipped the nib into an inkwell, blotted the excess ink from the tip, and then picked up where he'd left off earlier in the afternoon.

Genesis:

It is after great deliberation, due mostly to years of persistent supplication from relatives and friends—the latter of which none remain—that I have elected at this late stage in life to tell my story. Being four score, plus two years, I have witnessed a great many changes during a life so bountiful with both fortune and mishap that I have somehow managed to outlive the zest for life itself.

Begun in 1860, one year before my birth, the Pony Express has come and gone. I have been blessed with the good fortune to have traversed this beautiful nation of ours on foot, by horseback and covered wagon, locomotive and, even now, enjoy an occasional Sunday afternoon ride in my son-in-law's shiny new motorcar, a 1943 Packard Clipper. I have also witnessed the telegraph's transformation into the telephone, and currently listen (with much merriment I might add) to those "Old West" dramas broadcast across a contraption called a radio, have heard of, but yet to see this new invention called *television*.

Could I in any way, in my wildest dreams have anticipated the escapades of my youth would be of such deep interest to so many? Hardly not; but so as to silence the above-mentioned recurrent pleadings I will reconstruct—guide the reader down a path giving all diligence to accuracy—a long ago but hardly forgotten period of my early life, an era that would prove to have a profound influence upon me; an influence I have carried into these, my waning years; an influence I shall proudly carry into the next life which, I might add, I neither fear nor welcome.

As I write I remain cognizant some may read these pages and decide they are nothing greater than a work of autobiographical fiction, conjured up by a senile old

man's fertile imagination; NAY I tell you! This is the true story of one who no longer walks amongst us. One with whom I shall no doubt soon be reunited, and it will do my heart good to once again see my old friend. This is the story of the great Comanche warrior Kwanahshee (kwan-Ah-she)—the legendary White Wolf—as told by a humble soul what had the greatest honor of making that unique creature's acquaintance.

But before I endeavor to lead the reader down the dusty trails of a bygone era—to that proverbial fork in the road where diverse paths were ordained to cross, or in this case collide—it would be most prudent if I first communicated my own humble beginnings.

Born two days post Christmas in the year referenced above, and having been told my birth place was somewhere in West Virginia, which I neither recall nor know as factual in nature, and due to tender years have no remembrance of our family's move to the uncharted southern plains, then known as “the Oklahoma Territories.” I, Samuel Everett Heateson, will now commit the pen to the page with all honesty of recollection, and submit to the reader the following tale:

Life On The Great Plains:

My parents, Israel and Rebecca Heateson, relocated from the more populated eastern portion of our then fledgling nation to the untamed west; I suppose, partially, to avoid the bloodshed of the Civil War. At the time little could they have realized their westward travel by covered wagon would deposit them into a lesser-known battle, but one the reader can rest assured was of equal passion; for it was not the salvation of the Union that stood in balance, rather, it was the very survival of a race and way of life that existed for thousands of years before the white man's encroachment drove it to the brink of extinction.

To save the reader unnecessary page turning I shall take the liberty to capsulize my early existence, which is really of little significance to the story. Rather, I shall move forward on a brisk pace to the point where dramatic changes occurred in my life.

Unlike many larger pioneer families, Father and Mother had but two offspring, and I only have conjecture as my ally as to the reason thereof. A place in clouded memory points to a barren womb after the birth of my sibling, Joshua Abraham Heateson. I was but a mere lad the night the stork delivered that loud, pink bundle of wrinkled flesh that interrupted my slumber. Some months hence I inquired of Father if the stork should ever again visit our humble abode. In a gruff voice, he replied,

“No!” and immediately presented me with an armload of split timbers. “Fetch these up to your mother,” he said. As you can see, my father was a man of few words.

Compared to the bustling city of Cleveland, Ohio, where I currently reside with my daughter RoseAnne and her husband John Anthony Winston (who barely lost 41’s election for the Mayorship to Frank J. Lausche), our remote homestead in Oklahoma was isolated from the rest of the world.

