The traitors

by habakuk

Summary

W/OS spend time in Fort William which is one of the biggest forts nearby the Apaches territory inhabited by more than three hundred soldiers and also some citizens. The fort is under the command of likable German officer. He tries with all of his power to be fair to Indians as well as to white immigrants and he fights for the peace in Apaches territory. He is also respected by W/OS. But what happen, if Winnetou’s own warrior disturb the peace by attacking the wagon train of immigrants and become the traitors of their own nation?
Chapter 1

It was beginning of December. Shortly after events on Devil’s Head, when we said goodbye to our friends Old Surehand and Apanatchka, we set off on the track to one of the military forts nearby the Apaches territory to restore our supplies of food and munitions. Then we have planned to make some trips around befriended Indian tribes before my next departure to my European home. We, it means me, our good inseparable friends Dick Hammerdull and Pitt Hollbers and of course my best friend Winnetou, the main Chief of Apaches. We thought about spending there ten days because we and our brave horses really needed little bit rest after the adventure with Old Surehand. Because weather started to be really cold, we decided to stay there and not to continue directly to Apaches which could be dangerous without enough supply of food and munitions in this horrible weather.

Fort William was one of the biggest forts nearby the Apaches territory inhabited by more than three hundred soldiers and also some citizens. It was really nice and peaceful place with plenty of wooden building. The head of the fort William was Major Kurt Hornstall. It was likable German officer, around forty, tall with blonde hairs and blue eyes. He was very respected by his men. He was engaging to me, not just only because we came from the same country, but especially because we had the same opinion on the politics. He was trying with all of his power to be fair to Indians as well as to white immigrants. He was fighting for peace between white and red and it seemed that he was successful in his effort. He also was respected by Winnetou who knew him from some previous encounter when they discussed together in some issue regarding his nation. Major Hornstall had to be really special man, because Winnetou usually deal with contempt with soldiers, but he made exception here. We became friendly with the Major and we sometimes spent evening together near the fireplace drinking wine and discussing plenty of politician issues. Sure, Winnetou was as usual silent almost the whole time drinking just only water but listening us with interest. Major Hornstall was worried in past days by several attacked on immigrant wagon train as well as stagecoaches evidently done by some unfriendly Indians. However, when we came to the point to which Indian tribe could be those attackers belonged to he said us nothing just only that he had some suspicion without any plausible evidence so he would not to blame anyone yet letting his opinion hidden. Winnetou ensured him, that there is no need to be afraid of Apaches.

Unfortunately, it happened that one such attack took place just the day after our discussion and major Hornstall send to this place his deputy with ten other soldiers to investigate this situation. This deputy was some young lieutenant Wilkes, also very plausible person with whom we spend one of those discussing evenings too. We offered Major also our help, but he ensured us, that he had plenty of men to solve this problem and we should rather enjoy our time in fort William in peace. Thus, we agreed and decided not to mixed into to this matter, with which we moreover had nothing in common. By the way, I preferred to rest little bit because my old injury, that I received during the events of recent weeks, started to pain again.

It was two days after the lieutenant Wilkes departure. Pitt and Dick were somewhere outside; I and Winnetou spend that morning in our hotel room. Winnetou was just treating my injured leg and changing the bandage when somebody knocked on the door. “Good morning, gentlemen, I don’t want to disturbed you, but I just received telegram from Lieutenant Wilkes. He is asking about the help of some good Indian tracer and he kindly is asking you, mister Winnetou, about your help,” Major Hornstall spoke directly to my blood brother. However, as usually, because Winnetou was not so much talkative especially to other people, I answer naturally instead of him: “Yes, why not, we would like to be helpful to you.” Major looked at me doubtfully: “It seemed that wagon train of immigrants was attacked by Indian again, but this time Indians were careless and left some arrows on the place of attack. Probably we have finally chance to find out who they are. However, Lieutenant Wilkes asks explicitly only Chief of Apaches without his white brother.
I have absolutely no idea why." He looked to us apologetic and helpless. Before I could say
something quite against his habits answered Winnetou instead of me: “My white brother was
injured during our last adventure as you can see,” he showed with look to my bandage: “so it is
better when he can rest. Winnetou is sure that Major Hornstall will do great company to him in
case of my absence. Winnetou will saddle his horse and he will be ready to hit the road in few
minutes.” Major Hornstall smiled to him with great pleasure that Winnetou helped him from
embarrassing situation: “Thank you very much, Chief.” Winnetou disappeared sooner than I could
say a word. Major Hornstall said to me sadly: “I am really sorry for that but we have strong strict
principles concerning Indian scouts and trackers, with your presence you would be violated some
of the principles. Indian scout must not be influenced by anyone. Please, trust me he will be back
alright in one day.” “But he is not ordinary Indian tracker, he is the main Chief of Apaches, one of
the most famous men in Wild West, don’t you forget, Major Hornstall?” “No, sure I didn’t forget,
but I can do nothing with it. It is our rule that is helping us to maintain peace in this territory. I
understand his position but this rule applies to all. I can do nothing with this, mister Shatterhand,
I’m sorry.” “To be honest, I trust you; you look like a man who holds his promises. However,
anyhow you should know I am not happy from this situation and I am not happy from sending my
best friend to danger alone. If you are able to understand principles of army law, you should also
understand principles of friendship.” Major Hornstall looked that he really felt sorry with that
situation so I did not press it further. “I know about extraordinary relationship that connected you
both. The legends are told about it. And I am really shame for the rules of American army. In case
you are not angry to me, I would like to invite you for a cap of wine and good dinner for this
evening,” said he then doubtfully between the doors when he was leaving the room. I decided to
accept his invitation despite this situation. Still, he was really likeable and I enjoyed discussion
with him.

