

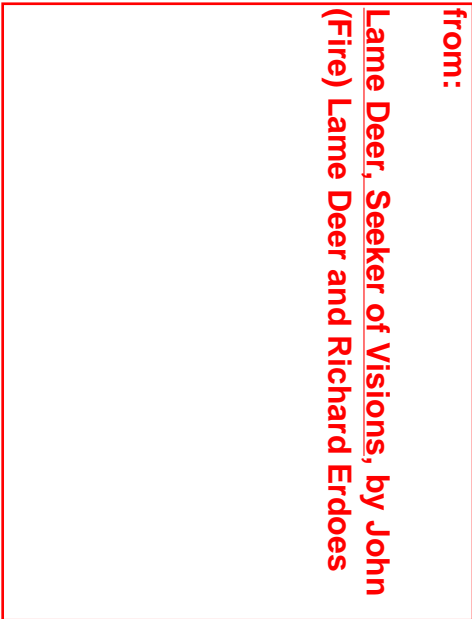
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last one. So you can see that I am in no hurry to do this. Study my earth picture well. It is a spiritual design a man has to think about.

The twenty-four marks also represent the four directions of the universe, four dots each for the north, the east, the west, the south, the sky above and the earth below. I point my peace pipe toward all these directions. Now we are one with the universe, with all the living things, a link in the circle which has no end. It means we were here long before the first white man came, we are here now, we will still be here at the end of time—Indian Time. We will live! Now let us smoke. *He-hetchetu.*

from:

Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions, by John (Fife) Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes



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Talking to the Owls and Butterflies

Let's sit down here, all of us, on the open prairie, where we can't see a highway or a fence. Let's have no blankets to sit on, but feel the ground with our bodies, the earth, the yielding shrubs. Let's have the grass for a mattress, experiencing its sharpness and its softness. Let us become like stones, plants, and trees. Let us be animals, think and feel like animals.

Listen to the air. You can hear it, feel it, smell it, taste it. *Woniyá waken*—the holy air—which renews all by its breath. *Woniyá, woniyá waken*—spirit, life, breath, renewal—it means all that. *Woniyá*—we sit together, don't touch, but something is there; we feel it between us, as a presence. A good way to start thinking about nature, talk about it. Rather talk to it, talk to the rivers, to the lakes, to the winds as to our relatives.

You have made it hard for us to experience nature in the good way by being part of it. Even here we are conscious that somewhere out in those hills there are missile silos and radar stations. White men always pick the few unspoiled, beautiful, awesome spots for the sites of these abominations. You have raped and violated these lands, always saying, "Gimme, gimme, gimme," and never giving anything back. You have taken 200,000 acres of our Pine Ridge reservation and made them into a bombing range. This land is so beautiful and strange that now some of you want to make it into a national park. The only use you have made of this land since you took it from us was to blow it up. You have not only despoiled the earth, the

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rocks, the minerals, all of which you call "dead" but which are very much alive; you have even changed the animals, which are part of us, part of the Great Spirit, changed them in a horrible way, so no one can recognize them. There is power in a buffalo—spiritual, magic power—but there is no power in an Angus, in a Hereford.

There is power in an antelope, but not in a goat or in a sheep, which holds still while you butcher it, which will eat your newspaper if you let it. There was great power in a wolf, even in a coyote. You have made him into a freak—a toy poodle, a Pekingese, a lap dog. You can't do much with a cat, which is like an Indian, unchangeable. So you fix it, alter it, declaw it, even cut its vocal cords so you can experiment on it in a laboratory without being disturbed by its cries.

A partridge, a grouse, a quail, a pheasant, you have made them into chickens, creatures that can't fly, that wear a kind of sunglasses so that they won't peck each other's eyes out, "birds" with a "pecking order." There are some farms where they breed chickens for breast meat. Those birds are kept in low cages, forced to be hunched over all the time, which makes the breast muscles very big. Soothing sounds, Muzak, are piped into these chicken hutches. One loud noise and the chickens go haywire, killing themselves by flying against the mesh of their cages. Having to spend all their lives stooped over makes an unnatural, crazy, no-good bird. It also makes unnatural, no-good human beings.

That's where you fooled yourselves. You have not only altered, declawed and malformed your winged and four-legged cousins; you have done it to yourselves. You have changed men into chairmen of boards, into office workers, into time-clock punchers. You have changed women into housewives, truly fearful creatures. I was once invited into the home of such a one.