At the time Father had staked a claim to fifty acres of fertile land on the banks of a narrow, crystal-clear stream that fed the North Fork of the Red River, approximately thirty miles southwest of what is now Lawton, Oklahoma, but then known as Fort Sill. Our closest neighbor was the Wagner family, German immigrants who lived six miles to the northeast. By today’s lively standards a remote homestead nestled on the banks of a pristine waterway may sound delightful, possibly even heavenly—but it was not. Pioneer life on the plains was, indeed, a harsh one!

At this juncture of the narrative I shall call upon the reader to excite his or her imagination; picture a solitary existence where you occasioned no persons for months on end other than immediate family. Oh yes, there were those occasional day-long journeys into Fort Sill where accumulated furs and hides were traded for flour, corn meal, rice, beans and other dry goods (bolts of wool and Flax) that Mother required to keep the household fed and clothed. Also purchased, from the blacksmith shop, were tools intended to lessen Father’s labors at tilling the rocky land, and over the years an abundance of hides had allowed for the acquisition of several horses, along with a small head of cattle. It was during those infrequent excursions up to Fort Sill that I was afforded the opportunity to romp about with children my own age, but as stated above, beyond the sporadic trapper that wandered by our cabin en route to the Texas panhandle, contact with my own species was limited for the most part to Father, Mother, Joshua, and occasionally the Wagner boys, Adam and Levi.

The spring of ‘74 arrived early on the Great Plains, and whilst Father busied himself turning the ground for the spring plant (which would supply our winter table throughout the winter with dried and canned vegetables), Mother’s time was consumed fussing with Joshua, sewing, cooking, and tending to the milk cows.

By the time I’d reached the *experienced* age of twelve (on my birthday last) I had become a proficient hunter, often charged with the responsibility of supplying meat for our table. The variety of game in our locale was abundant with deer, raccoon, waterfowl, and squirrels...to mention but a few. It was a rare expedition indeed when I returned empty handed, and proudly I boast of killing my first bear at the tender age of nine.

Captured By Indians:

As stated, spring arrived early, so after I'd finished my chores I made my plans for an afternoon hunting trip to the southwest of our cabin. Joshua being but nine and a half years old at the time, begged and pleaded and pleaded and begged to accompany me on the expedition. I flat out refused to take him along. It was not that I did not love my little brother...he just couldn't keep his mouth shut, which had a tendency to make game a little more difficult to come across. Much to my chagrin, Mother said if I didn't take Joshua along with me I wasn't going either. I honestly believe she wanted a reprieve from his 1,001 questions, so she dumped him on me.

As we rode off, Father said, "...don't wander afar from the cabin yung'uns..." His warning came as a result of Mr. Wagner and sons visit the prior evening, rifles carried at the ready. They made known to us that a small band of Comanche Indians had been spotted in the area, "...no doubt it's just a hunting party...nothing to fret over..." Mr. Wagner had said.

Allow me pause to explain the significance of Indians in close proximity to our cabin, and mind you, we're talking about the 1870s. "Red savage" raids on outlying farms for the purpose of stealing horses was not uncommon at the time, however, in all my years the only place I'd come in close congress with an Indian was at Fort Sill, where many of the Plains' tribes had surrendered themselves to the reservations being set up around the fort. As Joshua and I headed out from the cabin I was not the least bit concerned about a confrontation with an Indian. The red skins at Fort Sill seemed to know their place when in the company of the whites, and besides, I carried with me my twelfth birthday gift, a Sharp's Rifle Company 44 caliber, single shot, long rifle.

Joshua and I rode off that pleasant spring morning astride the bare back of our gentle gray mare, Bossy. His insistent pleadings caused me to relinquish to him the unloaded rifle. We were but a few miles from home, and less than a mile from a place where I had seen, on a previous hunt, an enormous buck whose antlers, I reckoned, would look remarkable affixed overtop our cabin door.

We arrived at our destination and I brought Bossy to a halt, eased from her back and dropped bare feet to the powdered earth. I turned and waited patiently while Joshua, reluctantly, handed down the rifle, which I carried off some fifteen paces and propped agin' a large tree at the entrance to a thick, dark grove of cedars and cottonwoods. When I then turned to assist with Joshua's dismount, I froze in terror.

