

Return Of The Canoe Societies

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Chapter 1

Open Ocean

Despite the gusts of wind on the ocean that day the two elegantly decorated, ceremonial canoes set out for the waters of Cape Flattery at a lively pace. The paddlers were determined to quickly complete the first segment of their twelve hundred mile journey. The journey was a partial replication of “Qatuwas,” the journey that the Canoe Societies had made in the Summer of 1993 up to Bella Bella on the rough coast of British Columbia to demonstrate a resurgence of culture. Taking part in the gathering were three thousand people from thirty First Nations Bands.

It was now the summer of 2000 and the replication of the original journey was being done by B. C. coastal tribes to demonstrate solidarity for their attempts to negotiate treaties with the Province of British Columbia. The opponents of the land claims process maintained that the First Nations peoples were so divided about what they wanted that the talks should be abandoned. To counter this claim, the present “Voyage of Solidarity” to Bella Bella by participating Canoe Societies had the support of nearly every First Nations Coastal Tribal Group in the province as it had already been over one hundred and twenty-five years since the first protest about the theft of Indian lands had been done by Coast Salish people in 1874.

Rachel McBay felt a gust of strong wind on her body as she paddled in the second seat of the first ceremonial dugout with dismay. “The forecast was only for a five knot wind,” she thought. “This is much stronger.”

Return Of The Canoe Societies

Rachel looked out at the ocean as the twelve paddlers in her canoe, a black dugout with Raven proudly emblazoned on it's side in red and white, propelled the craft powerfully through the moderate chop on the open ocean towards Cape Flattery. She smiled as the enthusiastic paddlers from her host nation of the gathering, the Heiltsuks of Bella Bella, quickly pulled ahead of the second canoe from the Nuu'chah'nulth Nation, from the rugged, west coast of Vancouver Island.

"Make sure you're facing towards me, Darling, and look slightly to the right," Rachel McBay cringed as Nigel Kent, the strong minded, documentary director hired to record the journey, repositioned her grandmother, the tribal, ceremonial chanter.

"That's it, Darling," the handsome, middle-aged Englishman directed. "Perfect. Believe me, right is your best side, I know. We do want you to be photogenic, don't we? Now, don't move, not even a wiggle, unless it's a matter of life and death."

"As if we don't have enough problems," Rachel thought. "Giving the final say to the film director of this trip is going to be the death of us all. Nigel Kent is thinking only of the artistic merits of his documentary. And he's obsessed with reaching our destination at Bella Bella in advance."

"He wants to rehearse the entry of the canoes into Bella Bella, of all things, so that it's perfect in every detail, and time wasn't allowed for that by the tribal council.

Rachel braced herself as another heavy gust of wind struck the canoe.

"And now there's these death threats," Rachel sighed. "But that can't be possible, not in the Province of British Columbia." Rachel mused over her grandmother's words that morning.

"Watch out for any unusual boat travel, Rachel, anything approaching unexpectedly," Gran warned. "There's been death threats against the paddlers."

"Death threats!" Rachel remembered blurting. "Why would anyone be crazy enough to do such a thing?"

"There's lots of people that will do anything to stop the treaty talks, Rachel. Don't kid yourself. Believe me, what the white man thinks is his, he's not going to part with easily."

"What are you talking about, Gran?"

"Fish, lumber and mineral rights, Dear. Perhaps, even the right to Native self-government."

Another strong gust of wind struck the canoe.

"With winds like this, I don't think we need to worry about death threats," Rachel thought. "We'll be lucky to even keep this canoe afloat at all, without worrying about either death threats or getting ahead of schedule. And does it really

matter whether the angle of Gran's face is photogenic or not, and which way the canoe should travel to shoot the most spectacular scenery?"

Except for Nigel Kent correcting everybody's positioning to get the best camera angle, everything had gone all right for the first day of paddling yesterday from the launch site in Washington State. But today as the canoes had started approaching Cape Flattery the wind had become downright dangerous.

Rachel felt ever increasing fear in the pit of her stomach as the paddlers pushed on. The strong gusts that were becoming more frequent and more severe were making moving forward at all very difficult. She stole a few second's paddling time as the canoeists regrouped to face the increased demands. Rachel used it to tie back her silky, auburn hair, the only visible trace of her great-grandfather's Scottish blood, with a headband.

"My God, there's whitecaps out there!" Rachel felt her heart rate start to thump as she stared out into the open water ahead of them. The waves crashed on flotsam and jetsam in the ocean as the canoe moved further towards Cape Flattery. The sun was high in the sky now and the foaming, salty, rolling whitecaps glimmered defiantly, reflecting the all-powerful sunrays.

"Will we even be able to keep this canoe afloat, Gran?" Rachel asked her grandmother, Martha McBay, as the waves started to crash heavily against them. The tiny elder dropped her photogenic facial pose and her rhythmic chanting and drumming at Rachel's question.

"That's a good question, Dear," Gran stared anxiously at the surging waves.

"Darling, you've spoiled that shot completely," Nigel complained as he lowered his video camera. The canoe swerved suddenly. Someone in the back had moved off centre and waves began splashing right into the craft. The water was alarmingly cold. Rachel felt more fear in the pit of her stomach as she contemplated the fact that the two lone canoes on the ocean that day were without an escort vessel.

"We should turn back!" Rachel found herself shouting. "We won't last forty minutes in this freezing water if the canoe goes over. Whose idea was it not to use life-jackets on this journey, anyway?"

"Wearing life jackets wouldn't be traditional, Darling," Nigel Kent answered. Rachel sighed as Gran abandoned her chanting and reached for something to bail out the water that was now splashing into the canoe with each wave.

"Use this Martha," Nigel handed Gran the traditional red bark bailer he had insisted we bring along.

"Didn't paddlers of the Canoe Societies of old use their powers with the sea animals and ocean spirits to control weather like this? Can't you do the same, Martha? I'd so like to get a shot of you calming the waves?"

Return Of The Canoe Societies

“Some of the old ways have been lost forever, Nigel. Besides, if I were you I’d be more interested in bailing out the water around you,” Gran replied.

“Mother Jesus!”

Irritation joined the fear in Rachel’s mind as she thought of the reason she was sitting in the dugout canoe at all. Her grandmother’s words several months before came back in full force.

“Your university degrees mean nothing, Rachel. The white culture has nothing to offer Indian people. There is nothing in their traditions that will heal us. All their psychiatric and psychological science gives us is diagnostic labels and mind-fogging drugs.”

Sharp pain had formed around Rachel’s heart at the words.

“You won’t be able to help us, Dear, like you’ve hoped all these years unless you immerse yourself in the old ways. I know you mean well but as a result of your university studies, you’ve distanced yourself from your people and their ways.”

Rachel had realised that four years of undergraduate and six years of graduate work meant nothing to her grandmother.

Fear increased as all the paddlers in the canoe became aware that it was possible that they were going to perish in the cold sea. The conditions were becoming even more dangerous.

“God, you could be snuffed out in no time in these waters,” the tall, young women with the classical good looks of the Heiltsuk people started to go into a full-fledged panic.

