



LANDSCAPES EVOLVE SEQUENTIALLY

*except under extraordinary provocation, or in circumstances not at all to be apprehended, it is not probable that as many as five hundred Indian warriors will ever again be mustered at one point for a fight; and with the conflicting interests of the different tribes, and the occupation of the intervening country by advancing settlements, such an event as a general Indian war can never occur in the United States. (Edward Parmelee Smith, 1873)*

. . .

My blood is my own and my name is Robert Hawks. I am sitting on a painted green wooden bench in a small Episcopal church on the northern edge of the Plata Indian Reservation, holding in my hands a Vietnam-era M-16, the butt of the weapon flat against the plank floor between my feet. There are seven other armed people sitting on the floor, backs against the paneled walls, or pacing and peering out the windows—stained and clear—at the armored personnel carrier some hundred yards away across the dirt and gravel parking lot, and at the pasture where two sad-looking bulls stand, their sides, black and gray, flat against the sky behind them. Out there, there are two hundred and fifty police—FBI, all clad in blue windbreakers with large gold letters, and National Guardsmen, looking like the soldiers they want to be. There is an FBI agent sitting in a chair opposite me; his hands are bound with yellow nylon cord; his mouth is ungagged; his feet are bare and rubbing

against each other in this cold room. The hard look he had worn just hours ago has faded and, although his blue eyes show no fear, the continual licking of his lips betrays him. His partner, a shorter, wider man, is face down on the ground outside; his blood and last heat having melted the snow beneath him. He lies dead between two dead Indians, brothers, twins.

That I should feel put out or annoyed or even dismayed at having to tell this story is absurd since I do want the story told and since I am the only one who can properly and accurately reproduce it. There is no one else in whom I place sufficient trust to attempt a fair representation of the events—not that the events related would be anything less than factual, but that those chosen for exhibition would not cover the canvas with the stain or underpainting of truth—and of course truth necessarily exists only as perception and its subsequent recitation alters it. But I can tell it, my own incriminations aside.

The insignificant point of light on the ceiling seemed to dilate as I watched, and I wondered how it was that the perforation would not let in enough light to illuminate even a section of the poorly lit room, but could allow in enough water to ruin the entire house; how it had to be in some way dark to see the distending prick, but water would always find me in there. I slapped myself for pondering like an idiot and did the only thing that made any sense: I grabbed my vest, the box of flies I'd tied the previous night, and my sixty-year-old Wright and McGill bamboo rod that no one could believe I actually got wet, much less used, and went fishing.

*Nymphs are meant to be fished near or on the bottom of the water and so must absorb moisture and/or be weighted so they get to the bottom quickly. The materials of their construction must give the appearance of life, suggesting the movement of a living insect in its larval or nymphal stage, its pulsing, vibrating. The fish get close to it, without the concern of the surface predators, and take a good look, and so it must be lifelike.*

My father had never liked fishing. It seemed enough to him that my grandfather, his father, hunted and fished. My grandfather never pushed the idea on him, however. In fact, he confided in me that he understood my father needed the difference between them as a necessary point of divergence. "We're so much alike," he would say, then make a cast or load his rifle or rip the guts out of a fish in one quick motion. Indeed, he and my father looked enough alike to be brothers and to my mind, in matters all but those having to do with the outdoors, they shared the same beliefs. They were both physicians and both well liked, though to hear them speak you'd have assumed they found people objectionable and you would have been right, but it was people, not persons, who were problematic, they would articulately point out. They hated America, policemen, and especially churches. Their outright detestation for Christianity—it was much more than a simple disregard—had ended their marriages: my grandfather had known full well that his wife was a member of the AME Church but had hoped that he could live with it; my father claimed that my mother had found religion and bushwhacked him one day with a prayer at the dinner table. My grandmother died when I was ten and we went to the funeral, Christian service and all, and my aunt shouted at my grandfather, called him a heathen. She then turned to my father and said, "You're just as bad." She then knelt in front of me and tried to be nice, offering me a

That had been some weeks ago, just more than a month, when I had left Karen for the third and last time and come to the mountains. The weather was turning colder, with stiff winds from the northwest pressing through the canyons. I wondered if the fishing was relaxing me. It made the days pass and I was at least obliged to use my hands, for repairs on the cabin and tying flies—my hands needing the work, my eyes needing the attention to detail. And the fish didn't yell at me. They more often than not ignored me, but they didn't yell at me. I watched the no. 12 hare's ear I had tied the night before land and sink beneath the surface of the water.