From whence they came I have no idea, but there they stood, six of them. Joshua, surrounded by a wall of red flesh, had become as wide-eyed and gape-mouthed as he tended to get on Christmas morning. My jolt lasted but a moment. In a single frantic motion, as fast as a star streaks across the night sky, I reached into the

pouch attached to my waist by rope and removed a cartridge, and then thrust my hand behind me for the rifle. I grasped nothing more substantial than a handful of air. I slowly turned around and found myself staring into the black eyes of a redskin savage, the rifle casually rested on his shoulder.

Without warning, he struck me above the right eye with the butt of my own firearm. I can only assume a moment's unconsciousness, or at the very least being severely dazed, because when I opened my eyes I discovered my head rested in Joshua's wet lap. He was sobbing uncontrollably.

I immediately found myself borne up at the end of the savage's clenched fist, the buttons down the front of my denim shirt popped loose from their mooring. My feet were suspended several inches above the ground, the savage's face thrust within inches from mine as he grunted in a language unfamiliar to me.

Concerned not for my welfare, but rather, for the safety of my little brother, I answered the filthy stinking savage's questions with a formidable blow to the jaw. He snarled at me through yellowed fangs, and then proceeded to repeatedly backhand me like a sassy child.

Tears of rage mixed with the blood pouring from my upper lip and nose. I screamed, "Let go of me you vile heathen!"

For the gallant effort to break free I found myself battered about with heavy blows, and once again rendered unconscious. The hazy return to my senses was hastened by Joshua's bloodcurdling scream: "No! Sammy!"

I opened my eyes to the blurred image of a savage straddling my chest, my shoulders pinned under his knees, my brown locks intertwined in his fingers. In his free hand he brought to bear toward my skull a large skinning knife. About to lose my scalp without the benefit of death, I was not afraid, because Joshua's and my daily reading lessons came from the Good Book, a book of such insight into the mysteries of life it could only have been inspired by the Almighty himself. The reason I feared not shedding my mortal vessel to the hands of savages was because I was sure my demise was of little importance in the Almighty's plan, but I could not permit history to affix to Sammy Heateson's name the guilt-ridden disgrace of Cain slaying Abel—even through an act of omission.

As the elder Heateson it was my responsibility to protect my little brother, and so with all the fury a boy can muster against a full-grown heathen, I lashed out gallantly. I kicked, gnashed red flesh between my teeth, swung pugilist fists with complete abandon, for my staunch resistance, however, an unpredictable state of affairs developed. My dear little brother became the target of the Indians' wrath. Three braves drew bows taut with the intent of ending his young life. Somehow I managed to break free from the savage I was in contest with. I cast myself into the path of their missiles, shielded Joshua and I implored them to take me instead, to do with me as they wished.

Whither it was resilient courage, or pity, the latter of which I hardly doubt, the heathens lowered the bows and removed their arrows from the string. To this day I trust in my heart-of-hearts that it was the hand of God what had intervened in their murderous intent.

The heartless savages left one brave guard over us while the remainder walked a short distance away and held council. I hugged Joshua tight and assured him we would indeed survive. I still recall his face was the pallid color of a snowcapped mountain in the spring. I'm not so sure he even heard my trembling words of encouragement.

The Indians disembarked from their convention and the warrior whose design it had been to take my scalp stepped before us. He bade us to sit, but of course we did not understand his tongue, so with a heavy hand he shoved me to the ground. I, in turn, dragged Joshua down beside me. The next few minutes were excruciatingly long. From the hand gestures and primitive grunts of the brave squatted on his heels in front of me, I tried to decipher what was to become of us. Finally able to discern by his signing from Joshua to Bossy that we were free to leave, I leaped to my feet with exuberance and dragged Joshua up from the ground.

The Indians crowded around us like a red cocoon, closing their ranks as we neared our horse, laughing while I pleaded with Joshua to climb onto Bossy, but by now he had become like a sleepwalker. One of the redskins grabbed him by the arm and flung him onto Bossy, a defeated whimper escaped his colorless lips. Under the current circumstances I did not think it wise to protest his rough handling, nor was I about to consider a demand for the return of my rifle. The joyous prospect we would escape with our lives, and our scalps, stilled my voice. I bounded behind Joshua and made ready to heel Bossy to a full gallop when, suddenly, I found myself yanked from her back and dashed to the ground.