After Major departure I packed some food and things that were necessary for one or two day
journey in winter condition and I went to see my brother. He was almost ready for the journey.
Just patting his horse's neck he whispered something to his ear. Itschi looked that he is looking
forward after several days of inactivity to some adventure. Winnetou greeted me with his barely
noticeable smile that he reserved just only for me when he saw me coming. Firstly, I put the thinks
that I packed for him to the saddlebags then I turned to him. Sooner I could say a word he pressed
gently my shoulders with both hands and said like he was almost reading my thoughts: “Winnetou
knows that his brother would like to go with him and he understand the true reason why it is not
possible. My brother should not to be angry to Major Hornstall, he is just holding the rules of the
army. Winnetou is not taken it personally. Chief of white soldiers looks like reliable honest man
and Winnetou trust him. My brother should do the same.” Then he leaned to me and looked
closely in my eye with look full of love: “Don’t worry about me, Scharlih. I will be back in one
day. Think on your own injury. You should rest little bit.” He released me with those words and
jumped to back of his horse. Then he turned Itschi to three soldiers that they should accompany
him. Major Hornstall was given the instruction to them in this moment: “The easiest way to the
White hill, where Lieutenant Wilkes is waiting for you, leads through the West forest.” However,
my red brother didn’t agree with him and declared with his sonorous voice: “Winnetou knows the
shortcut. It is two hours shorter way than the road through the West forest and it is less dangerous.
Winnetou will lead you.” It was fascinating, how inadvertently the three soldiers left the leadership
to Winnetou. He was so charismatic with the royal poise and proud face that nobody complained
about the supremacy of an Indian. Also Major Hornstall looked at him with great respect
absolutely fascinated by his personality. Before the expedition went to the journey I couldn’t hold
myself and I caught Itschi’s reins, when Winnetou trotted around me: “Be careful, please, my
brother,” I whispered to him silently. “Don’t worry, Scharlih. I will! I promise!” He said it with
soft smile but with restless look around himself and I realized that he felt uncomfortable about this
my gesture in the presence of so many foreign people, so I released his horse quickly. I was
looking at him and praying for his safe return until he disappeared from my eyes.
I had to look absolutely helplessly, while Dick Hammerdull ensured me: “Don’t worry about him, Mr. Shatterhand. He is in good hands. He will return in one or two days.” “I know, dear Dick, but still I have such an unfortunate feeling, that something bad is going to happen,” I shrugged my shoulders helplessly, but I replied by the question: “Are you both also going to this Major’s dinner?” “No, it seems that we were not invited. Anyway, we planned to go to the saloon to play poker with some soldiers, what are you saying, Pitt, old coon?” “Yes, why not, I haven’t played the poker for years.” “So in that case, I wish you good luck and have a good fun. Good night, gentlemen,” I said goodbye to them lifting the hat and I set out to the journey to the hotel to dress up for the dinner.

When I entered our room my first sight fell to the Winnetou’s empty “bed”. Actually I meant just only blankets spread on the ground, because Winnetou hated sleeping in the bed of palefaces. My bad feeling was back immediately. I tried to ensure myself that everything is going to be ok, but it was not helping to me. I dressed up from my hunting suit to the more formal bright shirt with vest. When I came towards the Major’s house I noticed in the darkness of coming night on the horizon heavy dark clouds which signalized approaching snowstorm. When I counted the distance it could be here in one or two days. I hoped that Winnetou will be back sooner; otherwise he would be buried under the snow somewhere in the prairie. My fear for him started to be bigger and I prayed for him once again in the spirit.

“Welcome, Sir, come in,” said Major’s beautiful blonde wife when I knocked on the door. “You must be hungry. Come to the dining room. My husband is waiting for you.”

Major Hornstall was sitting still dressed to the uniform by the small table near the fireplace and reading the newspaper when I came in. “Oh, good evening, Mr. Shatterhand.” “Good evening, Major, you are not waiting more people for today’s dinner, right?” I pointed to the fact that on the table was laid just for two people. “Actually, to be honest, I lured you here for another reason. I would like to know more about your extraordinary friend Winnetou. He is far away from Indian that I used to know from my previous encounter with this spectacular nation. And I would like to know more about his personality, politics opinion and his view on coexistence of white and red in this country. He was always polite and friendly to me but not so much talkative. You could be the more appropriate person who I can ask to it. Do not get me wrong, Mr. Shatterhand, I just want to know more about him, because I think it could be helpful for ensuring peace in this territory. He is the main Chief of Apaches and moreover he is respected by plenty of other tribes and also white hunters.”