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"Watch the ashes, don't smoke, you stain the curtains. Watch the goldfish bowl, don't breathe on the parakeet, don't lean your head against the wallpaper; your hair may be greasy. Don't spill liquor on that table: it has a delicate finish. You should have wiped your boots; the floor was just varnished. Don't, don't, don't..." That is crazy. We weren't made to endure this. You live in prisons which you have built for yourselves, calling them "homes," offices, factories. We have a new joke on the reservation: "What is cultural deprivation?" Answer: "Being an upper-middle-class white kid living in a split-level suburban home with a color TV."

Sometimes I think that even our pitiful tar-paper shacks are better than your luxury homes. Walking a hundred feet to the outhouse on a clear wintry night, through mud or snow, that's one small link with nature. Or in the summer, in the back country, leaving the door of the privy open, taking your time, listening to the humming of the insects, the sun warming your bones through the thin planks of wood; you don't even have that pleasure anymore.

Americans want to have everything sanitized. No smells! Not even the good, natural man and woman smell. Take away the smell from under the armpits, from your skin. Rub it out, and then spray or dab some nonhuman odor on yourself, stuff you can spend a lot of money on, ten dollars an ounce, so you know this has to smell good. "B.O.," bad breath, "Intimate Female Odor Spray"—I see it all on TV. Soon you'll breed people without body openings.

I think white people are so afraid of the world they created that they don't want to see, feel, smell or hear it. The feeling of rain and snow on your face, being numbed by an icy wind and thawing out before a smoking fire, coming out of a hot sweat bath and plunging into a cold stream, these things make you feel alive, but you don't want them anymore. Living in

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boxes which shut out the heat of the summer and the chill of winter, living inside a body that no longer has a scent, hearing the noise from the hi-fi instead of listening to the sounds of nature, watching some actor on TV having a make-believe experience when you no longer experience anything for yourself, eating food without taste—that's your way. It's no good.

The food you eat, you treat it like your bodies, take out all the nature part, the taste, the smell, the roughness, then put the artificial color, the artificial flavor in. Raw liver, raw kidney—that's what we old-fashioned full-bloods like to get our teeth into. In the old days we used to eat the guts of the buffalo, making a contest of it, two fellows getting hold of a long piece of intestines from opposite ends, starting chewing toward the middle, seeing who can get there first; that's eating. Those buffalo guts, full of half-fermented, half-digested grass and herbs, you didn't need any pills and vitamins when you swallowed those. Use the bitterness of gall for flavoring, not refined salt or sugar. *Wasna*—meat, kidney fat and berries all pounded together—a lump of that sweet *wasna* kept a man going for a whole day. That was food, that had the power. Not the stuff you give us today: powdered milk, dehydrated eggs, pasteurized butter, chickens that are all drumsticks or all breast; there's no bird left there.

You don't want the bird. You don't have the courage to kill honestly—cut off the chicken's head, pluck it and gut it—no, you don't want this anymore. So it all comes in a neat plastic bag, all cut up, ready to eat, with no taste and no guilt. Your mink and seal coats, you don't want to know about the blood and pain which went into making them. Your idea of war—sit in an airplane, way above the clouds, press a button, drop the bombs, and never look below the clouds—that's the odorless, guiltless, sanitized way.

When we killed a buffalo, we knew what we were

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doing. We apologized to his spirit, tried to make him understand why we did it, honoring with a prayer the bones of those who gave their flesh to keep us alive, praying for their return, praying for the life of our brothers, the buffalo nation, as well as for our own people. You wouldn't understand this and that's why we had the Washita Massacre, the Sand Creek Massacre, the dead women and babies at Wounded Knee. That's why we have Song My and My Lai now.

To us life, all life, is sacred. The state of South Dakota has pest-control officers. They go up in a plane and shoot coyotes from the air. They keep track of their kills, put them all down in their little books. The stockmen and sheepowners pay them. Coyotes eat mostly rodents, field mice and such. Only once in a while will they go after a stray lamb. They are our natural garbage men cleaning up the rotten and stinking things. They make good pets if you give them a chance. But their living could lose some man a few cents, and so the coyotes are killed from the air. They were here before the sheep, but they are in the way; you can't make a profit out of them. More and more animals are dying out. The animals which the Great Spirit put here, they must go. The man-made animals are allowed to stay—at least until they are shipped out to be butchered. That terrible arrogance of the white man, making himself something more than God, more than nature, saying, "I will let this animal live, because it makes money"; saying, "This animal must go, it brings no income, the space it occupies can be used in a better way. The only good coyote is a dead coyote." They are treating coyotes almost as badly as they used to treat Indians.