You cannot imagine the horror that knotted the pit of my stomach when it became clear that only one of the Heateson boys would return home. A sharp slap to the rump, and Bossy was away on a lazy trot.

Confident the old nag would find her way home, carry Joshua to safety, I nearly found myself thanking the heathens for allowing his release, and for saving him from witnessing whatever disagreeable torture they had in mind for me.

One of them disappeared into the thick copse, and in short order returned with their mounts. The savage whose intent it had been to take my scalp grabbed a handful of hair and yanked me onto his horse. He wrapped his arms around me and signed for me to hold onto the horse's mane. To assure I did not release my grip and leap to the ground and make good my escape, he tucked his elbows tight against my sides, securing me in place. With a series of war-whoops we rode off in a direction totally foreign to me.

The Great Escape:

The Indians rode hard-and-fast for the remainder of the afternoon, and well into the night. They put behind them as many miles as possible, dampening any hope I fostered that Father would eventually overtake us and secure my release. I would later learn it was best we had not been intercepted, for a fleeing Indian would rather kill his captive and massacre the well-meaning posse than surrender his illicit gain.

As the moon climbed high in the sky, we crossed enough streams and rivers to frustrate even the best of trackers. When it was poised directly overhead, my captors apparently postulated enough landscape had been crossed to thwart my rescue, so they stopped to rest.

Cold and hungry and exhausted, my behind rubbed sore from so long on the pony's bare back, I was thankful for the reprieve. The Indians set up camp at the top of a butte that gave them an unrestricted view in all directions, but they dared not light a fire for fear of giving away their position. They sat in a tight circle under a pale moon, ankles folded into their laps as they dined on dried buffalo jerky and canteen water...none of which they offered me. When I tried to sign that I was both thirsty and hungry, they pointed fingers and mocked me with laughter. I sulked off a short distance and set my mind to a single enterprise—ESCAPE!

While they sat in a circle laughing and grunting in their uncouth tongue, I pondered my exodus. The minute the heathens lay down, and I was certain they were fast asleep, I would take flight.

According to the position of the setting sun our journey, deep into the hinterland, had been predominately on a southwesterly compass point. I assumed, with no clarity of conviction, we must be within the state of Texas, possibly fifty to seventy miles from home. While I dared not risk raising an alarm by attempting to steal a horse—besides, my tender derriere had no desire to return to the back of a horse—I further simplified that a trek through the wilds, afoot and unarmed, would take me between four and seven days. Food I could do without, but should perish for a lack of water. While the savages slept I would liberate their canteens (What concern was it of mine if they perished of thirst?) and be well underway by the time the simple-minded heathens realized they had been outwitted. I watched and waited, bided my time for them to repose to slumber; and that's when *the great escape* turned to folly.

Prior to retiring for the evening one of the scalawags ventured away from camp only to return a short time later with a timber six-foot in length. This they buried in the ground to its midpoint, and then fastened me to the pole, my hands securely bound behind my back with a course leather strap of buffalo hide. I remained

confident, however, that nimbleness would permit me to work my hands to the top of the pole during the night and make good my escape. Once free of their encampment, I would concern myself with locating a jagged stone to saw through the bindings. It never occurred to me that those illiterate heathens might be slightly smarter than a boy inexperienced in the ways of captivity.

A second thong of leather was secured around my neck, and then attached to the pole, drawn so tight I was forced to turn my head to the side so I could breathe. And as if the predicament of being bound hand and neck were not discouragement enough, those crafty red devils removed my outer garments by virtue of the scalping knife, and then tightly lashed my ankles together. During that sleepless night, clad in red long johns and tethered to the pole like a spring goat, I lost all sensation in my feet and hands.

All night long my teeth chattered in rhythm to the sound of snoring Indians. *To Hades with my noble plan!* I chided myself over and over again.

The next morning as dawn's first light grayed the edges of the horizon they awoke and released me from my bindings. But when I tried to stand, my tingling limbs refused to cooperate and I immediately fell to my buttocks with a heavy thud. Of course those dreadful heathens found great mirth with my pratfall, while I on the other hand cursed them with callous words barely deliberated before my capture, let alone spoken aloud.