“On the other hand, he has also plenty of enemies, Major Hornstall, that do not agree with his dealing at all. I am pleased by your idea to stay on the Winnetou’s side but you should not forget that by doing this you are not choosing the easiest way,” I said, while I sat and started eating vegetable soup that his wife prepared for us. I didn’t want arouse doubts in him but I just wanted to let him know that to be the officer advocacy matters of Indian is not always so idealistic as it seems to. “So, you are not angry to me, that I want to spy information about the person who is close to your heart,” he assured timidly. “No, don’t worry. Actually, he is my favorite topic for the discussion, although if he would know it, he was not so happy from it,” I replied with muffled laugh. “Yeah, I have noticed that he is very reserved person. Indians usually are but he is very private man and it looks that it is not easy to get closer to him.” “You are true, but I could ensure you, that you already gained his trust. Winnetou is reserved to everybody, sometimes also to me. Do not take his behavior personally. It is just his defense mechanism against disappointment which he experienced too much in his life.” “And another think, he also looks like very educated man, he has plenty of knowledge about the history, politics and literature. I am so surprised. It is unusual in an Indian. Are you educated him or where did he get his knowledge?”
I decided to tell him about Klekih-Petra and his role in the life of Apaches. Major listen me with interest genuinely surprised by the story. “It is amazing, that Winnetou had so charismatic teacher and I feel really sorry for his death. But it is great that Winnetou use his knowledge for finding the peaceful way.” “As I already told you, there are two sides to every coin. Not all of Indians agree with his dealing. To be honest, I think that majority of red men don’t approve his negotiations. Winnetou sometimes feel like foreigner by his people,” I sighed. “But this concerns just the other Indian tribes, Comanche, Kiowa etc. he is respected by all Apaches, right?” “Yes, he is respected. But it doesn’t mean that he is popular for his peaceful tactics. He became famous warrior already during the childhood. He has never lost any duel or battle. And he became very young the main Chief of all Apaches, probably too much young. Usually, warriors around forty can gain the respects of the council of elders to become Chiefs. Winnetou was only twenty in that time. He subordinated the all private life to his people and he has unusual abilities of battle tactics, bargaining, rhetoric as well as forest wisdom and amazing tracking abilities. That is why he is respected, but not for the fact, that he preferred to live in peace with white immigrants. Plenty of Apaches hate palefaces like other Indians do and yes, they have enough reason for it. But do not idealize them, without Winnetou’s influence they could be probably as warlike as tribe of Comanche for example.”

Major Hornstall was silent for a while sorting his thoughts in head. Meanwhile, I finished the amazing dinner composed from fish and potato salad. It didn’t last long and Major asked me further: “Thus, it means that Winnetou really want to established peace with white people in his territory? So, it means that his dealing has nothing to do with any tactic, it really means, that he wants peace from the depth of his heart?” “Do you feel that Winnetou is just only pretending his effort?” I said keen. “No, Mr. Shatterhand, I didn’t mean it like that, sorry. Actually, I have one plan in my head how to contribute to his effort also from our side.” “Could I know how your plan is, Major?” “I have not yet my idea completed. But once I unfold this idea, I will let you know and we can discuss it. But right now I’d still prefer to keep it to myself.” “Ok, I don’t mean to pry. You will let me know.” We ended up our discussion with those words. I thanked for an excellent dinner, we wished ourselves goodnight and I returned to my hotel room.

I realized that it started to be really cold and extremely windy, when I walk through the Fort. This discussing evening awakened plenty of memories in myself, especially those from the early beginning of mine and Winnetou’s friendship. I was inadvertently smiling. What would Winnetou think if he knew that the theme throughout our discussion was him? I knew that he hate these types of “talks about us without us”. When I entered the dark silent room I knelt for a moment on the ground near the Winnetou’s sleeping place and touched unconsciously his blanket. It was usual for me that I missed him all the time when we had to be separated although it should be for example only for really short time as in the previous moment. But I still couldn’t get rid of the unusual fear and apprehension of something evil. I haven’t slept through the whole night and I was happy that the morning of next day came relatively quickly.
In the morning, which was still more cold and windy, I came for breakfast to the soldiers’canteen as all days during our stay in the Fort. I set down next to Pitt and Dick. “Good morning, how was your evening? Did you win any of the poker’s battle?” I guessed that no, because both looked really depressed and not like the winners of poker’s fortune probably also with headache from drinking too much alcohols, for what they were not used to it. Tight-lipped Pitt was chewing his corn cake and he didn’t look to be willing to answer me. Dick was little bit more talkative: “Win or lose it doesn’t matter. But I will never play poker in my life anymore. What about you, Pitt, old coon?” “If you say so, so it too will.” “And how was your evening, Mr. Shatterhand?” Dick replied. “Really nice. Major Hornstall looks like the person whom I like more the more I know him.” “Yees, I share your opinion. I never expected, that I can ever say it, but I will miss this place and people here when this horrible wheatear will end and we will continue the journey.”

