

THE COMPLETE  
WESTERN  
STORIES  
OF  
ELMORE  
LEONARD

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 HarperCollins e-books

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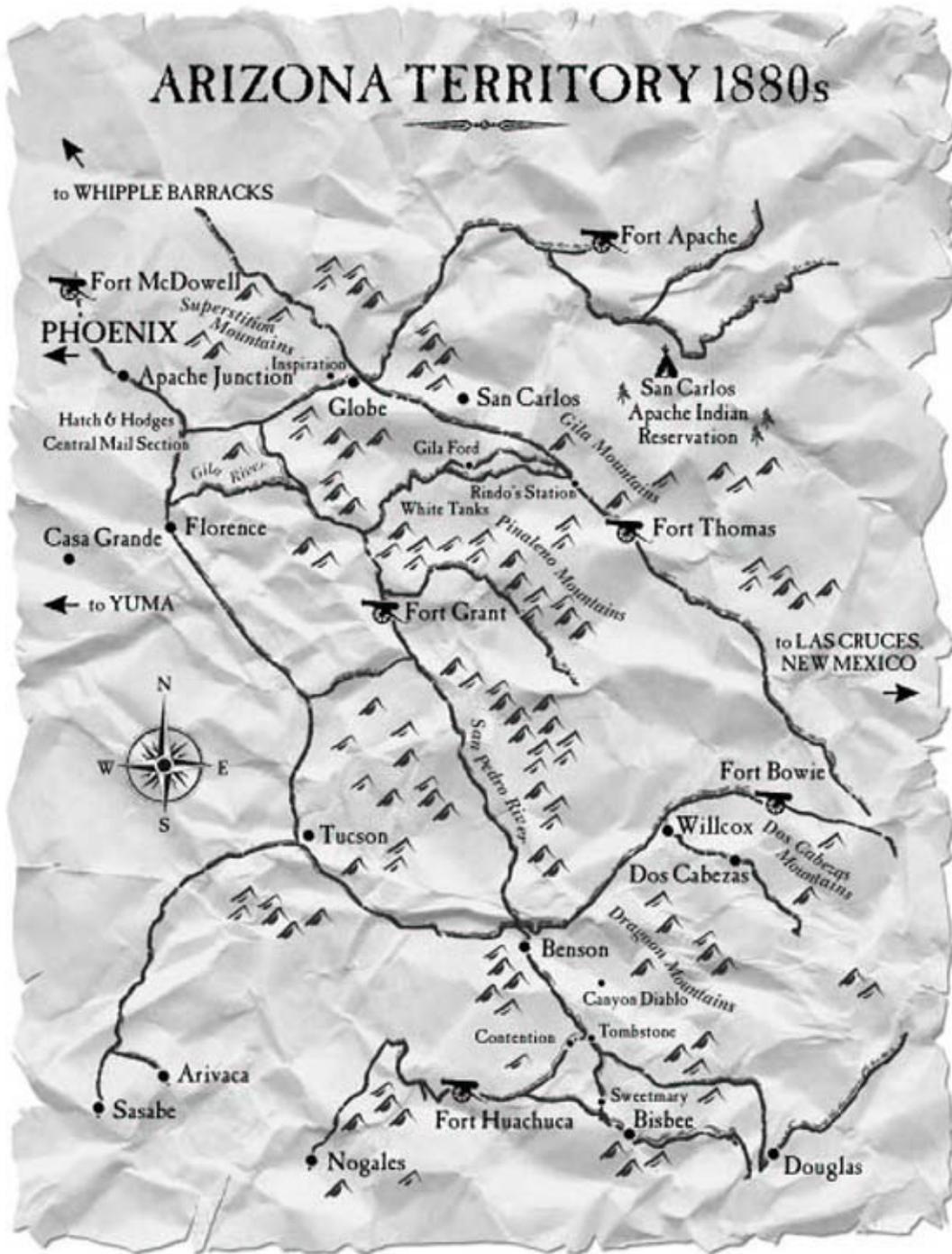
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## A CONVERSATION WITH ELMORE LEONARD

ELMORE JOHN LEONARD, Jr., started his life of writing in the fifth grade, when as a student at Blessed Sacrament Grade School in Detroit, he was inspired by a *Detroit Times* serialization of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, wrote a play, and staged it at school, the classroom desks serving as no man's land. He did not write again until his college years at the University of Detroit, where he majored in English. He wrote a few experimental short stories while spending most of his free time reading and going to the movies. "I was discovering who I liked to read," he said. "I wasn't reading for story, I was reading for style."

Sometime shortly after college Elmore decided he wanted to be a writer. "I looked for a genre where I could learn how to write and be selling at the same time," he recalls. "I chose Westerns because I liked Western movies. From the time I was a kid I liked them. Movies like *The Plainsman* with Gary Cooper in 1936 up through *My Darling Clementine* and *Red River* in the late forties."