Through tears of frustration and rage, I screamed, "Kill me you heathen bastards! Kill me now and be done with it."

I spat at their feet and brought forth the true living God to bear down upon their souls. "May the Lord God Almighty strike each and every one of you dead in your tracks, you merciless cowards!"

I turned my back to them with full expectation of receiving the tomahawk to the back of the skull, but instead of my brains being spilled out onto the ground, the youngest of them squatted in front of me and offered his canteen—which I might add carried a U.S. Cavalry inscription. Not in the fashion to drink from the same vessel as these contemptuous creatures, neither was I ready to die of thirst. Unbeknownst to me, and in short order, I would receive all the fluids I needed, and then some. I'd managed but a few meager swallows before the canteen was yanked from my hands by my abductor, who again ordered me by signs and grunts to the back of his horse. I shook my head no; no I would not climb onto his beast.

The blow to my chest landed with such ferocity that it knocked the wind from my sails. My abductor flipped me onto my belly and sat on me as I tried desperately to catch my breath. He tied my hands and feet, dragged me across the ground by my hair, and then none too gingerly flung me across the back of his horse like a gutted deer. That was how I rode for the remainder of the day.

It appeared that the only means of escape from my desperate situation would be the wanton act of taking my own life, an act I was not sure I held the fortitude to accomplish.

We continued on a southwesterly compass point for the better part of the day, and then for no apparent reason one of the braves let out as series of blood-stopping war-whoops. Of course from my upside down point-of-view I could see little, but in short order discovered that we'd arrived at their village.

Tribal Ritual:

Deposited to the ground with the gentleness of a sack of milled grain tossed from the back of a wagon, I lay face down in the dirt for a moment before I managed to roll onto my side and, with difficulty, rock myself upright into a seated position.

I looked around at the gathering crowd, and considering how many of the Indian children ran about stark naked, while papooses suckled bared breasts, not to mention the modest loincloths meagerly concealing the braves' nether regions, I should not have been in the least bit ashamed of my disheveled appearance clad only in dirty, tattered red long underwear.

The same young buck what had shared his canteen with me assisted me to my feet. I stood before the gawking throng as several of them perambulated around their terrified captive, chattering in guttural jargon, pointing fingers at me.

I'd heard Mr. Wagner speak of the atrocities Indians sometimes imparted on white captives—relayed in most graphic detail. The evil they did ranged from burnings at the stake, to live scalplings, and sometimes to skinning captives alive and feeding them to their dogs. As I stood before them pondering my fate, a commotion arose from the back of the crowd and interrupted my reverie.

A white shock of hair pushed its way through the crowd toward the forward ranks; no doubt one of their elders, I deceived myself at the time. When the creature stepped into full view, my awe-struck jaw fell open like a yawning cave.

His hair was unlike the brittle, lackluster thin tresses of an elderly person, quite the contrary. Gathered together and braided into long tails that dangled beyond powerful shoulders, his snow-white mane was dressed with bear tallow. It gleamed in the late afternoon sunlight. The creature's skin was baked as brown as tanned leather. He was adorned in the garb of his tribesmen, which is to say he wore nothing more than a breechclout. From the leather strap securing the paltry covering to his hips hung several scalps of human origin. Tied around his neck was an intricate leather necklace, decorated with silver and turquoise beads that accented a single bear's claw. A deep, hideous scar along his left ribcage, thick silver bands encased both wrists and muscular upper arms. Eagle feathers suspended from holes pierced through each earlobe swayed in the breeze. Painted upon his face and running from the hairline to the top of the cheek just below his left eye were two black stripes and a red center one, each equal in length. It was not this Comanche warrior's countenance that troubled me the most; it was his set of piercing eyes, the radiant color of a cloudless sky, communicating neither compassion nor tolerance.