We were almost finishing the breakfast, when the patrol at the gate suddenly called: “Lieutenant Wilkes is coming back!” “Well you see, so you have your Winnetou back again and it was not lasting long time” Dick tugged me mischievously at my sleeve. Immediately commotion occurred, but which subsequently was eased by the Major, who gave most men instructions to seize their regular tasks and only few officers were allowed to stay. It seemed to me that Major was expecting some difficulties. And my suspicion was confirmed soon.

Lieutenant Wilkes came first on his white horse through the gate followed by Winnetou. He greeted me by a glimpse. I immediately noticed his troubled face. Other soldiers came behind them in disordered tangle. In the middle I recognized four Indian’s prisoners, Apaches, Mescalero’s! One of them was older, around fifty, one of the ordinary warriors that usually were not inhabitants of Mescalero’s pueblo, but were mostly nomads, so I didn’t know his name. I knew him just only by face. Other two were young boys, almost like children around fifteen. I had doubts if they have already had the warrior’s name. The fourth one was strikingly handsome young warrior around seventeen. He had blue-black hair tied in two braids and slightly prominent cheekbones and bronze skin color with enormously beautiful dark velvet eyes with long eyelashes. His appearance was so striking to Winnetou’s, that I almost couldn’t break my view off this boy. All captives had hands tied behind their back. Lieutenant Wilkes galloped directly to the Major Hornstall. He dismounted and saluted: “Lieutenant Wilkes reports that the expedition fulfilled its purpose. We found ambushed wagon train of immigrants, all 13 people dead, men, women and children. We found several Apache’s arrows on the place. With the help of Winnetou we then found several tracks leading to the North. We tracked them and arrested them. They belong to Mescalero’s. Winnetou can tell you the names and he agrees that they should be punished under the law of United States.” It was visible that Major Horstall is almost not able to speak. I understand him, especially after the yesterday’s discussion. He regarded Apaches as peaceful nation and he was shocked that my yesterday’s words became truth so quickly. Not all of Winnetou’s warriors shared his peaceful efforts and traitors can be found in every nation. Major Horstall seemed to be really disappointed.

However, I fixed by my eyes mainly to Winnetou. He dismounted from Itchi’s back, his face transformed into an opaque mask. Only wrinkles around the eyes betrayed his true feelings. Probably I was the only one person who was able to recognize that he is exhausted to the death, angry, disappointed and also ashamed of his own warriors. His own warriors became traitors and murderers of innocent people probably just only because they do not agree with the dealing of their Chief. Maybe they want to revenge themselves for years of hardships caused by white foreigners. But rather I see young eyes in nearly the children’s faces who have committed indiscretions probably driven by someone who was more responsible for this act. Was it this old warrior? It didn’t seem to me. He looked too ordinary for it. Winnetou approached Major
Hornstall after Lieutenant Wilkes ended his reports. His eyes fixed on the captives he spoke with his sonorous voice: “These four are warriors of Mescalero’s. Hashika, Usimuve, Ataw and Korimas. Winnetou truly shamed for what they did. There is no excuse for it. Winnetou surrender them to Major Horstall’s hands. They committed a crime on palefaces, they should be judged by the law of United States. If they would be judged by our law they were tortured at stake martyr. Howgh!” Major Horstall recuperated himself: “Lieutenant Wilkes! Please, arrest them to the prison. They will be judged for murder of 13 American inhabitants including three children. Surely they will be executed!” “Major Horstall do you realize that those Indians are almost children yet?” There was me who had to speak. “Should it be some extenuating circumstance for you?” “Not for me, but as I know, The United States Constitution do not allowed to hang a child.” “So in this case we have to made the exception,” answer me Major angry. I fell to him and I grabbed him by the coat and I raise my voice to his face: “Then you are consciously violating the laws. Three of the captives are children, didn’t you see? I understand that they must be punished but do not send them to the death. It must be somebody else who is more responsible for the attack. Give me a time I will bring him to you.”

“Scharlih,” I heard the familiar voice behind me. Winnetou put so many emotion to the pronunciation of my name; love for me but also strong disagreement with my dealing; that I inadvertently stopped to hold Major Hornstall by the coat. “Scharlih, they are young but all of them are already warriors. They are responsible for their actions. They are also responsible to me. And Chief of Apaches let them to Major Hornstall. He will decide what to do.” I turned to him and stared at him in disbelief. He couldn’t mean it seriously. But he evidently meant. “But, Winnetou…” “There is no, but, Scharlih. Winnetou is trying with all of his power to hold the peace in this territory and he cannot tolerate that his own warriors violate it,” he said it calmly without any emotions and his eyes looked to me with tenderness and full of understating for my Christian principles. I saw, that he is not angry to me, that he rather agreed with my opinion personally, but as the main Chief he can do nothing else. I looked down to the ground.