Rachel felt the canoe come close to being swamped when a powerful rogue wave struck. The winds were getting even stronger. Gran and Nigel Kent were now frantically bailing out the frigid water with their traditional cedar-bark bailers. All the startled canoe occupants were desperately shifting balance each time the waves struck. The crashing waves seemed to come from slightly different directions each time. Rachel looked back at the other canoe supposedly accompanying them. The Nuw’chah’nulth canoe and the Heiltsuk canoe were scheduled to meet the Squamish Nation canoe at Port Angeles in two days to cross the Strait of Juan De Fuca to Sooke on Vancouver Island where they would be joined by the Sooke Nation canoe. The Nuw’chah’nulth canoe was a long ways behind them.

“I wonder if they will be able to even pick us up if we capsize?” she thought. The waves were crashing against their dugout canoe with a vengeance.

“We should turn back,” she shouted again.

“No, we need to make time, keep the canoe pointing into the waves. We’ll be all right,” the Dugout Canoe Coordinator commanded. “The forecast is only for gusts up to five knots.”

Rachel recognised another irritating voice.

“This must be a nightmare,” she thought, thinking of the horror the canoe journey had suddenly become. If Rachel had known that Nate Archer, her long-lost, former fiance, was coming along for the journey she would have avoided it at all cost. A disabling mixture of emotions had surged into the pit of her stomach when all of his powerful self had turned up on the beach yesterday. Rachel tried in vain to separate her anger at his arrogance from the longing for his physical presence that had somehow never left with him.

“He’s still hasn’t changed,” Rachel realised angrily. “Nate Archer was always ordering people around even back then.”

Her thoughts went back to the day she had asked him to postpone their marriage until she managed another graduate degree. She had been granted unexpected entry into a Doctorate Program in Clinical Psychology.

“Another degree!” Nate had yelled. “You said a Masters degree would be enough, Rachel. Look, I don’t mind you doing Drug and Alcohol counselling on the Coast of B. C. like you’re determined to do. It should keep you occupied while I’m away at my job. But I’ll be damned if I’m going to wait while you do another graduate degree. God knows how long that will take.”

“It’s an honour, Nate,” Rachel remembered trying to explain. “I’m the first Heiltsuk female to be accepted into a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology program.”

“Don’t try to impress me with that prestige stuff, Rachel. It’s money that’s all important in this world. And you know I promised my parents we would be married this summer. They’ve arranged a huge Potlatch for us. I’m not going to disappoint them.”

“A Masters in Psychology means nothing now, Nate,” Rachel remembered herself arguing. “You have to have a Doctorate to be a registered psychologist.”

Rachel had been so sure that Nate would accept it when she continued on with the Doctorate but he hadn’t. “All of a sudden he turns up on the same beach I’m on,” Rachel mused as Nate’s voice directed the paddlers. “And he looks even better than he did four years ago. He must be working out. Nate didn’t have a butt like iron and a six pack on his torso like a body builder back then. Life isn’t fair.”

“You wouldn’t think Nate’s present title as Vice-President of the Pacific Fish Processing Corporation would mean anything in this canoe,” Rachel thought as he shouted out orders to paddle deeper and faster on the starboard side.

But the other paddlers instinctively followed Nate’s order. The canoe shifted forty-five degrees to assault the waves head on. The canoe hit a huge oncoming wave with its brow and the vessel rose alarmingly in the air. It came down with a sickening crunch as the next wave was encountered. Some of the paddlers in the back lost their balance. There was an anxiety-provoking lurch to port and the canoe tipped.

Return Of The Canoe Societies

“Mother Jesus, the video camera!” Rachel heard Nigel Kent shout.

“We’re going over,” Rachel found herself freezing with fear as she was thrown headfirst into the frigid water. She screamed as the bitterly cold water enveloped her. Other paddlers splashed around her yelling and clutching on to paddles.

“Oh God, Gran’s sinking,” Rachel realised as she felt herself going into total panic. The heavy, ceremonial robes her grandmother was wearing at Nigel’s request were soaking up water and she was having great difficulty even holding her head above water.

“Do something,” Rachel found herself screaming to Nate Archer who was swimming near her as Gran suddenly lost her battle and disappeared under the waves. “This is your fault. We should have turned back long ago.”

The muscular, full-blooded man from the Heiltsuk Nation responded by diving down into the water after the older woman. Rachel grabbed onto the stern of the overturned canoe and fought to hang on. She sighed deeply as Gran and Nate Archer seemed to have disappeared from the world forever. Then suddenly Nate broke the surface after what had seemed a lifetime.

“He’s got Gran,” Rachel gave a prayer of thanks to the cosmos. Her heart felt warmth around it. She watched in deep gratitude as Nate pulled the ceremonial robes off Gran’s shoulders and brought her over to Rachel. Nigel Kent swam over and both of them grabbed onto the canoe around Gran.

“Are you all right, Martha?” Nigel seemed very anxious about Gran.

“If any of us are, Dear?” Gran sputtered, looking at the raging sea around them. Other paddlers were frantically trying to hang onto both the bobbing canoe and their paddles.

“We’ve got to hang on till the other canoe gets here,” Nate yelled above the ocean roar. “Or maybe try and turn this thing over.” He motioned Nigel and Gran away from the stern.

“Oh God,” Rachel gasped. Everyone was starting to flounder in the heavy surf. She and Nigel tried to hold Gran up. She was a poor swimmer. Nate and several of the men dived down under the canoe. Rachel could see their arms desperately trying to force the dugout upright.

“How can they hold their breath that long?” Rachel thought. It seemed like forever before the canoe slowly started to right itself. Then suddenly it flipped over. Nate Archer and the other men broke to the surface, gasping for air. The canoe was three quarters full of water but at least there was room to grab onto the sides now, although the sea seemed determined to push it over again.

Nate and the others crowded around the canoe, desperately grasping onto it’s sides and trying to hold it upright. The men tried to splash some of the water out with their hands. Rachel realised the futility of their efforts. With every wave the

water was more than returned. Nigel and Gran were now desperately clinging to the brow. It's carved head stood a couple of feet above the water and gave them more to hold onto. The canoe bobbed unpredictably in the waves.

Rachel stared back at the Nu'u'chah'nulth canoe bobbing in the distance. It was barely making headway against the wind and the waves.

"I'm going for shore," Nate Archer shouted to the others. "I'll try and get help."

"You'll never make it, Nate," Nigel Kent warned.

Rachel felt sharp fear in her heart as Nate Archer ignored Nigel and set out for shore with a powerful stroke.

"I must still care a little about him," Rachel acknowledged. "He'll never make it in this wind."

The paddlers watched as Nate's head appeared between the waves in the distance only to disappear again as the huge waves struck. It seemed an impossible task but the Dugout Canoe Coordinator crept on against the hopeless odds.

"There's a boat coming in towards Nate," one of the paddlers suddenly shouted. "Looks like they're trying to pick him up."

Rachel's fear lessened. A boat far in the distance was moving towards Nate.

"It's still going to be too late for us," she thought. Rachel realised she couldn't feel anything in her hands.

"We're all going to perish," Rachel decided as she felt the growing numbness in her legs as well as her body.