*Simulocorymbus*

*Hook: Mustad 9674*

*Thread: Reddish or dark brown*

*Tail: Brown or ginger hackle fibers (1½ gap widths in length)*

*Rib: Fine gold tinsel*

*Abdomen: Hare's mask and ear dubbing fur blend*

*Wing case: Gray duck-wing quill section (folded over)*

*Thorax: Same as abdomen*

*Legs: Guard hairs plucked from under thorax with a dubbing needle*

I had a string of six decent browns wrapped in newspaper. I took them down to the little store at the junction of the highway and the road off which I lived, hoping I could trade them for sundries.

"Hi, hon," Clara said as I walked in. She was a rough-looking woman with a soft, pleasant voice that came from beneath a massive mound of white hair and from behind oversized, red-framed bifocals. The glasses were new, one in a long line of pairs, as it seemed the woman was unable to locate her glasses once removed from her narrow face and set on some surface.

"Clara." I greeted her at the old brass-scrolled register she sat behind in the front of the store. Light found its way through the collecting clouds and into the store through the painted window beside her. "I brought you some trout. What do you say? Six fish for milk, butter, and eggs?"

"Why them ain't trout," she said, giving the fish a look, lifting her glasses and squinting, then gazing through both lenses of her bifocals. "Them's minnows."

"They told me they were trout."

"It's a deal then," Clara said, no smile, her lips tight. "But remember, I'm doing you a favor."

I felt the woman watching me as I collected the items from the refrigerator on the other side of the store, the air outside the unit fogging up the door as I held it open. I walked back toward her, smiling.

She said, as I dropped the butter on the counter with a thud, "You're pretty ugly for a young feller." She entered the routine smoothly, the same line as always; I assumed she reserved it for all younger men.

"Precocious."

"I call 'em likes I see 'em."

"A fine quality in anyone." I grabbed a loaf of rye bread from the unstable wire rack beside me and took some fruit, three bananas and ten apples, from the big wicker basket on the counter.

"How long do you think that many bananas are going to last you?" Clara asked.

"They get ripe too fast," I told her. "I like them while they're still a little green."

"Go figure ugly guys." She tallied in her head, her eyes disappearing behind the change in her lenses. "Let's call it two bucks."

I gave her the money.

"By the way, your lady friend called," Clara said, opening a

I drove on down the lane, watching her grow even smaller in my mirror. She was still standing there when I rounded the bend and lost sight of her.

*Plata Creek Indian Community v. United States, No. C.V.-99-3456-R (filed Dec. 22, 1984). The Indian Community seeks a federal review of its charges under the Administrative Procedure Act to the Secretary of the Interior's resolution to omit tribal lands from the Hellhole Creek Project. The Indian Community maintains that the project benefits only non-Indian residents of the area and that the Secretary has not complied with the 1916 federal act directing him to designate 768 twenty-acre plots and to provide for water rights to irrigate them in perpetuity.*

I parked in front of my cabin, opened the truck door, and sat there staring up at the brown-shingled roof and the intimidating sky above it. I'd put off the patching job for some time, but I couldn't any longer. I went into the house, put the food away, and made a mental note to go through the shelves later to discard the spoiled stuff. Then I got the ladder from the shed and brought it into the house, knocking over, as I always did when carrying something into the house, the too-small cowboy hat I kept hanging on a nail by the door. I set the ladder where I had been sitting earlier, from where I had been able to detect the cancerous puncture; then I climbed the rungs, found the tiny hole between the boards, and pushed a broom straw through it. I next took the ladder outside where I used it to get on the roof. I found the straw and marked the spot with a scratch of white chalk. I stood and looked around and remembered how I didn't much care for roofs. Heights didn't bother me, but roofs—the pitches of roofs, the materials of roofs—did: especially metal roofs, which this one was not, but

still the thought of it bothered me, the thought of the slick surface, of the sound of my steps on the tin, the jagged rips.