You are spreading death, buying and selling death. With all your deodorants, you smell of it, but you are afraid of its reality; you don't want to face up to it. You have sanitized death, put it under the rug, robbed it of its honor. But we Indians think a lot about death.

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I do. Today would be a perfect day to die—not too hot, not too cool. A day to leave something of yourself behind, to let it linger. A day for a lucky man to come to the end of his trail. A happy man with many friends. Other days are not so good. They are for selfish, lonesome men, having a hard time leaving this earth. But for whites every day would be considered a bad one, I guess.

Eighty years ago our people danced the Ghost Dance, singing and dancing until they dropped from exhaustion, swooning, fainting, seeing visions. They danced in this way to bring back their dead, to bring back the buffalo. A prophet had told them that through the power of the Ghost Dance the earth would roll up like a carpet, with all the white man's works—the fences and the mining towns with their whorehouses, the factories and the farms with their stinking, unnatural animals, the railroads and the telegraph poles, the whole works. And underneath this rolled-up white man's world we would find again the flowering prairie, unspoiled, with its herds of buffalo and antelope, its clouds of birds, belonging to everyone, enjoyed by all.

I guess it was not time for this to happen, but it is coming back, I feel it warming my bones. Not the old Ghost Dance, not the rolling-up—but a new-old spirit, not only among Indians but among whites and blacks, too, especially among young people. It is like raindrops making a tiny brook, many brooks making a stream, many streams making one big river bursting all dams. Us making this book, talking like this—these are some of the raindrops.

Listen, I saw this in my mind not long ago: In my vision the electric light will stop sometime. It is used too much for TV and going to the moon. The day is coming when nature will stop the electricity. Police without flashlights, beer getting hot in the refrigerators, planes dropping from the sky, even the President

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can't call up somebody on the phone. A young man will come, or men, who'll know how to shut off all electricity. It will be painful, like giving birth. Rapings in the dark, winos breaking into the liquor stores, a lot of destruction. People are being too smart, too clever; the machine stops and they are helpless, because they have forgotten how to make do without the machine. There is a Light Man coming, bringing a new light. It will happen before this century is over. The man who has the power will do good things, too—stop all atomic power, stop wars, just by shutting the white electro-power off. I hope to see this, but then I'm also afraid. What will be will be.

I think we are moving in a circle, or maybe a spiral, going a little higher every time, but still returning to the same point. We are moving closer to nature again. I feel it, your two boys here feel it. It won't be bad, doing without many things you are now used to, things taken out of the earth and wasted foolishly. You can't replace them and they won't last forever. Then you'll have to live more according to the Indian way. People won't like that, but their children will. The machine will stop, I hope, before they make electric corncocks for poor Indians' privies.

We'll come out of our boxes and rediscover the weather. In the old days you took your weather as it came, following the cranes, moving south with the herds. Here, in South Dakota, they say, "If you don't like the weather, wait five minutes." It can be 100 degrees in the shade one afternoon and suddenly there comes a storm with hailstones as big as golf balls, the prairie is all white and your teeth chatter. That's good—a reminder that you are just a small particle of nature, not so powerful as you think.

You people try to escape the weather, fly to Miami where it's summer all the time, miss the rains, miss the snow. That's pitiful. Up to 1925 we had some old men who had a sort of a club where they could get

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together. Somehow they could tell what the weather would be. They needed no forecaster with all those gimmicks, satellites and what have you. They just had their wisdom, something which told them what nature was up to.

Some medicine men have the power to influence the weather. One does not use it lightly, only when it is absolutely necessary. When we hold our sun dance, we always try to have perfect weather. When we had a wedding ceremony in Winner, last spring, you saw me draw a design in the earth, the figure of a turtle. I picked this up from the old people. When I was a little boy I had a party where we played games. It was drizzling and I was mad. We wanted to play and the weather wouldn't let us. My grandma said, "Why don't you make the picture of a turtle?" Before we were through making it, the rain stopped. I could dry the country up, or make a special upside-down turtle and flood everything. You have to know the right prayer with it, the right words. I won't tell what they are. That's too dangerous. You don't fool around with it. I see that white man's look on your face. You don't believe this. Ask my friend Pete Catches here, a brother medicine man.