"Gran's turning blue," she said as she glanced at her only remaining relative.

"That's not going to help," Rachel's still analytical mind pronounced, as she heard Gran start chanting an ancient appeal for help to "Raven," their clan protector.

Suddenly the canoe started to revolve in circles.

"My God, now we must be in a water spout," Rachel thought. The canoe started spinning rapidly. Those clinging to the canoe were thrown back into the ocean.

"Don't worry," Martha McBay shouted above the roar of the wind and sea. "It's Raven," she cried. "He's taking care of us."

"Sure," Rachel said to herself as the sickening vortex of dizziness increased. The canoe seemed to be spinning around in some kind of force field.

"I can't breathe," Rachel said to herself. A huge force of some kind was crushing her chest. She felt horribly nauseous.

"I'm going to black out," Rachel muttered to herself. Suddenly everything went dim.

Return Of The Canoe Societies

* * *

Chapter 2

Potlatch Law Enforced

“What’s happening?” Rachel gasped as she felt herself being furiously shaken like a rag doll.

“Rachel, wake up,” some voice sounded irritatingly like Nate Archer’s. It was giving her orders. She forced her eyes open and found herself staring into some still very attractive eyes that had taken years to forget.

Fear pounded in Rachel’s heart as her thoughts returned to the raging ocean. She stared at Nate in shock. Then she gave a huge sigh of relief as she spotted Gran and Nigel Kent standing with his arm around her. Nigel looked completely dazed.

“Thank God you’re safe!” she said to Gran. But then she forced my eyes to focus and realised that both she, Nigel and Nate were dressed strangely.

“It is them,” she forced her mind to reason. “But they’re dressed in clothes like people wore years ago.” Rachel stared closely at her former fiance. He was wearing a grey flannel shirt, woolen pants and cap that looked like they belonged to the 1920’s. Nigel was dressed in a black, three piece suit from long ago, complete with a tie. Gran was wearing a red woolen dress down to her ankles that looked like it belonged back in time as well.

“Stop that!” Rachel complained as Nate shook her furiously again.

“You’ve got to get up Rachel.” Nate pulled her to her feet.

Rachel stared around at her surroundings. She gasped. A shudder of fear went through her. All three of the canoe voyagers were on an island somewhere but

Return Of The Canoe Societies

Rachel had no idea where it was. They watched as a crowd of First Nations people moved up from a collection of dugout canoes and boats with primitive gas motors pulled up onto the shore in the distance.

“Where are we?” Rachel demanded. “What’s happened to the dugout canoe? Who are these people? Where are the others?”

“We’re on some island, Rachel,” Nate replied. “I think its off of Vancouver Island. I don’t know how it happened but we seem to be back in time somehow.” Nate sounded completely disoriented.

“Those are Kwakiutl and Heiltsuk people from another time period, I think. They can’t seem to see us,” Nate explained incoherently. “I think we must be dead or something.”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Rachel shouted at Nate. “There must be a reasonable explanation for this somehow.”

“This is for you, Rachel,” Gran said excitedly. “Raven has a task for you. He wants you write about your people’s history, what they went through at the will of the white man’s governments, both Provincial and Federal. So that the ordinary people of British Columbia can realise the truth about their government’s actions against our people following the invasion of the English settlers. The ordinary person in this Province is not aware of what was done.”

“What do you mean Gran?” Rachel gasped.

“You need to know exactly what happened, Rachel and to record the information into a book,” Gran explained. “So that you and the people of British Columbia become aware of what our people went through and are still going through. What was done to turn so many of our people to despair, depression, substance abuse and even suicide and violence. Without that understanding, land claims will continue to be opposed and you won’t be able to be the healer amongst us you wish to be.”

“Don’t be ridiculous, Gran,” Rachel told her. Her Psychological training caused her to negate all that Gran was saying.

“You must be having hallucinations. And besides, I haven’t time to write a book. I have to complete my Doctorate.”

Gran just smiled knowingly.

“Come on Rachel,” Nate ordered. “We had better follow those people, towards that village. I don’t understand what’s happening myself.” Little of Nate’s normal self assurance was present.

“I think we should go along with these people,” he said. “Come on Nigel, perhaps this is the only way we’ll get back to the others.”

“They are probably all dead by now, Nate. I was losing my hold on the dugout, myself. My hands were almost completely numb.”

"I know, Nigel." Rachel gasped in surprise as she realised that Nate's voice had real anguish in it. She realised that it was the first time she had ever heard him sound like that.

"I should have never ordered everyone to keep on. We never should have tried to make it to Cape Flattery in that unexpected wind. We should have turned back."

Gran put her arms around Rachel and hugged her close. Her eyes were bright with excitement.

"You think you know something we don't Gran, don't you?" Rachel said in horror. She was sure Gran was experiencing delusions.

"Raven's brought us back in the past for you Rachel," Gran repeated. "There must be something here, this day, that Raven want's you to witness and record."

"Don't act crazy, Gran," Rachel ordered. Her scientific training wouldn't allow her to consider what Gran was saying.

"How did we get here?" she demanded from Nate.

"I don't have any idea, Rachel," he answered. "When I came to I was lying on the beach just like you."

Rachel's head was reeling. Tears came to her eyes as she realised it was a good likelihood that their other companions in the canoe had perished.

"You're right, we must be dead, Nate," Rachel shouted in horror.

Even more villagers moved from their boats towards some buildings up from the beach. Rachel looked at the sky. The sun was just about to go down below the horizon. Her heart sank. She realised it was almost night. And they were in some place she couldn't begin to understand.

"Hurry," someone shouted. "The Potlatch is about to begin."

"Raven wants you to witness and record this, Rachel," Gran said with certainty.

"My God, she's hearing voices in her head," Rachel surmised. "The stress we just went through must be causing a transient mental crisis," she diagnosed.

Gran and Nigel started off after the villagers.

Nate dragged Rachel after them. Everyone was moving towards the buildings above the beach.

"That's Knight Inlet," Gran shouted, looking at the sea. "This must be Village Island. I was here for a Potlatch when I was a child. "But it looks like it did over seventy years ago."

"How do you know that?" Rachel demanded.

"Look at that longhouse," Gran pointed at one of a string of large cedar plank longhouses along the shoreline, "and that totem pole in front of them." A two tier ceremonial pole stood in front of the large house the crowd was going to. Rachel stared at the pole in shock.

Return Of The Canoe Societies

“That’s a Kwakiutl totem pole,” Gran told them. “That’s Thunderbird on top, and Raven on the bottom. And Thunderbird’s wings are outstretched. Other poles, like Heiltsuk and Haida ones have the wings by the sides. I remember this pole. No one lives here now but Village Island was one of the centres of Kwatiutl life seventy years ago.”

“Gran, you’re only seventy-five,” Rachel challenged. How can you remember this pole? You’d have been only five years old when you saw it.”

“I remember it, Rachel,” Gran testified. “Besides, there are many pictures of this village. But it exists only as a tourist centre, now. The longhouse, pole and school still exist. But these other buildings were torn down.”

They followed the crowd. It was disappearing into a giant statue of Raven carved at the front of one of the longhouses.