I cut some material from the roll of extra roofing felt that had been stored in the shed, grabbed a leftover shingle from the stack of several, and went out and climbed back onto the roof. The air turned frigid quickly, and when I looked at the sky I could see the snow coming: small flakes that seemed to disappear before they reached me at first, then crystals that kissed my neck and made me cold. I peeled back the shingles on the problem spot, glued down a patch of felt, and nailed down the new shingle to replace the old. It was not a great job, probably it wasn't even the correct way to do it, but it was done and I kicked myself for not having performed the simple task much sooner. The snow fell in larger flakes and began to stick to the rhododendrons against the wall of the shed. From my perch, I looked in the direction of the road, but could see nothing, just the gray of the bad weather closing in.

I climbed down, put away the ladder, and collected a load of wood from the pile I'd chopped earlier. I went into the house and dropped the fuel by the stove, then went back outside and secured the tarp over the stacked logs beside the house before taking in another lading of wood.

Inside, I fried some eggs and a trout with the head still on it, an eye staring up at me. I sat down to it, thinking all the while about that little woman Louise out there someplace in the cold without proper gear. It was her business though. I didn't care who froze to death from their own witlessness or considered deliberation.

When I was eight my grandfather took me hunting for wild turkey. Once out of the city he was alert to any human movement, saying that if the rednecks found you alone, there was no telling

"Are you crazy?" I asked. I opened the stove and poked at the logs to get the flame up, burning myself slightly on the inside edge of the door. "I didn't say anything in the truck because I thought it was none of my business. But now that you're in my house and wearing my clothes . . ." I paused while I closed the stove. "Another hour out there and you might be dead, or at least missing a few fingers and toes."

*Before the action of deglutition, the pharynx is pulled upward and opened in a different direction; this is in order to receive the food thrown into it by the mouth. Once received into the pharynx, the elevator muscles relax and the constrictors contract upon the food and transport it down into the esophagus.*

She didn't say anything.

"Listen, I'm going to make some tea." I felt badly for scolding her. I walked over to the kitchen and from the cupboard pulled down the old coffee can in which I kept tea bags. I took a couple of mugs from the rack, one bearing the name Canyon City, Colorado, and the other Wellfleet, Massachusetts. "So, what are you doing out here?" I asked, dropping the tea bags into the cups. Louise didn't answer, but she was now sitting in the chair in front of the stove, her tiny toes wiggling, obviously hurting her as feeling worked back into them. I walked back across the room with the mugs and poured water into them from the kettle I kept sitting on top of the stove. "It's a good sign that you can wiggle your toes like that."

She nodded.

"Do you take milk?" I asked.

"No."

"Would you like Canyon City or Wellfleet?" I asked, but she

said nothing. "I'll give you Wellfleet," I said, handing her the mug. "It's a little town on Cape Cod and it has one of my all-time favorite traffic signs. 'Thickly settled,' it says."

She thanked me for the tea and sipped it.

"Listen," I began again, "I don't want to belabor the point, but are you crazy?" I took her silence as an affirmative response. "I guess there's no more to say then. Tomorrow, I'll drive you back down to town and you can check into some dementia retreat."

"I can find my way."

"I can't let you go out there and become coyote feed."

Louise's face tightened. "If I were a six-foot man, you wouldn't be talking to me like this."

"Well, you're wrong. I might be a little more afraid of someone who was bigger and crazy, but I'd be saying the same thing to a six-foot idiot who was sitting in front of my fire, half-frozen, lost, in my pajamas, and saying he was going out into the snow and deep freeze in sneakers and a sweater." I drank some tea. "You can do whatever you want, but I just need to know, for myself, that I tried to discourage you. I'd offer you my boots and some clothes, but the problem is obvious." I looked at her face and saw that she was indeed listening. "All I have to offer you is my roof, my fire, and food. Tomorrow, you can do what you want."