Major Hornstall then spoke to his officers: “You all know that today afternoon is this celebration of five years anniversary of the Fort William. I would be really please if you all will hide the information about the attacks, murders and captives. Keep it for yourselves especially before the citizens. Tomorrow we will make the court and we will decide.” Then he turned to me, Winnetou, Dick and Pitt: “I would like you to participate. You are welcome, gentlemen! It would be just only small celebration with music and good food. It is our tradition. I hope you will enjoy it,” he said it really friendly. It seems to me that his trust for us was not disrupted by this incident and I felt little ashamed that I got carried away by my emotions. Dick decided instead all of us giving the reasonable argument and whispering silently: “It seems to me that we should rather accept the invitation. It is better when we will know the attitude of soldiers to this assault then to let them the space to talk about us without us. Because I have doubts that everybody will hold the tongue behind the teeth. What do you say, Pitt?” Pitt as usually said nothing, he just replied with nod of head.

During Dick’s speech Winnetou came last to the captures. He chose the middle-aged boy and stood before him. His dark eyes flashed the lightings and he said angrily through clenched teeth: “Are you proud to be traitor of our own people, Ataw? Do you think you performed a heroic act by attacking the palefaces? Do you think that this act would you earned a place in the chieftain council after which you desire so much? Settlers, who were no warriors, women and children? During the night without any warning? This is not our style how we lead the fight, when it is necessary. And it was not necessary in this case. Winnetou is ashamed of you. Howgh.” Ataw evidently didn’t agree with his Chief and opposed: “The only one traitor of Apache’s nation, who shamelessly fraternizes with palefaces, is you, Winnetou!” And he spit into Winnetou’s face. But as usual, my brother didn’t lose his self-control. He just looked directly to the Ataw’s eyes. The boy did not last it and looked down to the ground. Winnetou then wiped his face, turned on his heel and disappear without any word.
I came to Iltschi and took Winnetou’s horse to drink. Iltschi looked tired, his neck and back was wet maybe from the snow or rain, because they probably met the beginning snowstorm on the road. I tapped the faithful horse’s neck while he was drinking. I was thinking why Winnetou chose for his speech this young boy and not this older warrior. I couldn’t get out Ataw from my head. After Iltschi finished drinking I took him to the stable. Soldiers also disappear from the square taken the captures to the prison.

When I entered the stable, Winnetou was just putting the oats into the trough in Iltschi’s stall. It was incredible how we both agreed with our dealings. I said nothing about caring for his horse, but he somehow guessed it. I took the horse inside and removed his saddle. We both started to rub the wet horse’s hips by the straw one on each side in the same moment. I had to smile inadvertently. Despite the situation I was really happy that Winnetou was back safe. We worked in silent, both lost in our thoughts. When we finished, Winnetou wanted to leave the stall. When he passed around me I couldn’t hold myself and I grabbed him by the shoulders, looked at him apologetically and closed him in my arms. To my surprise, Winnetou didn’t protest and he returned my gesture and wrapped his arms around my waist. We stayed for the moment like that and just enjoying our closeness. After a while I pulled him at arm’s length and looked to his tired and sad but still unbelievably wonderful dark eyes. I read there deep disappointment for his own warriors but also immense love for me. Then I said with light smile: “Come, my brother, we should go to this celebration. You must be hungry and frozen. Let’s go to eat and warm up there. Scharlih will guard you before the nosey people, he promises.” I alluded to the fact that Winnetou hated from the depth of his soul the large gatherings with foreign people, especially the settlers and citizens who always looked to an Indian as an exhibit in the museum. But Dick Hammerdull had truth. We should participate.
“Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank all of you that we come together to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Fort William. I would like to thank you also for what you all are doing for our common coexistence. I am grateful to my soldiers as well as the ordinary citizens here - salesmen, stablemen, cooks, carpenters, farmers. You all are formatting the peaceful atmosphere here and you all are helpful to settlers that come from far away often exhausted to the death to start new life in the Wild West. We are living here five years in peace. I hope that it will continue at least other five years. I hope that you will have good time on this celebration. Feast your heart’s content, listen our band and drink wine but please sparingly,” Major Hornstall started the celebration with ceremonial speech. Celebration was held in a spacious wooden city hall. There were plenty of well-laid tables with turkey meat and other goodies. More than hundred people mostly soldiers but also some citizens were participating. It was played great music and everyone quietly told a tales, jokes or just spoke about various themes.

We were sitting by the Major Hornstall’s table on the wooden benches together with Lieutenant Wilkes and other four officers. Dick Hammerdull told us plenty of stories from his life and also Major Hornstall sometimes contributed. Winnetou sat to my left. He spoke no words the whole afternoon just only half-watched the events. I noticed that he has eaten almost nothing sometimes drinking only a cup of herbal tea. Although he was a point of attention of plenty present people he completely ignored their curious stares. He sat motionless with proudly raised head and with the hands on his knees on which he had laid his silver riffle. I was also not so much talkative today, most of the time lost in my thoughts. But anyway we both were listening closely surrounding talks.