“Mother Jesus, this is surreal!” Nigel gasped. He regained some of his ordinary enthusiasm for life as he stared at the totem pole.

“If only I had a camera?” he stated.

As they got up under the huge beak of the bird it opened suddenly to reveal a ramp.

“Imagine the bird concealing a hidden entrance?” Nigel exclaimed.

All four of them went down the ramp and found themselves in the insides of a large cedar plank longhouse. Totems painted in bright colours sat at one end of the longhouse anchoring the roof.

“Mother Jesus, the opportunity of a lifetime,” Nigel moaned, putting his hand to his forehead. “And not a camera in sight.”

“Where are we?” Nate questioned one of the revellers. The people all appeared to be in a good mood. To their horror the tall Kwakiutl man Nate addressed didn’t appear to be able to hear or see him. Shock struck Rachel as she realised that she, Nate, Gran and Nigel were invisible and inaudible. Rachel collapsed onto one of the benches around the sides of the longhouse and sat down. Gran and Nate sat on each side of her.

“Christ, there’s got to be a camera in here somewhere,” Nigel muttered and disappeared into the crowd. An open fire was burning fiercely with smoke rising through the opening on the roof.

“Look at all the gifts for the Potlatch,” Gran commented.

A pile of large, ceramic jugs, bowls and kitchen items were heaped in the middle of the community house as well as some Singer serving machines. Sacks of flour and Hudson Bay Blankets were piled everywhere.

“There’s even a huge pool table, out there by the door,” Nate Archer said in disbelief. “And a dugout canoe.”

“Sad songs for the dead are being sung,” Gran informed them. Rachel fell into

a complete depression.

“Perhaps they are singing for Nate, Gran, Nigel and I, for all I know,” Rachel thought. She had long ago lost any of the Heiltsuk language that Gran had taught her when she had raised the little girl in Bella Bella whose parents had died in a fiery car crash. Until a relative down in Vancouver had insisted Rachel board at her house and attend school in the city. Rachel couldn’t understand a word the singers were saying.

The show started. Costumed dancers came out from behind a painted screen.

Nigel appeared suddenly in an open space near the others. He kneeled on the floor and started setting something up. Nigel had somehow located a camera and was setting it up on a tripod.

“Where did you find that, Dear?” Gran asked.

“It was one of the gifts for the Potlatch, Darling,” Nigel replied. His eyes gleamed in the dim light. He disappeared under a cloth at the back of the camera.

“What’s going on here now, Martha?” he queried.

“It’s the Red Cedar Bark Ceremonies,” Gran answered excitedly. “Part of the Winter Ceremonial. Watch for the Hamatsa,” she urged.

“The Hamatsa?” Nigel questioned.

“The Cannibal Monster,” Gran said. “He’s returning from the spirit world.”

“A Cannibal Monster, how photogenic!” Nigel was enthused.

“While the Hamatsa has been in the spirit world he’s eaten nothing but human flesh,” Gran explained.

“Sounds like WWF Wrestling,” Nigel joked.

All of a sudden the sounds of fast drumming and whistles blowing filled the longhouse. A dancer came from behind the screen looking wild, dazed and totally out of control.

“The Hamatsa has to be caught and brought back to his senses,” Gran explained.

The Hamatsa dancer was joined by four elegantly decorated dancers wearing huge bird masks. Their wooden beaks were over three feet long. Some of them even had movable parts.

“What are those, Darling?” Nigel’s voice reached us from beneath the cloth at the back of the camera.

“Those are Cannibal birds, Nigel,” Gran explained. A huge flash of light lit up the Longhouse. Nigel was using some kind of flash powder to get enough lighting for his shots.

Loud chanting, fast drumming, and whistles all accompanied the Cannibal birds and the Hamatsa as they whirled around the dance floor. Then two other dancers appeared, surrounded the Hamatsa, and attempted to control his wild

lunges.

“See the cedar bark neck-ring,” Gran yelled to Nigel. “Once they get the neck-rings on the Hamatsa he will be under control.”

Despite the bizarre circumstances, Rachel concentrated on the performance. The dancers were experts and Rachel realized she had never been aware of the complexity of the Winter Ceremonial.

“That’s the Hamatsa’s sister,” Gran told them as a female dancer appeared, dancing backwards in front of the Hamatsa. “She trying to lead him from the Spirit world.”

Rachel cringed as the Hamatsa broke free and suddenly grabbed something from down in the audience. It looked like a human body. The Hamatsa started to feed on it. A substance resembling blood started to ooze and pour from the body wounds. Rachel gasped in disbelief. Another bright flash testified to Nigel’s fascination with the ancient ceremony they were witnessing.

Don’t worry,” Gran assured them. “That’s a fake body. It’s a dummy made out of bonemeal and red dye. The Hamatsa secret society dancers always were master actors, special effects people, and choreographers.”

“Mother Jesus,” Nigel replied. “They had me fooled completely.”

“Really?” Rachel’s university training still wouldn’t allow her to accept Gran’s explanation of the events happening to them.

“Sure fooled the white man, though,” Gran laughed. “At the St. Louis Exhibition in 1904, Bob Harris, one of the Kwakiutl people, danced the Hamatsa and the European audience was convinced he had eaten a real boy from the audience.”

One of the dancers held up a huge, ornately carved wooden rattle.

“Watch,” Gran hissed, “that rattle gives power to the neck-rings.” Before Rachel and Nate’s startled eyes the rattle was shaken and the red, cedar-bark neck-rings were inserted around the Hamatsa’s neck. The Hamatsa immediately stopped all his convincing resistance. He was led meekly off the stage.

“This is my favourite dance,” Gran said as a group of completely different men took over the stage.

“It’s the Klassila,” she informed them. “The dancers are the Chiefs of the visiting villages. They’re dressed in cedar bark headdresses with ermine tails and button blankets. They are dancing the Peace dance.”

Another flash came from Nigel’s direction. Rachel forgot some of her fear at the circumstances and lost herself in the show. After the Klassila, other dancers performed a Wolf dance, and a Paddle dance.

“I remember the stories of this Potlatch,” Gran confided as the dancing ended. “It was referred to as the Potlatch of all the Potlatches. The one that Emma

Cramner's family put on for her husband Dan Cramner on Village Island in 1921. Emma was returning the marriage security investment received many years ago in a Potlatch that was held when she and Dan Cramner were married, with interest of course. It's like a form of dowry. Marriage investment securities helped set up so many of our people when they were young. Now the debt was being returned."

Gran's voice sounded like she was very excited. Pain struck in my Rachel's heart as she worried that Gran was beginning to lose it completely.

"You should be worrying about how we're going to get back to the present, Gran," Rachel censored Gran's enthusiasm. Her psychology studies ridiculed trance states in aboriginal dances like the ones they had just witnessed.

"This rhythmic drumming, chanting and circular dancing is just inducing a trance. that's all, Gran," Rachel explained. "This is all like a mass hypnotic experience."

"How little you know, Rachel," Gran answered. "These dances reached audiences in the early days as far away as Hamburg, Germany. Dancers from the Kwakiutl, and Haida people toured Europe and even attracted Frans Boas, the noted anthropologist, to the northern coast to study our customs in the very late 1890's and early 1900's."