PETE CATCHES: "John is right. That sun dance he was referring to, when we chopped down the sun-dance pole, we had to catch the tree. It is not supposed to touch the ground. We stood in line and I was close to the trunk of the tree, and when it fell it hit me right above the knee. I went through the sun dance with that suffering in me. And I really liked it. My sun dance was as near close to authentic as I could make it. I pierced my flesh in the morning and broke loose around three o'clock in the afternoon, the longest piercing since we revived this sacred dance. And after I broke loose, there was a big thundercloud forming in the west. A lot of people wanted to get away, to go

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home before the storm broke. And it was nearing, coming on fast. So, during the course of the dance, they handed me my pipe, the pipe that I always use. I call it my chief pipe. So I took that and asked the Great Spirit to part that thunder, part it in half, so we can finish our ceremony. Before all the people that great storm parted, right before their eyes. The one part went to the north, wrought havoc in the White River country, clear on in, tore off the roofs, destroyed gardens and acted like that. The part of the storm which went south, toward Pine Ridge, covered everything with hail, but on the dance ground the sun kept shining. So, to me, that sun dance in 1964 was the best one I ever did.

"And the power of the turtle design, what John told you about it, we know this to be true. The heart of Keha, the turtle, is about the strongest thing there is. I keeps on beating and beating for two days after you kill the turtle. There is so much strength and endurance in it. To eat such a heart makes you tough. It imparts its power to whoever has eaten of it. My sister ate that turtle heart. They had to cut it in half for her to make it possible to swallow it. This made her into a strong woman, stout-hearted like a warrior. She had a growth on her breast. The doctors said it was cancer. She lit five cigarettes. She told the children to puff on them, to keep those cigarettes glowing. Then she took the lighted cigarettes, one after the other, and burned this evil thing out of her. On and on she went, deep into her breast, and her face remained calm all the while; not one muscle twitched. She is cured now. A turtle heart will do this for you.

But all animals have power, because the Great Spirit dwells in all of them, even a tiny ant, a butterfly, a tree, a flower, a rock. The modern, white man's way keeps that power from us, dilutes it. To come to nature, feel its power, let it help you, one needs time and patience for that. Time to think, to figure it all

out. You have so little time for contemplation; it's always rush, rush, rush with you. It lessens a person's life, all that grind, that hurrying and scurrying about. Our old people say that the Indians of long ago didn't have heart trouble. They didn't have that cancer. The illnesses they had they knew how to cure. But between 1890 and 1920 most of the medicines, the animal bundles, the pipes, the ancient, secret things which we had treasured for centuries, were lost and destroyed by the B.I.A., by the Government police. They went about tearing down sweat lodges, went into our homes, broke the pipes, tore up the medicine bags, threw them into the fire, burned them up, completely wiped out the wisdom of generations. But the Indian, you take away everything from him, he still has his mouth to pray, to sing the ancient songs. He can still do his *yuwipi* ceremony in a darkened room, beat his small drum, make the power come back, make the wisdom return. He did, but not all of it. The elk medicines are gone. The bear medicine, too. We had a medicine man here, up the creek, who died about fifteen years ago. He was the last bear medicine man that I knew about. And he was good, too. He was really good.

But it is coming again, the bear power. We make bear sounds, talk bear language when we are in a fighting mood. "Harrnh"—and you are as good as gone. A bear claw, properly treated, you pierce a man for the sun dance with it, he won't feel the pain. Let me tell you about the power of the bear, natural animal power when it comes up against one of those artificial, non-animals.

When I was a boy, a long time ago, I was traveling with my father. We were on our way back to Standing Rock. It happened on the road. My dad stopped for a poker game at a saloon. In the next room a young bear was sitting on the counter, hardly more than a cub. He

was chained down, really pitiful. They teased him, made him stand up on two legs.

The card players paid it no mind. They had big stacks of silver dollars before each player. I was sitting under the table. I liked those big, round, shiny silver pieces. I reached up and helped myself to some. Nobody noticed, or maybe they didn't mind. A big white man in a shaggy black coat and a derby walked into the place and sat down at the counter. With him he had a huge bulldog, really huge.

"You have a nice pet here," said the big man, chomping on a big cigar, to the bartender. "But you'd better watch him. If my dog gets loose, your bear will be all chewed up."

"That bulldog is good for nothing. He can't lick my pet!"

"I bet you fifty bucks he can. I give you odds—five to one—my bulldog will tear up this pet. Let's have a big fight!"

They put all this money up, the gamblers tripping over each other to get into the action. They took the bulldog and the bear outside. There was a big brown tent there where they used to hold revival meetings. There were four or five big cowboy hats full of betting money for the dog and for the bear. The news of the fight spread like wildfire, with more and more people coming all the time.