Unbeknownst to me at the time, I stood before Kwanahshee, the legendary *White Wolf*—a white pioneer child stolen many years ago and raised in the way of the

Indian. Under the intensity of his unblinking glower I turned my eyes away, as if unworthy to gaze upon such a daunting specimen. He grunted several commands I deemed his endorsement to hasten my execution, and when I located the fortitude to look up from the ground the great Kwanahshee was retreating through his congregation of Indians, a frenzied squaw ran along at his side, clinging and tugging against his arm, chattering at a frantic mile-a-minute pace.

The circle of redskins closed ranks around me and I began reciting, aloud, the 23rd Psalm...*‘Yea though I walk through the valley of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.’*

An old squaw signed that I should turn around. Because I failed understand her, I was instantly reprimanded. Several boys picked up stones and hurled them at me, opening deep gashes in my flesh. It appeared to me that as a Christian in the presence of pagan gentiles, I would be stoned to death in the way of the Old Testament. I stood firm...nonresistant...even as the Lord had resisted not those gathered to crucify him. The stoning was thrice repeated before I succumbed to the weakness of spirit and turned away so the ruthless cowards could knife me in the back.

The toothless hag of a squaw stepped forward and ripped asunder the remnants of my tattered clothing, and then from behind unintelligible grunts, shoved me forward. Bound as I was, hand and foot, I stumbled and fell to the ground face-first and lay there, humiliated in my nakedness before savages of mixed gender. They, in turn, shamelessly laughed at me. Someone removed the restraints from my ankles and wrists, and I was again ordered to my feet. Hesitation brought about a sharp slap to the side of my head that reopened my scabbed upper lip, and set my ears pealing like a church bell. The blood flowing from my mouth excited the savages; they began whooping and hollering and cavorting around me in a barbaric dance. I silently blessed God for sparing Joshua these agonies, as well as not having to witness my death—nor me his.

Dragged to my feet and prodded forward at the tip of an Indian lance, I soon found myself on the banks of a wide, muddy river with a lazy current. I was forced into the water, which confirmed the manner of my death they had chosen...drowning.

Suddenly, two braves lunged at me from the riverbank and accosted me with a level of ferocity what I had never experienced before. They delighted the crowd by forcing my head under water and pummeling the back of my neck with heavy blows; and just when I thought I could no longer hold my breath, they snatched me to the surface and permitted a quick gulp of air, and then, once again plunged me down to Neptune’s sepulcher.

During one such reprieve I caught a glimpse of the riverbank. It was lined with men, women, and children all whipped to a frenzy, and hooting barbarous encouragement to my attackers. But standing apart from the crowd I saw the same

young brave who had twice come to my aid—once with his canteen, the second time when he picked me up off the ground—and he obviously took no pleasure with my demise.

This game of cat-torments-mouse continued how many more times I cannot be certain. All I remember is that river water began to clog my nose and throat, and I felt myself slipping toward the hereafter. Without warning, I was hoisted into the air and carried, semi-conscious, to the riverbank, where I was dashed to the ground ahead of a painful thud. I struggled to my hands and knees and vomited up copious amounts of river water, mixed with bile. Once again my tresses were gathered into a savage's fist. I felt my lifeless body being dragged along the ground, and then deposited next to a roaring fire.

I have no recollection of which culprit yanked back my head and clutched my throat in a vise-like grip, but what I do remember is the pain of sharpened, burning twigs being thrust through each earlobe. No longer able to suffer in silence as had the Lord; I screamed loud enough that Father and Mother should have heard my agony, from any distance, and came to my rescue.

The aforementioned blue-eyed devil sat down on the ground next to me and bade me to close my eyes, which I promptly did, praying with all my might that he was about to deliver the fatal blow. Vaguely, I felt myself being drawn spread-eagle by violent hands, and waited (with great anticipation) for one of their spears to pierce my breast. A small wooden dowel wrapped in hide was jammed into my mouth an instant before intense pain seized my thigh just above the right knee. The scent of scorched flesh (My flesh!) sickened me, but I had nothing left in my gullet to retch up. I bit down on the rod and screamed bloody murder, struggled with waning vigor against their powerful grasp as they violated my body with fire.

It was too much to endure—the abduction, the beatings, naked humiliation, stoning and near drowning, the puncturing of my ears and searing of my flesh—I fainted dead away.