Willy-nilly, once there came the topic of some of these talks also the recent assault, although Major Hornstall pleaded for keeping it in the silence. But because we were last separated table and nobody could here us he let Lieutenant Wilkes to tell us details from the place of attack. “It was dreadful sight. The caravan camped just in the valley surrounded from all sides by rocks. They had no chance to escape. Wagons were burned, horses killed and settlers scalped. Indians were evidently hurried. Someone had to distract them, because they let some arrows there and some small but still visible footprints. We stayed there one day and we bury the dead. After Winnetou came, we followed the tracks which were covered by the upcoming snowstorm. We got them in mountains. They were hiding in a cave. Because of the weather they were stacked there.” I was thinking for a while: “Mr. Wilkins, are you sure that the attack was made by only these four red men? There could not be more of them?” “The place of attack was like the trap. It could be made only by one or two people when it comes to. Moreover, we didn’t find any proofs of somebody else’s presence.” “Hmm, thank you for your opinion,” I was not satisfied by his answer. I still had the feeling that it must somebody else more responsible behind this. Winnetou looked at me studied my face while I was reflecting the thoughts. I still couldn’t believe that almost children were able to commit such a heinous crime. While I was thinking, music started to play again. This time the band played classical songs from Mozart and Beethoven. The audience started to be silent and loudly talks at the tables stopped. It allowed me to completely immersed myself in the sound of music and at least temporarily forget the current anxiety. I was fully lost in my world that I didn’t notice that Winnetou took advantage of the situation and somewhere disappeared. It was his characteristic trait to disappear unnoticed but I was still surprised that I didn’t record it although he was sitting so closely by my side. After the music stopped again I apologized by my companion and I went to look for him. Before I left the door I took a bowl of soup that was prepared for the serving as the dinner fully decided that I will force him to eat something.

I walked around the house and I found him sitting on the ground of wooden porch on his red blanket. Rigid as a statue crossed legged, he watched the clouds in sunset. His heavy blue-black
hairs were blowing in the wind. It was more windy and cold than in the morning. It started to fall
the snow with rain, the sort of outrageous stinging crystals. The wind was picking up on the
terrible strength. I knelt next to him and I remarked: “It was too much noise for my brother,” I said
it more like the statement as the question. “You know me, Scharlih,” he replied with the silent
voice using intonation other than usual sonorous type that he used for dealing with ordinary
people. This intonation he reserved just for ones that were closed to his heart. I forced to his hands
the bowl of the soup: “You must be hungry.” First he looked at me with surprise taking the bowl
to his palms but then he fractionally smiled: “Winnetou isn’t hungry but he is freezing. Thanks,
Scharlih!” “It starts to snow,” I noticed when he became to eat. He reply: “It's nothing yet. We met
on this expedition,” he said it with a grin: “only the edge of this storm and it was enough for us.
Winnetou hope that center of the storm will avoid this place. Otherwise we would be buried under
the snow for a long time.”

I wait until he finished the eating; I just sat otherwise so I could see Winnetou edgeways. I leaned
my back on the near pillar of the porch one leg bent and the other stretched out comfortably.
“What about your leg, it is better?” He asked me when he put aside the empty bowl with the look
to my injured leg. “Don’t worry, my brother, it is much better. I haven’t felt any pain since you
used this herbal ointment. But I missed you the whole time we weren’t together,” I said
unreservedly. He thoughtfully looked at me with his deep dark eyes. “But… Winnetou was happy
that Scharlih wasn’t with him,” I knew what he is meaning by that and I did not blame him. He
was happy that I was not the witness of what he has experienced.

We both stared into each other's eyes for a while. I was thinking if he is not angry to me for my
effort to save these trapped Apaches warriors from noose. He had to read my thoughts somehow
because he suddenly took my hand to his own. He looked for a while on our intertwined fingers
which skin color was in the upcoming gloom so visibly different. Then he turned his gaze again to
my face still holding my hand. “Winnetou is not angry to his brother. Scharlih is dealing together
with his Christian principles. But main Chief of Apaches has to punish the betrayal which they
have committed.” I shook my head: “But do you really want to punish those children by death?
Which lesson they can learn from it?” “And which lesson the unfortunate settlers can learn from to
be attacked in effort to settle in a foreign country where they do not belong when they are dead
now?” He countered the same bitter question. What should I answer him? He had truth. Winnetou
cought my desperate sigh and he tried to reassure me a little bit: “I know that you are considering
those young warriors to be children. But they are not. It was their own decision to become
warriors. Once they are warriors once they have to bear all the burdens of responsibility that is
associated with it.” “I know. I am maybe just taking it from the point of view of white boys in
their age who have usually uncomplicated childhood like me had for example, In that age when
you became the warrior I was playing in the streets with my peers and except the school I had no
troubles or responsibility. I cannot imagine not even a little bit, that I would have at that age
responsibility for other people's lives. When did you become the member of chieftain council? In
fifteen, am I right? Neither could I imagine being the Chief in that age, nor even now in twenty
six. Forgive me!” “Scharlih,” he pressed my hand gently again: “Winnetou has nothing to forgive
you. And anyhow you are one of the Chief of Mescaleros, have you already forgotten it?” He
asked me with barely visible smile. “No, I’ve never forgotten that your father gave me such a
privilege. But let it be, we both know that my function in the chieftain council is rather honorary
than something else.” “No, actually you are the only one person who has the most important
function there, Scharlih,” he looked at me archly. I raised my eyebrows. “To be the best friend of
the main Chief of all Apaches. And Winnetou think that you are filling the duties of this position
the best how you can.” Willy-nilly, I had to laugh out loud. It was curious, because during the
conversation with Major Hornstall about my blood brother, Major also asked me a question if
Winnetou has any sense of humor while he considered him to be really serious person. He would
be probably quite surprised how funny Winnetou can sometimes be. It took me a while before I
calmed down. Winnetou was watching me with an amused expression on his handsome face still
holding firmly my hand.
Then we both sank into the silence for a long time enjoying our closeness and watching the wind playing with surrounding trees. The night was coming. Here and there I glanced at Winnetou’s comely face and I could not help thinking about this young warrior Ataw. Their similar appearance was so evident. Both were really handsome and their beautiful dark eyes had so visibly similar shine that only the blind couldn’t notice it. Sure, my Winnetou’s eyes had softer expression whereas Ataw’s looked rather angry, but anyway… I had inauspicious suspicion and I was little bit disappointed that Winnetou was hiding something to me.