My dad had sold some cattle and had money on him. He told me, "Son, I'm going to bet a hundred dollars on that little pet bear." The big white man with the derby was so sure of his huge brute that he put up fistfuls of money against my dad—those big old twenty-dollar bills, gold and silver coins. They drew a circle inside the tent. Nobody was supposed to step in there. Those who had bet money could sit up front. They knelt or sat down so that the others could see what was going on. There were no bleachers. They put up some blankets, like a fence, to keep the two

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animals in the circle. The dog owner and the saloon keeper sat inside the circle together with the man who held the bank. I never again saw such a big heap of money all in one place. They were all puffing on their big cheroots, filling the tent with smoke. At last the big man with the dog said, "Five minutes more, after that no more bets!"

That caused a big commotion. Everybody tried to get into the act then. People got so heated up arguing about who was going to win, they started fist fights all over the place, the money rolling on the ground. Those were the old gambling days!

"Quit fussing and bet!" said the big man. Then he pulled out his watch. "Time's up. No more." He turned to his dog and pulled his ears a little. "Okay, get that bear, kill the little bastard. Tear him apart!"

That poor thing of a bear was sitting up like a baby, as if the whole show was no concern of his. "One round, that's all," said the bartender, "one round to the finish." Still a few ranchers and cowhands came running, money in their hands. They were out of luck, or maybe lucky, depending on what they had in mind, because the dog owner pulled a gun and fired it as a starter.

The poor little bear was still sitting up there when they sicked the dog on him. Boy, that bear came on slow. Under the old gas lamps his eyes looked blue. The dog was growling, snarling, his nose more wrinkled than my face is now. The bear just moved a foot closer and sat down again. He looked at that growling thing, all full of white teeth. The little bear just rubbed his paw on the earth, put some dirt on his head. That bulldog, maybe he was smarter than his owner. Maybe he knew something. He snarled, growled, made a big racket, but kept his distance. The big man in the derby got annoyed. "Come on, get on with it," he said and kicked the dog in the backside. The dog gathered himself up for the charge and finally here he comes.

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The bear just reached out with his paw, the claws shooting out like so many knives, and made one swipe at the dog, just one swipe, and that old bulldog is out and cold, throat ripped out, dead and gone. And the little bear made the killing sound, "harrnh," like a Sioux Indian.

My dad won over 700 dollars on that little bear. Most of the whites had bet on the bulldog; all the Indians had put their money on that puny bear. They knew he had the power.

It is the same with the buffalo. They have the power and the wisdom. We Sioux have a close relationship to the buffalo. He is our brother. We have many legends of buffalo changing themselves into men. And the Indians are built like buffalo, too—big shoulders, narrow hips. According to our belief, the Buffalo Woman who brought us the peace pipe, which is at the center of our religion, was a beautiful maiden, and after she had taught our tribes how to worship with the pipe, she changed herself into a white buffalo calf. So the buffalo is very sacred to us. You can't understand about nature, about the feeling we have toward it, unless you understand how close we were to the buffalo. That animal was almost like a part of ourselves, part of our souls.

The buffalo gave us everything we needed. Without it we were nothing. Our tipis were made of his skin. His hide was our bed, our blanket, our winter coat. It was our drum, throbbing through the night, alive, strengthened us, became flesh of our flesh. Not the smallest part of it was wasted. His stomach, a red-hot stone dropped into it, became our soup kettle. His horns were our spoons, the bones our knives, our women's awls and needles. Out of his sinews we made our bowstrings and thread. His ribs were fashioned into sleds for our children, his hoofs became rattles. His mighty skull, with the pipe leaning against it, was

our sacred altar. The name of the greatest of all Sioux was Tatanka Iyotake—Sitting Bull. When you killed off the buffalo, you also killed the Indian—the real, natural, “wild” Indian.

The buffalo has wisdom, but man-bred cattle—that’s just a factory-made thing. They have no sense. Those Mexican fighting bulls get fooled by the cape every time. They are brave, yes, but not very smart. Imagine those bullfighters taking on a buffalo. They’d all get killed. The man-bred bull, he keeps looking at the cape. But a buffalo wouldn’t be horn-swoggled by a red piece of cloth. He’d be looking for the man behind the cape, and his horns would find him. Buffalo are smart. They also have a sense of humor. Remember when we were together last in the Black Hills? When it suddenly snowed after a very hot day? Those six big black bulls we saw near Blue Bell, just like six large pick-up trucks. They were so happy over that snow. Gambling, racing around, playing like kittens. And afterward we came across the tame cattle, hunched over, miserable, pitiful. “Moo, moo, moo—I’m cold.” The real, natural animals don’t mind the cold; they are happy with the kind of fur coat and galoshes the Great Spirit gave them. White hunters used to call the buffalo stupid because they were easy to shoot, weren’t afraid of a gun. But the buffalo was not designed to cope with modern weapons. He was designed to deal with an Indian’s arrows.