"If you say so, Gran."

"The ceremonial is impressive, Rachel," Nate Archer whispered.

"How ironic," she thought. "Our roles seem to be reversed. Four years ago it was Nate that devalued the Heiltsuk culture and now it's me that's equating the astounding performance in front of us to a self-imposed, hypnotic trance state."

"The women dancing with the Hamatsa?" Gran queried. Nate nodded.

"One of them was Florence Knox," Gran told them.. "That's Eagle down she had on her headdress. It represents the cleansing of the dark period of the winter ceremonial. The red of her button blanket represents the return of the spring, the return of life to this end of the universe."

"Sure Gran," Rachel sighed.

"Florence was dancing for her brother," Gran continued. "He owed Dan Cramner from another Potlatch. She spent two months in Oakalla prison for taking part in this potlatch tonight."

"How do you know, Gran?" Rachel gasped.

"See that man," Gran pointed to one of the men standing near a door. Rachel and Nate stared closely. The man was writing something down on a pad of paper.

"That's Kenneth Hunt. He's an informer sent here by Indian Agent William Halliday. He's recording the names of all the people taking part in the Potlatch and what role they are playing or what they do this night."

A flash of light illuminated the man as Nigel turned his camera in the fellow's

Return Of The Canoe Societies

direction at Gran's words.

Rachel stared at Gran in shock.

"The Indian agent turned Kwakiutl people into spies on others, Gran? And that lady was arrested, for dancing? I can't believe it," she commented.

"She and forty-five others, Rachel." Gran's voice got quite angry. "William Halliday, the Indian Agent for this area was determined to end the traditional dances of our people. Like so many of the whites he had no understanding and total disrespect for our practices."

"And the white government was determined to turn us into some kind of carbon copy of their people with their policy of Assimilation. Not to mention that the Provincial and Federal government officials were starting to fear our land claims. The fact that British Columbia was the only province where government representatives hadn't bothered to extinguish Aboriginal Title through treaties was beginning to catch up with them. Land claim discussion and strategy sessions occurred at the Potlatches along with other Indian matters."

"The white governments of both the province and the country wanted our culture and spirituality extinguished completely. And above all, they did not want Indian Land Claims being submitted to the Privy Council in England as the Allied Tribes of B. C. were threatening to do. Even then, some government officials sensed the possibility that British Courts would rule that Aboriginal Title had not been extinguished in British Columbia. That's the main reason why the Provincial Government enforced the Potlatch ban legislation in 1921."

"Don't get so angry, Gran," Rachel cautioned her.

"Anger directed positively is a useful thing, Rachel," she replied. "How do you think our people managed to get the Potlatch Ban revoked. It took sixty-seven years but it was revoked. Thanks largely to William Halliday and others like him, the Winter Ceremonial dances were silent in many of our villages for over thirty years."

"It was the same Indian Agent, William Halliday, that arranged the stripping of the forest on the Cape Mudge reserve on Quadra Island. Chief Assu wouldn't agree to one of the railroad company executive's wish to log the forest because he wanted the Kwakiutl people of the village to do it themselves. William Halliday, for a five thousand dollar bribe, took the matter into his own hands. When most of the Cape Mudge people were absent at the fishing grounds, he came in, got several remaining members' signatures and one man's signature on the logging agreement. When the Cape Mudge people returned twenty million board feet of their forests were gone forever."

"Remember the cedar bark ring dancers and the Cannibal birds?" Gran queried. Rachel nodded.

“One of those dancers was James Knox,” Gran continued. “He was dancing with his two bothers. He was all of fifteen years old, Rachel. He went to Oakalla and spent two months in the men’s unit along with his brothers.”

“You’re kidding, Martha?” Nate Archer commented.

“I wish I was, Nate.” Gran’s voice sounded choked, she had so much emotion in it.

“Don’t take this so hard, Gran,” Rachel advised.

“How can I do otherwise, Rachel?” Gran argued. “The government’s actions here this night caused over six of the Kwakiutl villages to surrender their regalia, masks and coppers to avoid their people going to jail. The passing of the companion legislature to the Potlatch ban, the prohibition forbidding legal action for Indian land claims in 1927, caused twenty-five years of inaction. Our culture was given a blow it barely survived. And our resources were handed to the English invaders to benefit from while we lived in poverty. We were barred even from filing a legal protest, or seeking comfort or understanding with our healing practices, culture and dances.”

Rachel was experiencing a deep conflict between her scientific training and her grandmothers words. In Canadian schools she had been taught that the Indian people had be generously compensated for the loss of their lands. She had also assumed that the vast Canadian country was largely uninhabited when the British settlers arrived. Rachel had been trained in university that ancient dances of aboriginals were a form of self-imposed, hypnotic trance. She had also been trained that the First Nations’ traditional healing rituals were only effective because they allowed troubled aboriginals the opportunity for positive identity achievement.

“God,” she thought. “I’m going to be experiencing identity confusion myself if this keeps up.” Rachel had been thoroughly trained in the university enculturation of modern Psychology. It recognised only what could be scientifically proven.

At their end of the night Rachel watched intently as members of the audience got up and made speeches to Dan and Emma Cramner and another couple that were getting married that day.

“See that fellow distributing apples, Rachel?” Gran directed again.

She glanced at a tall man handing out bags of apples to guests.

“That’s Moses Alfred. He served two months in Oakalla for giving apples to the guests.” Rachel sighed. Nigel’s camera fired again.

“And that lady. She’s Mary Whonnock, the wife of one of our chiefs.” Rachel and Nate stared at a tall, dignified lady who also appeared to be writing things down.

“Is she another informer, Gran?” Rachel asked, her heart somehow experiencing pain.

Return Of The Canoe Societies

“No, Rachel. She was acting as the recorder of the Potlatch proceedings. Who gave what to whom, what speeches were made, and what quests took part in the Potlatch as cooks, dancers, ushers, etc. so they could be paid a small sum in gratitude. That service got her two months in jail in Oakalla as well as her husband.”

“My God,” Nate exclaimed.

“And that fellow there is Spruce Martin. He served two months because he gave a speech. Billy McDuff, next to him was sent to Oakalla because he went around to the different villages and invited people to the Potlatch.”

As Gran spoke the walls of the longhouse suddenly started spinning. The spin quickly made all four of the paddlers dizzy and nauseous and they started to retch as their stomachs and chests felt like a ton of rocks were weighing on them.

“What’s happening now, Martha,” Nigel gasped.

“It’s Raven. I think he’s moving us somewhere else.

“Sure Gran!” Rachel thought as she felt myself flung unceremoniously on yet another beach.

* * *

Chapter 3

Harsh Sentences

The voyageurs never lost consciousness this time but it took awhile before their breathing and fast heartbeats got back to normal. They slowly managed to stagger to their feet.

“The camera?” Nigel was yelling at the others in horror. “Do you see any sign of the camera?”

“The camera was one of the Potlatch presents Nigel,” Gran informed him. “The government probably confiscated it along with the other presents.”