"Thank you," she said, putting down her mug on the floor by her feet.

"Are you hungry?" I asked.

"No." She looked around the cabin and then at me. "What do you do?"

"I fish," I said. I looked down at the surface of my tea, at a piece of leaf floating there, and I poked at it with my finger.

"No, I mean for a living."

"I'm a hydrologist," I told her. I realized that she was shaking, but not with cold. She was scared.

We sat there for a while without talking.

"Do you have any socks I can use?" she asked. "My feet are getting cold or too hot or something."

"Yeah, I've got some socks."

*During the field study, 23–27 September, examinations of the geology, hydrology, and soil-erosion processes were made of the Plata Mountain watershed. Observations of the Plata and Silly Man Creeks were made from Rural Route 13 above the confluence of the Silly Man and Red Creeks, from the mining road numbered A-28 traversing north-south along Silly Man Ridge and from various locations along the two main creeks.*

*The study revealed that at least four major plateaus make up the Plata Mountain watershed. The presence of these terraces, and observations of the deposition pattern within the terraces, indicate at least two, and perhaps more, periods of downcutting and aggradation. The oldest plateau consists of undercut banks and ridges and is more pronounced in the eastern portion of the watershed, facing west to the opening of Tick Canyon. Tick Canyon streams and flood events meet and cut into Plata Canyon, and join Plata Canyon and Creek. Traces of an older, alluvial terrace can be found at higher elevations within the adjoining canyons of Skinner, Dog, and, to a lesser extent, in Hell-hole watersheds, where there are apparent cycles of aggradation as well.*

My grandmother baked pies. All the time. There were always pies. One day, it could have been any day, I was eating pie in her kitchen. I was less than ten, I remember. I must have been. I watched her pull another pie from the oven. Blueberry.

"You don't like Grandfather," I said.

"Your grandfather is a very smart man," she said.

"But you don't like him?"

"He's very smart."

We were in my truck driving down the twenty-five icy miles to Clara's store. "Why don't you let me drive you all the way to Plata?" I asked.

"The junction will be fine," she said and, when I didn't press, I felt her looking at me. "What kind of hydrologist?" she asked.

"The boring kind," I said. When I looked over at her I could see the answer wasn't amusing to her. "I've been studying the watershed of Plata Mountain for the Naturalists' Conservancy."

She nodded.

"It allows me to live here. I've studied the flow of the Plata and some of the creeks for Fish and Game as well."

"The mountain is dying," she said. "My grandfather told me that before he died. He said the river is no longer any good. He said the Plata can't feed the fish."

"The Plata is in trouble, but it's not dying."

"You should come to the reservation and meet my people. They're a part of this land. I didn't grow up here, so I'm not. But my mother is as much a part of this land as Silly Man Creek."

I nodded.

I could feel her looking at me. I could feel her thinking. "How can a river be in trouble and not be dying?" she asked.

I didn't have an answer for her.

"Our way tells us that when the river dies, so will our people."

I nodded again.

your truck?" I told him it was a '78 and he said he liked riding in the back of it and that he'd noticed that it was a four-by-four and asked me if I wanted to sell it. When I told him I didn't, he said, "It's a nice truck. Della likes it, too."

Louise came over and sat next to me, but she attended to the others. "They have to do some tests," she said. "They want to scope her and do a biopsy."

Mary Brown had turned from the window to listen to her niece's words, but they obviously meant nothing to her. "Does she have to stay here?" the old woman asked.

"For a while," Louise said.

Mary Brown looked at Della. "Tomorrow, you go by Georgie Head's and tell him I'll be coming by to see him."

Della nodded.

To Big Junior, Mary Brown said, "Go out to that little store and buy me a carton of cigarettes."