I told you about the little bear and the bulldog. Let me tell you about the buffalo and the bull. Word got around that some ranchers were staging a fight between a buffalo and a bull at the Philips ranch. We Sioux are all natural gamblers. We used to have many betting games long before the white man came. Betting was something you didn’t have to teach us. We could have taught you. My dad knew how to judge things. This happened in 1919 or 1920. We had one of those funny old Fords. It took three dollars to get from

Fort Pierre to the Philips ranch. On three bucks you could go, maybe, a hundred miles. I was about sixteen years old. Dad was still taking care of me. Well, we got to that ranch. The corral was loaded, black with people. They had two roosters fighting each other first, to warm up the crowd, get the money moving. My dad wouldn’t bet on a chicken. Two poor chickens, scratching and pecking at each other, who could get excited about such a thing?

At last they drove the buffalo into the trap. The bull was already waiting in a chute. It was owned by a man from Wyoming. It had a short name, but I don’t remember it. You hear me, the buffalo is a “he” always, unless we are talking about a cow. But a man-bred bull, that’s an “it.” It was big all right, a real Bull Durham bull, the meanest bull in the country. Its balls dangled so low it almost tripped over them. They opened the chute. Boy, I’ve seen lots of bulls in my days, but wow—those horns! They were huge, light with black tips.

The old buffer was blowing dirt this way and that, pawing the ground, looking at the crowd. Some men were sitting on top of the corral, some ladies too, I noticed. They had long skirts in those days, but I saw some nice legs. That was some crowd! They were hollering like at Billy Graham’s. All that commotion stirred up the buffalo, made him excited.

My dad picked up many two-to-one and three-to-one bets. He bet the buffalo to win, but this I don’t have to tell you. I thought there would be a hundred-miles-an-hour collision. The bull was about ready to charge. Its tail was sticking up in the air. I was scared it might break through the corral. My dad said, “Stay behind that big post just in case. Something could go wrong.” My dad talked only when it was necessary. For a moment I was afraid that the buffalo would chicken out, because he ignored the bull. They had only about twenty yards to make their charge. The

whole corral was maybe a little over a hundred feet across. At last here they came. They missed each other, horns straight up, like two passing trains coming from opposite directions. There was a big, disappointed "oh" from the crowd. But then we saw that the buffalo had ripped the side of the bull open as if with a razor blade. The ribs of the bull were cut. Two cowboys were yelling, "That bull is dead!" It still kicked a few times, but it was deader than hell. Those tame animals don't have the power.

A *hoka*—a badger—now there's a real animal. One day my uncle was on his gray horse, the one he uses to round up his other ponies with. He was riding bareback, just with a rope, a hitch around the gray's nozzle. Then he saw the badger. Once a badger is in his hole, not three or four men can drag him out. My uncle roped that *hoka*, but he couldn't pull it out. The badger was going into his hole; the rope was going in, too. Pretty soon there was the horse coming on. My uncle tried to unhitch it around the nose, but the horse's head was already too close to the hole. My uncle had to shoot the rope in two. Once a badger dips in, there isn't much you can do about it.

With the body of a dead badger, you can foretell how long you are going to live. There's a gift of prophecy in it. I knew a man called Night Chaser. He cut a dead badger open and let the blood stand there. You are supposed to see a vision in it. It's like a red looking glass, like seeing yourself in a mirror. Only you see yourself in that badger's blood as you will look when you are about to die. Three or four men were looking inside that *hoka*. I was there, too. We were all young. The first man to look said, "Boy, I'm an old man, wrinkled and white-haired, stooped, no teeth left." He was happy about it. He knew he'd live to be an old granddaddy. The second one was not so happy. "I think I'm about through," he said. "I'm looking as you see me now. I die before one of my hairs gets

gray!" Then it was my turn, but I didn't see anything, just the dark blood. But the two others were right. The one who had seen himself as an old man is still around. The other one died long ago, only a few months after he had looked inside that badger, just as he said, before his hair turned gray.

We use a badger's bone pizzle, his penis, for sewing, or as an awl. You polish it, make it shiny. It lasts forever. This is a good tool, so valuable that you get a good horse in exchange for it.