“Maybe you can reproduce what we saw using drawings?” Rachel tried to calm Nigel down. He was looking like he had lost his best friend.

“Drawings, Darling, why didn’t I think of that?” Nigel looked slightly relieved. “Of course.”

“Where are we now, Martha?” Nate asked Gran. He seemed to be convinced that she knew what was happening to us.

“It must be some kind of group hallucination,” Rachel told herself. Her scientific training still wouldn’t let her believe that Gran’s explanation of what was happening to them had any validity.

Their eyes followed yet another group of First Nations people as they made their way up from boats at the beach.

“This isn’t Village Island is it?” Rachel asked Gran as they stared at the group of longhouses stretched above the beach. They looked different. The houses were

Return Of The Canoe Societies

much closer to the beach and myriads of dugouts were lined up in front of them.

"I think this must be Alert Bay," Gran said. "That's where the sentencing was done for the Village Bay Potlatch offenders in 1922."

"Hurry up," someone shouted from the line of longhouses. "The Judge is starting the sentencing. Don't make him any angrier than he is."

The crowd rushed up to the boardwalk in front of the longhouses. The paddlers followed them inside one of the buildings. Rachel realised they were in a school of some kind. But it had been turned into a court of law. At the front a serious-looking man sat dressed in a magistrates robe. In his hand was a gavel. A pad of paper and a pencil in front of the recording secretary of the trial suddenly disappeared. Nigel appeared holding the pad and pencil in his hand.

"The opportunity of a lifetime, Darling," he explained as Rachel looked accusingly at him.

"Be seated," the judge ordered. The group of people around the paddlers went to the empty benches in front of the judge. Nate, Nigel, Gran and Rachel sat down at the back of the defendants but no one again seemed to be able to see them. Rachel touched the back of one of the people in front of her. He didn't respond.

"This is horrific," Rachel complained. "Nobody can see us, hear us or feel us." She felt her body feeling the prolonged shock of their circumstances.

"Tell Raven to stop this if he really is the one responsible," she ordered Gran. Her head reeled as she realised how crazy she sounded.

"Just pay attention, Rachel," Gran advised. "Raven is continuing your education."

"Sure Gran," she muttered.

A hush went through the crowd as the judge stood up to speak.

"As you all know," he said pompously. "Today is the day of the sentencing for the defendants found guilty as charged for breaking section 140, Statutes of Canada, 1906. Under this statute:"

"Any Indian or other person who engages in or assists in celebrating or encourages either directly or indirectly another to celebrate any Indian festival, dance or other ceremony of which the giving away or paying or giving back of money, goods or articles of any sort forms a part or is a feature, whether such gift or money, goods, articles takes place before, at or after the celebration of the same, is guilty of an offense and is liable on summary conviction for a term not exceeding six months and not less than two months."

"I have been informed by Indian Agent William Halliday that the officials of several Indian tribes involved in the unacceptable violation of Article 140 at Village Island on Christmas Day, 1921, have finally agreed to show remorse for their part in taking part in an illegal potlatch. They have surrendered their regalia, masks and

coppers to Indian Agent Halliday, in lieu of a fine. These tribes include the Nimpkish, Cape Mudge, Mamillikula, Tunour Island, Fort Rupert, and New Vancouver tribes. To demonstrate the mercy of the Crown and to reward cooperation, members of these tribes will therefore be given a suspended sentence.”

A large sigh of relief was noticeable in the room.

“However, as an example of the determination of the Crown to end the wasteful, detrimental impact of the pagan winter ceremonial dances known as the Potlatch, convicted members of other tribes who still show stubborn refusal to end their ceremonial dances will serve two months to six months of hard labour at Oakalla.”

A gasp went through the crowd. As the voyageurs watched tears formed in the eyes of some of the defendants as they realised they were going to have to go to jail.

A police constable took over the proceedings as the judge left the room. Each of the defendants’ names were called out and they were asked what tribe they were affiliated with. A printed list was checked for verification and the constable verbally placed each defendant into a line to the left or a line to the right.

When the constable reached the last of the defendants he ordered the line to the right to file out of the school room. The crowd watched as the members of the left line were handed blankets and told to sit themselves close together on the floor.

“Let’s get out of here while we can,” Nate ordered as the one group of released defendants filed out of the door.

“No,” Gran said emphatically. “Raven wants Rachel to witness what happens next and record it.”

“For God’s sake, Gran,” Rachel argued. “Let’s go. We need to try get back to the others in the canoe.” She tried to pull Gran to her feet but she refused to budge. For an older lady she was ridiculously strong.

“They are safe, Rachel,” Gran directed. “Raven tells me all the paddlers are safe.”

“Sure, Gran.”

“You go Nate,” Rachel suggested. “I’ll stay here with Gran. She won’t budge.”

“As you wish,” Nate replied, looking upset. “I’ll try and come back for you two if I find a way out.”

“I can’t believe that Nate Archer still looks so attractive,” Rachel acknowledged to herself.

Nigel Kent sat transfixed. He was drawing furiously on the pad of paper. Rachel glanced over at the drawing. Nigel had reproduced a perfect replica of the Hamatsa from the Potlatch.

“That’s exactly like the Cannibal Monster,” she praised Nigel. “I didn’t know

Return Of The Canoe Societies

you were an artist as well as a documentary film director.” Nigel just nodded. He was completely absorbed in his drawing.

By the next day Rachel was wishing she had taken the opportunity to leave when she could have. Nothing had happened since except that Gran, Nigel and her had spent the night on the cold floor without even the benefit of the single blanket afforded the prisoners.

“The steamer’s coming into the bay,” another police constable suddenly came through the front door. Everyone stood up and they were herded outside and down towards the dock. Gran, Rachel and Nigel followed. Rachel noticed Nate Archer standing on the dock.

“What happened yesterday?” she asked him.

“Nothing Rachel. I still don’t know how we got to this island or what the Hell we are doing back in the past. The people that came in boats went back to their homes, I guess. I thought of going with them but I didn’t want to abandon you. I just wandered the streets here all night.”

“Have you found out anything, Nate?”

“No. But I do want you to know that I think you are looking great, Rachel.”

“You look pretty good yourself, Nate.”

“In case anything happens to us, Rachel, I want to apologise for walking out on you four years ago.”

“Forget it, it was for the best, Nate.”

“No hard feelings?”

“No hard feelings!” Rachel answered. Nate put out his hand. Rachel shook it.”

“Thanks. I didn’t want to go to my grave without straightening that out.”

“What’s with this ‘going to my grave’ thing?”

“I’ve got a funny feeling, Rachel,” Nate confessed. “Something is telling me I’m not going to get back.”

“You’re just as bad as Gran, Nate,” Rachel complained. “Whatever happened to common sense?”

“There’s a steamship coming into the harbor,” Gran’s words interrupted their conversation.

“It’s the ‘Princess Beatrice,’ Gran continued, pointing out to sea. “She’s a CPR steamer that used to steam up from Vancouver to Prince Rupert. I rode on her myself when I was a child. She must be here for the prisoners.”

“Maybe we can at least get back to civilization,” Nate commented. “Maybe if we go back to where we disappeared something might happen,” he growled.