“My brother would like to know more about the warrior named Ataw,” suddenly said Winnetou into the silence. I turned to him surprised: “You are reading my thoughts, brother.” “No, I just did not miss your look with which you have examined him. I owe you one story. Once, you told me a paleface’s story about the black sheep in the herd of white sheep, do you remember? Winnetou’s family had also one such black sheep.” “How could the seventeen old boy be the black sheep of a family?” “Not him, but Naktih Pety, his father.” He paused for a while probably sorting his thoughts. I haven’t disturbed him, patiently waiting until he recounted further. “Naktih Pety was valiant warrior brave in fights and excellent archer. He was really handsome and successful man and the only one thing that he missed was the place of the member of chieftain council for what he desired the whole life.” “Why did Intschu-tschuna never give him the honor of a Chief, when he was so good warrior?” “Because he was too warlike. He hated palefaces from the depth of his hearth and for every small problem he had seen only the fighting solution and that’s…” “That’s not proper attribute of a Chief,” I concluded his sentence. “Scharlih has the truth. But this was not visible for Kilinaist, the youngest sister of Itischa, my mother. She saw the handsome young warrior and she fall in love with him. He was the good man to her, but he raised his son, Ataw, with unforgotten injustice that he never became the Chief just only because my father didn’t want it. Ataw is also brave warrior already in his young age, but he also hates palefaces like his father. He desires for the chief position and he think that it is his right because he is my only one living related. But he will never become the Chief, because I would never choose him. Thus, Ataw hate me as Naktih Pety hated my father.”

“Why has Winnetou never told me about Ataw?” I asked him guardedly after a long time of silence which between us suddenly fell. He shrugged the shoulders helplessly: “I don’t know, Scharlih. There was no proper opportunity. You never asked, so I had no reason to speak about him. Is my brother Scharlih angry to me?” I extricated my hand from his grasp, sat closer to him and wrapped my arm around his shoulders: “No, Winnetou. I would never be angry to you.” He gratefully leaned on me for a while and weary closed his eyes. He had to be really tired so I didn’t disturb him end just enjoyed the moment of peace.

Suddenly I heard the steps behind us and I turned. Winnetou quickly jumped up swiftly from my arms and looked angrily to the approaching Dick Hammerdull who apologetically said: “I don’t want to disturbed you but I just thought that you should know that the dinner is served now. You must be hungry.” “Thank you, Dick, but we are not hungry,” I prevented Winnetou to say something resentful. He really hated when somebody disturb his privacy especially in those moments because of such stupidities. “Well, when you are here, tell me please if somebody has noticed that we are missing on the celebration, especially Major Hornstall?” “No, don’t worry. Major Hornstall is dancing with his wife on the ball and Lieutenant Wilkes is just in the moment flirting with one young beautiful lady.” “That is what we needed, please, for the case that they have noticed that we disappeared, distract them somehow.” “Do you plan something, Mr. Shatterhand?” “Just only some small visit,” I answer him and he looked to me with his chubby face surprised but he didn’t dare to spy. “Ok, you can rely on me,” he turned and disappeared towards the house.

When he left I turned back to Winnetou who was now standing outside the roof on the rain and snow, his hairs were wildly blowing in the wind. He prevented me from speaking with the question: “My brother Shatterhand was also waiting for darkness to come?” “We had the same
idea as usually,” I smiled, “My brother Winnetou didn’t believe that Ataw and his companions made the attack without the command of some more responsible warriors or even a Chief, am I right?” “And my brother Scharlih thinks that when we are going to visit them in the prison we would be able to get that information.” “Actually, I didn’t expect this but we have to try it sooner than it will be late. But Major Hornstall must not find out that we were speaking with prisoners, otherwise we would lose his trust.” I neither had to say that because immediately I saw in Winnetou’s eyes that he had the same ideas. As usually we understood each other without any words.
We ran as silently as possible along the shadow of the palisade, that surrounding the Fort, trying to hide from the view of patrols. We took just only colts and knives; our rifles had to be left in the cases of saddles to not hinder us. The prison was nearby the gate of the Fort, so we had to be really careful. Our steps walked quietly on the crunching freshly fallen snow. The safest way to the prison looked to be over the roof of the building. Winnetou helped me setting his palms for my leg so I could jump easily on the roof edge where I locked my fingers to the wood platform and I pulled myself up to the roof. Then I helped to Winnetou with reaching the roof by stretching my hand. He pulled himself by the elegant jump like a panther. We crawled over the roof silently to the roof window. This window I noticed once I was walking through the palisade previous day so we used this way rather than the main entrance which was moreover well guarded by two armed soldiers. Fortunately we were able to open this window from outside and we launched one after another to the prison. We had to be really careful and quick. It was just the matter of time when guard on the palisade will notice our footprints left in the beginning snow cover from the crawling on the roof of the prison. We went down the wooden stairs where we found one guardian sleeping by the table under the window that passed last remnants of daylight into the room. He had the keys from the prison on the table under his arm. Winnetou looked at me. I saw only his beautiful shining eyes in the darkness. I understood him immediately. As silent as possible I sneak up behind man’s back and with my fist I send him to the dreamland. Winnetou swiftly captured the keys falling from the table. We reached the prison’s door and I opened it quickly.