There are some animals, a kind of gopher, very fast, with a black line down their faces. They got a lot of power; they can hypnotize you, even kill you. The power is in their eyes. They live with the prairie dogs. They are real subway users, traveling underground. They are so fast, your eyes can hardly follow them. Your eye is still here, he's already over there. They tell a funny story about a man who wanted to get one of these creatures. He was told to be fast. Shoot it and then run like hell, grab it before it disappears into its hole. The man made up his mind to be real quick about it. He shot and ran like the dickens. Something hit him in the seat of his pants—his own bullet! The earth from a gopher hole is also very powerful. It can protect you in war, make you bulletproof. I use it for curing certain illnesses.

An animal doesn't have to be big to be powerful. There's an ant power. Some ants have no eyes, but they can feel their way. They go out and bring back those rocks, called *yuwipi*, to put on their anthills. Tiny rocks, the size of seed beads, shiny, agate-like, little stones as clear as snow. Sometimes instead of these they bring tiny fossils. It takes two ants to get one of those rocks. One might be stepped upon and die. The ants take no chances.

We medicine men go out to look for anthills and get these tiny rocks. They are sacred. We put 405 of them into our gourds and rattles which we use in our

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ceremonies. They represent the 405 trees which grow in our land. *Tasuska sasa*—the red ants—we mash them up and put them in our medicine. If somebody gets shot we give this to him to drink. This ant medicine makes the wound heal faster. As to what you people call fossils, these too are used by us. Deep in the Badlands we find the bones of *unktegila*, the giant, the water monster, which lived long before human beings appeared. On a hill there lies the backbone of one of them, right along the spine of that mound. I have been up there, riding the ridge like a horse; that's the only way you can move on it. It's spooky, like riding the monster. At night there are spirit lights flitting about on that hill. I find things here which I use in my doctoring.

Iktomé—the spider—has a power, too, but it is evil. His body is short, and everything is in one place, in the center, with its legs spread out. It's sitting in its web, waiting for a fly. *Iktomé* is really a man. He's a foolish guy, a smart-ass; he wants to trick everybody, wants to tantalize people, make them miserable. But he is easy to outwit.

You have to listen to all these creatures, listen with your mind. They have secrets to tell. Even a kind of cricket, called *ptewoyake*, a wingless hopper, is used to tell us where to find buffalo. It has nothing to tell us now.

Butterflies talk to the women. A spirit will get into a beautiful butterfly, fly over to a young squaw, sit on her shoulder. The spirit will talk through that butterfly to the young squaw and tell her to become a medicine woman. We still have a couple of these ladies. I helped one, taught her what she must know, and she is doing a good job on the reservation. She is honest, so honest that the very poor, the down-and-out wins, really believe in her. She doesn't take any money from them, just does her best for the sake of helping them.

I have a nephew, Joe Thunderhawk, who is a healer.

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He has the coyote power. On his drum is painted the picture of a coyote, showing Joe's vision. This coyote power has been in the Thunderhawk family for a long time. Many years ago Joe's grandfather traveled in the wintertime. The snows were deep and darkness surprised him in a canyon. He had to hole up in there, trying to keep from freezing to death. In the middle of the night something came up to him, settling down by his legs. He saw that it was a coyote. They gave each other warmth, keeping each other alive, until the next morning. When that man got up to travel again, the coyote followed him.

After that, Joe's grandfather would hear the coyote bark at night, near his home. It would bark in two ways—one bark sounding like a dog, the other like a little boy. One barking meant that something good was about to happen, the other foreshadowed misfortune. Joe's grandfather became a medicine man and a prophet. The coyote told him of things to come. When the old man died, his knowledge died with him. He had not been able to pass it on.

One day Joe Thunderhawk passed through that same canyon where his grandfather and the coyote had warmed each other long ago. My nephew was in a wagon. Suddenly he had a feeling that someone was following him. He looked back and there was a coyote, right behind him. It was kind of lame and very thin. It started to bark in two ways—like a dog and like a child.

That night Joe Thunderhawk dreamed about this coyote and understood that he was meant to be a medicine man, that he would carry on his grandfather's work. He is working now in the Indian way, with his own medicines, curing sick people who would have to undergo surgery otherwise. Thus the coyote power has returned to the Thunderhawk family.

As for myself, the birds have something to tell me. The eagle, the owl. In an eagle there is all the wisdom

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of the world; that's why we have an eagle feather at the top of the pole during a *yuwipi* ceremony. If you are planning to kill an eagle, the minute you think of that he knows it, knows what you are planning. The black-tailed deer has this wisdom, too. That's why its tail is tied farther down at the *yuwipi* pole. This deer, if you shoot at him, you won't hit him. He just stands right there and the bullet comes right back and hits you. It is like somebody saying bad things about you and they come back at him.