All four of them crowded into the small boat taking the prisoners out to the steamer. No one on the ship seemed to be able to see or hear them.

The day passed in frustration for Rachel. There were still a lot of unsaid

things she wanted to discuss with Nate. She tried to find a spot to be alone but was forced to sit in the crowded passenger space with Gran and Nigel and the others as the “Beatrice” worked her way down the coast. The older couple’s presence prevented Rachel from initiating any kind of frank discussion with Nate. By the end of the day Nigel had an entire pad filled with drawings.

“You’re not going with them?” Nate protested as Gran, Nigel and Rachel started to follow the prisoners as they were herded into two ancient trucks, presumably to take them to Oakalla.

“Raven wants Rachel to witness and record what happens here,” Gran said obstinately.

“Oh, my God,” Nate commented.

“Gran’s having hallucinations, Nate,” she told him. “I have to stay and protect her.”

Gran crowded into one of the trucks with the prisoners. There was no room left in the trucks so Rachel grabbed onto the back of one of them, next to a large Kwakiutl man who didn’t fit in the truck, either. Nate pushed up against her and grabbed onto the latch on the back door. Nigel stood precariously on the bumper hanging on to Nate. The old truck lurched forward and all three of them grasped onto anything they could grab.

“Thank God we’re not going very fast,” Nigel said.

The native prisoner started shouting something loudly as we wove through the streets of Vancouver and then New Westminster on the way to Oakalla. It sounded like “hap, hap.” The other prisoners in the truck cheered loudly.

“What’s he shouting?” Rachel questioned Nate.

“He’s probably just nuts,” Nate answered.

“Remember Dear?” Gran shouted from inside the truck. “That’s the ‘Hamatsa’ cry from the Winter Ceremonial dance of the Kwakiutl. “Don’t you recognize it? ‘Hap, Hap,’ it means ‘Food, Food.’ You saw Bob Harris dancing it. That fellow next to you is Herbert Martin. He was one of the well known secret societies dancers the other night. Witness how he refuses to be intimidated by the orders of the white colonial government trying to exterminate our ancient culture.”

Rachel stared at the prisoner next to her in awe. She realized that Gran was right, that he was trying to keep up the spirits of the others in the trucks. People on the streets stared at Herbert Martin in derision as he kept the ‘Hamatsa’ cry up all through the passage to Oakalla. But he wasn’t the slightest deterred.

“That’s how our culture survived,” Gran shouted. “Because of people like Herbert Martin.”

It took forever to get to Oakalla. The trucks kept having flat tires. They were not used to carrying so many people. At the prison Rachel and Gran followed the

Return Of The Canoe Societies

ladies in through one door. The last she saw of Nate and Nigel, they were following some of the men in through another door.

Rachel could tell the four women from the Kwakiutl villages were completely terrified. She and Gran sat on one of the bare benches in the intake room as the women were forced to undress and were strip searched one by one by laughing male guards. They took the woman's fingerprints while they were still standing naked and shivering in fear. The guards looked over each of the woman and wrote down any irregularities (large head, weight irregularity, birthmarks) and the ladies measurements onto some kind of file records after reading them out loud. The four women were completely mortified.

"You know how Kwakiutl people are about the privacy of their bodies, Rachel," Gran spoke. Her voice was full of outrage. "Those ladies had never been violated like that before."

"Look at the front of the old one's head," one of the guards laughed. "It's slanted."

"Do those guards have to enjoy their jobs so much?" Rachel complained to Gran.

"They undoubtedly have orders from Government officials to teach these Indian people a lesson this time, Dear," she replied. "To make an example of them to others and humiliate them so much that they will never dare to dance the Potlatch again or break any other restrictions of the Indian Act, particularly submitting their Indian Land Claim petitions to the Privy Council in England. But how little they know."

"What do you mean, Gran?"

"The treatment these people received was reported to all the coastal and interior tribes, Dear. These arrests did more to strengthen our resolve to hold onto our customs and pursue our land claims than anything else that happened since the white man invaded our territories. The culture went underground instead of people practising outright defiance. Land Claim activities switched to the Native Brotherhood in Alaska and went on underground. That's how the culture survived until now."

Rachel's thoughts returned to the ordeal the four Kwakiutl ladies were going through.

After being strip searched, their body measurements written down and commented on, and fingerprinting in the nude, the four ladies were issued ill fitting prison dresses. Then they were ordered to pick up rough, cotton mattress covers, fill them with unprocessed straw and move into small cells with bars on their windows. The cells had a foul-smelling odour that nauseated Rachel. She and Gran followed Florence Knox into her cell and sat down on the cold cement floor. Rachel retched,

the place was so ghastly and smelly. She felt so sorry for the ladies. Florence Knox was sobbing uncontrollably and she could hear the others crying openly in their cells.

Gran and Rachel stayed with Florence Knox for the full ten days the ladies were locked up in the foul-smelling cells without so much as even an exercise break. A strange mixture of emotions whirled through Rachel's head. Anger at the government's treatment of the Potlatcher's was mixed with confusion over relationship issues. No one had come along to replace Nate after they had broke up. Rachel felt intense negativity. She reminded herself that she had made a vow to put a moratorium on relationship pressures at least until she finished her doctorate. She managed to acknowledge that she was presently afraid for her and Gran's present circumstances and that her sense of reality was being badly shaken. There was no way to make sense of the weird happenings.

The Kwakiutl ladies were thoroughly demoralized. Breakfast consisted of mush without milk or sugar, black coffee and half a piece of toast. Dinner was an bowl of very thin stew. It's contents were unrecognizable.

Rachel and Gran met up with Nate and Nigel again as all the prisoners were released into the courtyard to do some grounds cleaning after ten days.

Nate rushed over to Rachel.

"We need to have a talk, Rachel."

"I know," she replied.

Gran and Rachel learned that the men had been imprisoned for ten days in tiny cells without a break as well.

"It was awful," Rachel told Nate. "Do you know they strip searched these ladies. Florence Knox keeps having heart palpitations and the guards are just ignoring her complaints."

"That's nothing, Darling," Nigel replied. Rachel noticed he had even more sketch pads in his hands. "Do you know what they did to the men? The small ones were issued prison garb that were too big for them and the large ones were issued prison garb miles below their size. It was done deliberately to humiliate them, I'm sure. A fire hose was even turned on them at one point."

"Can you believe that they are deliberately sending the Chiefs of the villages to feed the pigs?" Nate asked. He sounded angry.

"You've changed, Nate?" Rachel commented. "I thought you didn't care what happened to Heiltsuk culture. Remember, all you cared about was becoming the first Heiltsuk man to become Superintendent of one of the big fish companies."

"I know, Rachel." Nate sounded apologetic. "I'm sorry, believe me. I've had all kinds of time to think since we've been in this prison."

"What made you come on this trip, Nate?"

Return Of The Canoe Societies

Nate smiled ruefully. "My boss volunteered me. You know his wife, Clarissa. She's obsessed with successful conclusion of the Land Claims. It's Clarissa that thought of this 'Voyage of Solidarity' to demonstrate First Nations Unity on the Land Claims situation."