*It is not uncommon for gallstones to cause intestinal obstructions (see Brockis and Gilbert: "Review of 179 Cases," British Journal of Surgery, 44:461, 1957 and Kirkland and Croce: "Gallstone Intestinal Obstruction," Journal of the American Medical Association, 176:494, 1961). However, the cause is often slowly recognized. The occurrence of gallstone ileus is nearly without exception due to binary-enteric fistula formation, the most usual locations of the fistula being the duodenum, colon, jejunum, and stomach. A case was reported where complicated cholecystitis with accompanying gastric obstruction appeared as carcinoma of the antrum of the stomach due to gallstones (Kavetz and Gilmore, "Cholecysto-Gastric Fistula Masquerading as Carcinoma of the Stomach," Annals of Surgery, 159:461, 1964).*

"They think she might have cancer," Louise said. She drank from her steaming cup of coffee. There was a white-haired woman sitting in the booth behind Louise. The expanse of head and hair served to frame Louise's face with a bleached halo.

I caught a passing waitress. "Can we get some bread here, please?" To Louise, I said, "That's pretty tough."

Louise shrugged, rubbed at the corners of her eyes with a knuckle. "I was certainly surprised to see you tonight."

"Well, I'm sorry I picked such a bad time." Feeling ravenous, I eyed the packages of honey in a bowl by the napkin dispenser. "I haven't eaten today," I said.

"My mother's a tough bird," Louise said.

"I can imagine," I said. "If she had anything to do with raising you, she would have to be."

Louise laughed. "I'm sorry I gave you such a hard time the other night."

"That's all right, but I'd still like to know what you thought you were doing up there."

"I was just looking around." She peered across the room toward the closed salad bar. "I'm glad you did show up tonight though," she said as her little fingers ripped a napkin into strips.

"Why is that?"

"You turned out to be useful. I guess the polite way to put it would be 'helpful.' You know, driving Mary, Big Junior, and Della to the hospital. I want to thank you for that."

I nodded. "Would you like me to drive them back to the reservation?"

"No. Mary's going to stay at the hospital with me and Big Junior's brother is coming to get him and Della."

The waitress glided by and deposited a basket of cold bread on the table. I offered some to Louise first, and after she declined, I took a roll and bit into it. "I hate being hungry," I said.

"Coming here instead of staying at the hospital commissary was a good idea," Louise said. "That place is really depressing. I've spent too much time there recently."

"Cancer, eh?"

Louise looked at her pile of napkin tearings. "It would be no surprise, but it's not cancer."

"It's not? How do you know?"

"Hiram Kills Enemy told us last week. He came by and looked at my mother and said she should drink some tea made from the root of sweet flag."

"Did your mother do it?"

"No, she's afraid of Hiram. I mean, really afraid of him, says he fools around with powers, stuff like that."

I nodded. I didn't understand, but I nodded.

"You think this is weird shit," Louise said.

I nodded again.

*The symptoms of Wanda Yellow Calf, an eighty-one-year-old Plata Indian woman, when admitted were progressive nausea, anorexia, weight loss, gastric pain, and postprandial vomiting. It was reported by the daughter that the pain was nonradiating, was increased when eating, and relieved by regurgitation. Although the symptoms had been observed in the home for a period of two to three weeks, this was the first medical visit. The patient was observed to have an enlarged nodular liver and a low-grade fever. Liver functions were observed as normal. It was reported by the family that the patient did not drink alcohol.*

*The serum cholesterol of the patient was 141 mg/100ml. Serum-glutamic-oxaloacetic-transaminase was 65 units/100ml. As well, urine specific gravity was 1.213 and 7-10 white blood cells per high-powered field were found. Blood urea nitrogen was 39.7 mg/100 ml when admitted and later 19 mg/100 ml.*

*Initial diagnostic speculation was carcinoma of the stomach with possible metastases to the liver. Because of retained secretions, upper gastrointestinal X rays were inconclusive. Following extended gastric suction, X rays disclosed a stenosing antral lesion. Interpretation of subsequent film substantiated the earlier conjecture of carcinoma.*

I went home thinking it was all weird shit. It was about two in the morning and the cold sky was as clear as it could be. The stars were big. I thought about the name *Kills Enemy* and wished I had a name like that. I remembered the name of a man I saw in an old photograph once. His name was *Old Man Afraid of His Horses*. In the picture he stood next to the unfortunate man whose name was *Unidentified Indian*.