In one of my great visions I was talking to the birds, the winged creatures. I was saddened by the death of my mother. She had held my hand and said just one word: "pitiful." I don't think she grieved for herself; she was sorry for me, a poor Indian she would leave in a white man's world. I cried up on that vision hill, cried for help, stretched out my hands toward the sky and then put the blanket over myself—that's all I had, the blanket and the pipe, and a little tobacco for an offering. I didn't know what to expect. I wanted to touch the power, feel it. I had the thought to give myself up, even if it would kill me. So I just gave myself to the winds, to nature, not giving a damn about what could happen to me.

All of a sudden I hear a big bird crying, and then quickly he hit me on the back, touched me with his spread wings. I heard the cry of an eagle, loud above the voices of many other birds. It seemed to say, "We have been waiting for you. We knew you would come. Now you are here. Your trail leads from here. Let our voices guide you. We are your friends, the feathered people, the two-legged, the four-legged, we are your friends, the creatures, little tiny ones, eight legs, twelve legs—all those who crawl on the earth. All the little creatures which fly, all those under water. The powers of each one of us we will share with you and you will have a ghost with you always—another self." That's me, I thought, no other thing than myself,

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different, but me all the same, unseen, yet very real. I was frightened. I didn't understand it then. It took me a lifetime to find out.

And again I heard the voice amid the bird sounds, the clicking of beaks, the squeaking and chirping. "You have love for all that has been placed on this earth, not like the love of a mother for her son, or of a son for his mother, but a bigger love which encompasses the whole earth. You are just a human being, passes the whole earth. You are just a human being, afraid, weeping under that blanket, but there is a great space within you to be filled with that love. All of nature can fit in there." I was shivering, pulling the blanket tighter around myself, but the voices repeated themselves over and over again, calling me "Brother, brother, brother." So this is how it is with me. Sometimes I feel like the first being in one of our Indian legends. This was a giant made of earth, water, the moon and the winds. He had timber instead of hair, a whole forest of trees. He had a huge lake in his stomach and a waterfall in his crotch. I feel like this giant. All of nature is in me, and a bit of myself is in all of nature.

PETE CATCHES: "I too feel this way. I live in an age which has passed. I live like fifty years ago, a hundred years ago. I like it that way. I want to live as humbly, as close to the earth as I can. Close to the plants, the weeds, the flowers that I use the medicine. The Great Spirit has seen to it that man can survive in this way, can live as he is meant to live. So I and my wife are dwelling in a little cabin—no electricity, no tap water, no plumbing, no road. This is what we want. This simple log cabin knows peace. That's how we want to be for the rest of our lives. I want to exist apart from the modern world, get out, way out, in the sticks, and live much closer to nature, even, than I am doing now. I don't even want to be called a medicine man, just a healing man, because this is what I am made for. I

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don't ask for anything. A white doctor has a fee, a priest has a fee. I have no fee. A man goes away from me healed. That is my reward. Sometimes I do not have the power—it makes me sad. When I have the power, then I am happy. Some men think of money, how to get it. That never comes into my mind. We live off nature, my wife and I; we hardly need anything. We will somehow live. The Great Spirit made the flowers, the streams, the pines, the cedars—takes care of them. He lets a breeze go through there, makes them breathe it, waters them, makes them grow. Even the one that is down in the crags, in the rocks. He tends to that, too. He takes care of me, waters me, feeds me, makes me live with the plants and animals as one of them. This is how I wish to remain, an Indian, all the days of my life. This does not mean that I want to shut myself off. Somehow many people find their way to my cabin. I like this. I want to be in communication, reach out to people everywhere, impart a little of our Indian way, the spirit's way, to them.

"At the same time, I want to withdraw further and further away from everything, to live like the ancient ones. On the highway you sometimes see a full-blood Indian thumbing a ride. I never do that. When I walk the road, I expect to walk the whole way. That is deep down in me, a kind of pride. Someday I'll still move my cabin farther into the hills, maybe do without a cabin altogether, become part of the woods. There the spirit still has something for us to discover—an herb, a sprig, a flower—a very small flower, maybe, and you can spend a long time in its contemplation, thinking about it. Not a rose—yellow, white, artificial, big. I hear they are breeding black roses. That's not natural. These things are against nature. They make us weak. I abhor them.

"So as I get older, I burrow more and more into the hills. The Great Spirit made them for us, for me. I want to blend with them, shrink into them, and finally

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disappear in them. As my brother Lame Deer has said, all of nature is in us, all of us is in nature. That is as it should be. Tell me, what are you going to call the chapter of your book in which you put the things we have talked about today? I know, you will call it 'Talking to the Owls and the Butterflies.'"