"See that older lady," Gran interrupted. "She's the wife of a chief, Mary Whonnock. I guess the government made sure several of the chiefs were sentenced so they could be thoroughly humiliated."

"They made Florence Knox come down here even though her elderly husband is very ill," Rachel said, her mind going back to the plight of the ladies. She cried herself to sleep almost every night."

As Rachel spoke the voyageurs suddenly felt myself being thrown to the ground. The grounds of the prison suddenly started spinning.

"What's happening?" Rachel cried out. She felt her chest being crushed somehow by some kind of force-field again.

"Don't worry," Gran cried. "It's 'Raven,' returning us to the present."

"Rachel," Nate cried out. "Remember we need to have a talk." That was the last thing Rachel heard as she lost consciousness again.

When Rachel woke up she found myself lying inside a bobbing, dugout canoe in a raging sea. Someone's jacket had been thrown over her. She stared around trying to force her eyes to focus.

"Just stay still," one of the women paddlers advised. Rachel recognised her friend Rose Alfred from the Nuw'chah'nulth Nations' canoe.

"Don't try to move," Rose warned. "You're safe now, I think, that is if we can get this canoe to shore at Neah Bay before this wind gets any worse."

Rachel's vision cleared. She stared around her, desperately searching for Nate and Gran. She couldn't stop shivering. Her canoe mates were crammed together amongst tired-looking paddlers wearily stroking as they tried to pull their overcrowded dugout to the shore.

"Gran?" Rachel asked anxiously. "And Nate Archer? They're not in the canoe. And Nigel Kent?"

"Everyone except Nate Archer is safe," Rose told her. "A small yacht managed to pick your grandmother and Nigel Kent out of the water. We've picked up the others but no one knows what happened to Nate Archer."

"Nate's missing?" Rachel gasped. Rachel felt intense emotion flooding into her stomach and heart.

"We're not sure what happened. Several people swear a boat picked up Nate when he was near the shore. But if the boat picked him up it never dropped him off. No one's heard anything on the radio from them."

"There was a boat!" Rachel gasped. "I saw it myself."

"Maybe we'll hear something when we reach shore, Rachel. You just try and relax."

"Everyone else is safe?" she queried again.

"It's a miracle," Rose told her. "That only Nate Archer is missing. I was so scared when we saw your canoe overturn. It took us so long to get to you and that water must have been so cold. Thank God the wind blew your canoe back in our direction. Otherwise we would never have been able to reach you in time."

"Thank you," Rachel cried, tears filling her eyes. "All of you."

As the canoe reached shore people came running up.

"Where's Martha McBay," Rachel asked as someone helped her out of the canoe. "The older woman, she's the elder conducting the ceremonial chanting," she explained. "And have they found the missing paddler, yet?"

"The older ladies's with one of my neighbours," one of the Makah Nation people of Neah Bay advised Rachel. "But the other fellow hasn't been located."

Sharp fear filled Rachel's stomach. Tears came into her eyes.

"There's wilderness around that shoreline where he might of landed. He might have got lost trying to go through the woods for help," the fellow tried to cheer Rachel up. "Don't worry, there's a search party out and boats are searching up and down the shore in case he's still in the water."

"Come on, I'll drive you to the older lady, myself," the man offered. Rachel's face was frozen with fear for Nate. The fellow helped her into one of the waiting cars near the beach.

"You're safe," she gasped as she entered the house of one of the Makah people and found Gran sitting on the chesterfield next to Nigel Kent, calmly drinking a hot cup of tea.

"Everyone is safe, Rachel, just like I told you."

Rachel staggered over to her side. Nigel looked at her in sympathy.

"Nate is missing, Gran," Rachel's voice had agony in it. "They're not sure if he reached shore. Some people think a boat picked him up but there's been no word from them."

"It might be connected to the death threats Rachel," Gran looked frightened and shocked. Suddenly her eyes looked funny.

"She's conferring with Raven, Rachel," Nigel Kent advised her.

"You believe that, Nigel?" Rachel gasped.

"Wait to you see what was in my pocket," Nigel warned. He sounded very odd. Rachel looked around the room to see if anyone was overhearing them. No one was present.

"Rachel, Raven doesn't know where Nate is," Gran explained. "But he thinks he's still alive and is in great danger."

Return Of The Canoe Societies

“Sure, Gran.” Rachel’s heart froze at Gran’s words.

“Rachel?” Nigel Kent queried.

She stared at him in shock.

“Rachel, I think we had better do what Martha wants us to do,” he said. He pulled a pad of paper out of his pocket.

“What are you talking about, Nigel?”

“Martha says we two are to collaborate on a book about the history, Rachel. I believe her. Look at these.”

Rachel stared at the pad in Nigel’s hand. She froze.

“Nigel, those are the drawings you made at the Potlatch,” she gasped. “And at the trial and prison. How did you bring them back?”

“I didn’t, Rachel. I found them in my vest pocket when the fellow from the yacht pulled me into his boat.”

Rachel stared at Nigel, not willing to believe him.

My clothes were soaked, Rachel,” he explained. “But these drawings didn’t have a drop of water on them.”

“That’s not funny, Nigel,” Rachel told him. A shiver of fear ran down her spine.

“I’m not trying to be funny, Rachel. I’m only telling you what happened. There’s no way these drawings should be dry. The water should have ruined them. Something supernatural must have protected them.”

Rachel stared at Gran. Her eyes looked very intense. Somehow Rachel knew she had to take her seriously.

“I have to write a book, Gran?” she asked, her voice shaking with disbelief.

“And Nigel is going to illustrate it?”

“That’s correct, Dear.”

Rachel flipped through Nigel’s pad. Her hands shook as she recognized the drawing of the Hamatsa that Nigel had made in the old school room at Alert Bay. She flipped through the others. They were drawings Nigel had done on the Princess Beatrice and at Oakalla Prison. She stared at him in disbelief.

“We had better not tell anyone about this, Darling,” Nigel said. “They would throw us in for psychiatric assessment or something.”

“That’s where we should be, Nigel,” Rachel gasped. “Undergoing psychiatric assessment.”

“Trust me, Rachel,” Gran said. “You’re being given information about our people’s past that the ordinary people of British Columbia need to know. Once they know the truth about the government treatment of our people they will be more willing to support the Land Claims. The history will be invaluable to you also when you try and understand and counsel some of our people. Information that your white

university courses will never give you.”

“If you say so Gran,” Rachel’s mind reeled. She realized that she was in the same boat as Nigel. Despite her graduate training she realised that she didn’t have any rational explanation of the mystifying events that was any better than the explanation Gran had given. Rachel realised that her rational mind was thoroughly blown away by what had happened and Nate Archer’s disappearance.

“I only hope we don’t have to be thrown out of canoes into freezing water every time Raven wants us to learn something.” Rachel muttered. “Particularly with Nate Archer missing.”

“We would have been thrown out anyway, Rachel. Going on in that wind today was a big mistake. Raven was just taking advantage of the timing,” Gran explained.

“Sure, Gran.” Rachel realised she didn’t have the strength to argue any more.

* * *

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