At the store a few days later, there because I'd ripped a hook through my finger and didn't have antibiotic cream at the cabin, I heard a couple of fellows talking. They talked about the "damn Indians" and one said they didn't need the "fuckin'" water "no way" and that they were just trying to be militant and get even with the "Great White Father."

I was leaning over in front of the shelf, trying to decide between a cream and an ointment.

Clara walked by me. "Hey, ugly."

I chose a product because I liked the color of the box and because it was the only antibiotic cream there. I walked to the counter to pay, grabbing a bag of chips along the way.

The two men by the door stopped talking. One of them looked at me, then said, "You're a hydrologist, right?" He didn't wait for a response and raked under his nose with the back of his hand, saying, "What do you think?"



*gills instead of breasts, maybe you'd be more interested.  
You know what you can do with that bamboo rod you're so  
crazy about. Go to hell, Robert Hawks! I love you so much.  
Please, come back. Please, call. I won't be insane anymore.*

*Love*

*Love, Karen*

*Primary descriptions of watershed shape and geologic configurations were obtained from field investigations. Here again, observations agreed with Rucker's work. The dominant characteristics in the Plata Mountain watershed are the west face of Plata Mountain; Silly Man Ridge; and the entry of Skinner, Dog, and Hell-hole Canyons into the watershed from the west and north.*

*Plata Creek was found to be dry above the entrance of Dog Canyon, to achieve roughly 9 cubic feet per second of flow from Dog, and then to lose and gain flow for about three miles below the confluence of Silly Man and Red Creeks. The channel of Plata Creek occupies a shallow trough and wide flood plain between dramatically undercut slopes of older terraces.*

In my dream I was on the aircraft carrier *Theodore Roosevelt* and I was wearing a blue cap that read *CVN 71* over the brim that shaded my eyes. I couldn't see the cap, but I knew what was written on it. I was in the mess and I couldn't see any water, nor could I see planes, but I knew where I was. I was sitting across the gray table from a big red-faced man who was eating little green grapes and he was smiling between bites, pointing at me with a sausage finger and saying, "You're in on this somehow and when I find out how, I'm gonna have your liver for breakfast." I told him to go fuck himself, then walked out of the galley, and started climb-

ing ladders. I climbed ladder after ladder, higher and higher into the ship, thinking at the top of each one that I would find the deck, but I didn't. All I found was another ladder and another ladder. Finally I met a man on a ladder, an Indian in traditional dress, beaded moccasins and a buffalo robe over his shoulders, but he had no paint on his face. I told him I was looking for the deck. He told me he'd been there and that there was no water. "It's truly something to see," he said, "this big ship sitting in the middle of a mud plane. See, you can't feel the water." I attended to my legs and indeed there was no motion, no movement of the ocean, only stillness, an unrelenting stillness that would not stop, a stillness I hated, a stillness I wanted gone, a stillness that woke me up.

I sat up in bed and looked out my window. I'd left on the outside light and I could see that it was snowing.

The strength of my grandfather's personality had a delimiting effect on all those around him except my father and me. Most people were badly put off by his vocal and immediate repudiation of all things Christian, but oddly, in spite of the proclivity of the black community toward Christianity, he didn't alienate his patients. It was perhaps the case that his antireligious tendencies seemed so abstract that they were not taken seriously, but rather as an idiosyncratic function of the brilliant doctor. My father kept his sentiments more to himself, nodding when the family of patients asked him if prayer would help and saying, "How could it hurt?"

Big Junior stepped with heavy feet into my cabin as if he was way too big to fit. The fact of the matter was that Big Junior was not all that big. He was a little shorter than me at about 5 feet 10 inches