Three of the warriors who were sitting on the ground with the tied hand jumped up surprised after we entered the cell. Only Ataw stayed to sit on the ground with inscrutable expression on his handsome face. Motionless as the statue he reminded me by his behavior to Winnetou. The youngest warrior cheerfully smiled and turned to his companions: “I said you, that our chief won’t let us mercy of fate and he will come to set us free.” Winnetou stood tightly before him and looked at him with his penetrating look, which the young boy couldn’t hold and lowered his head. Winnetou then spoke by his ringing voice sliding by glance at all of them except Ataw: “My brother Korimas is wrong. Winnetou didn’t come to let you free. You have done abominable crime and this is not what Winnetou could ever forgive you. He came just only to ask you one question. And maybe, if you will be willing to answer he will give you the opportunity to escape from the punishment of bluecoats. But you will never escape from punishment of your main Chief. It is up to you, what you will choose.”

His voice was strong like the hammer thus all of them left the heads lowered. All of them except Ataw. He was still sitting proudly on the ground staring into the unknown like Winnetou wasn’t there at all. After the long time of silence, Hashika, the oldest one, asked Winnetou: “What is your question?” “Could you name other Mescalero’s warriors who betrayed their main Chief? Winnetou didn’t believe that just only you were able to do this.” “As I already said, the only one traitor is you, Winnetou,” Ataw, who couldn’t hold himself anymore, gritted between his teeth. It was the Apache’s habit that if somebody was speaking with any Chief he respectfully stood up. However, Ataw stayed sitting on the ground and he didn’t even look into the Winnetou’s eyes. But it didn’t unfazed Winnetou. He came slowly precisely conscious each his step. He stopped directly before Ataw and looked thoughtfully to his face. Winnetou raised his voice: “Ataw is a courageous speaker. But the true man should speak by his deeds. What courageous deeds have you already done in your young age, Ataw? There are not so many.” Ataw jumped up and finally he looked to Winnetou’s face: “You are speaking about courage. You who always cowardly recedes requirements of palefaces! You are speaking about heroic act but actually you are scared of open struggle! Apache’s nation used to be full of brave warriors, but you did from us just only puppets in the hands of palefaces! You are listening sweet words of your blood brother about the peace but you are not aware that it is him who is killing our nation. You are spending with him
and his white friends months and months somewhere near the town of palefaces not filling duties as the main Chief. You should probably spend more time in pueblo; maybe you would be able to answer yourself the question that you are now asking us. Your father was also ally of palefaces but just to a certain extent like the part of the politics. He never took any paleface as a friend. His best friend was still Apache. Not like you. Your best friend is white and now you are behaving more like paleface as the proud Indian. Old Shatterhand is the bane of our nation!” Ataw clearly had talent to stir up a hornet’s nest. I saw how Winnetou’s face slightly blanched. He pulled out his knife and put it on Ataw’s neck: “Old Shatterhand done for Apache so many brave glorious deeds that you would have never been able to imagine let alone even perform.” I saw the stripe of blood on Ataw’s neck and I drag Winnetou away from him. I calmly whispered to his ear: “Leave him, my brother, he is not worth it.” I felt how he was breathing hard trying to find his lost self-control. But sooner I could say a word, he approached Ataw again and with elegant hand movement cut by the knife the handcuffs on his hands: “Get out of my eyes! You have already answered me the question which I asked, although you probably haven’t notice. You should better control your emotion. I shamed of you, but I keep my promise. Go, you are free. But remember, you will not avoid the punishment.” Ataw looked surprised to Winnetou for a while, if he really meant is seriously. But the fact that Winnetou didn’t use designation of warrior while he spoke to Ataw or he even told his name signified that he refused to discuss with him anymore. Suddenly, we heard the noise of plenty of footsteps on the stairs. It must be soldiers who probably discovered our tracks. Ataw recovered himself immediately and ran quickly to the roof window where he disappeared from our eyes. Winnetou put his hand on my arm to imply to me that I should let him escape. “You really disappointed me, Mr. Winnetou and Mr. Shatterhand, I thought that you are the gentlemen keeping their promises,” we suddenly heard the voice of Major Hornstall behind us.

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