There was a surge of interest in Western stories in the early fifties, Elmore notes, "from *Saturday Evening Post* and *Colliers* down through *Argosy*, *Adventure*, *Blue Book*, and probably at least a dozen pulp magazines, the better ones like *Dime Western* and *Zane Grey Magazine* paying two cents a word."

His first attempt at writing a Western was not a success. "I wrote about a gunsmith that made a certain kind of gun. I have no idea now what the story was about when I sent it to a pulp magazine and it was rejected. I decided I'd better do some research. I read *On the Border with Crook*, *The Truth about Geronimo*, *The Look of the West*, and *Western Words*, and I subscribed to *Arizona Highways*. It had stories about guns—I insisted on authentic guns in my stories—stagecoach lines, specific looks at different little facets of the West, plus all the four-color shots that I could use for my descriptions, things I could put in and sound like I knew what I was talking about."

He distilled all this valuable detail into a ledger book, which became a constant reference for his story writing throughout the decade.

Properly armed with a sense of the West, he wrote his first Western, *Tizwin*, the Apache name for corn beer. It didn't sell immediately. "The editor at *Argosy* passed it on to one of their pulp magazines at Popular Publications," Elmore remembers, "and they bought it." And changed the title to "Red Hell Hits Canyon Diablo." "The *Argosy* editor said, 'If you have anything else about this period, we'd like to read it.' So I sat down and wrote 'Trail of the Apache,' which was the first one that was published."

A growing family and a full-time job as a copywriter on the Chevrolet account at Campbell-Ewald Advertising in Detroit did not give Elmore a lot of time to write.

“I realized that I was going to have to get up at five in the morning if I wanted to write fiction. It took a while, the alarm would go off and I’d roll over. Finally I started to get up and go into the living room and sit at the coffee table with a yellow pad and try to write two pages. I made a rule that I had to get something down on paper before I could put the water on for the coffee. *Know where you’re going and then put the water on.* That seemed to work because I did it for most of the fifties.”

He’d also get a little writing done at the agency. “I’d put my arm in the drawer and have the tablet in there and I’d just start writing and if somebody came in I’d stop writing and close the drawer.”

Elmore began to focus on a particular area of the West for his stories. “I liked Arizona and New Mexico,” he said. “I didn’t care that much for the High Plains Indians, I liked the Apaches because of their reputation as raiders and the way they dressed, with a headband and high moccasins up to their knees. I also liked their involvement with things Mexican and their use of Spanish names and words.”

*The Complete Western Stories* begins with Elmore’s first five shorts: Apache and cavalry stories set in Arizona in the 1870s and ’80s.

“I was disappointed by rejections from the better-paying magazines, *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Colliers*,” Elmore says. “They felt my stories were too relentless and lacked lighter moments or comic relief. But I continued to write what pleased me while trying to improve my style.”

The next direction for Elmore’s writing was obvious: write a Western novel. The result was *The Bounty Hunters* (1953), the prototype for many an Elmore Leonard Western. Take the most dangerous Apache, the wisest scout, and the greediest outlaw, put them all together in the desert sun, and see who wins.

As he spun out novels and short stories from five to seven in the morning, Hollywood came calling and bought a *Dime Western* story, “Three-Ten to Yuma,” and from *Argosy*, “The Captives,” filmed as *The Tall T*. Elmore was excited but in both cases “saw how easily Hollywood could screw up a simple story.” Both films, released in 1957, are now regarded as minor classics.

Elmore reached his goal as a Western writer in April of 1956, when *The Saturday Evening Post* published his story “Moment of Vengeance.”

In less than five years he had entered the pantheon of Western writers. But the Western was on its way out. “Television killed the Western,” Elmore says. “The pulps were mostly gone by then too, the market was drying up.”

In 1960, Elmore took his profit sharing from Campbell-Ewald—\$11,500—with the intention of becoming a full-time writer. He had put his ten years in. “The money would have lasted six months, and in that time I could write a book and sell it.” Instead, the family bought a house and he wrote freelance advertising copy and

educational films to pay the bills until the movie version of his novel *Hombre* was bought by a studio in 1966, and he finally had the money to write his first non-Western novel, *The Big Bounce*.

But he wasn't through with the Westerns by any means. He had yet to write what many consider to be his masterpiece.

Just before his five-year fiction-writing hiatus, in 1961, he wrote a story for *Roundup*, a Western Writers of America anthology, called "Only Good Ones," the story of Bob Valdez, soon to be the classic Elmore Leonard hero who is misjudged by the antagonist, "the bad guys realizing too late they'll be lucky to get out of this alive."

Six years later, in search of an idea for a novel he could sell to the movies, Elmore picked up "Only Good Ones" and, in seven weeks, expanded it into *Valdez Is Coming* (1970) which was brought to the big screen with Burt Lancaster three years later.

"Look what I got away with," Elmore says. "In the final scene of *Valdez* there is no shootout, not even in the film version. Writing this one I found that I could loosen up, concentrate on bringing the characters to life with recognizable traits, and ignore some of the conventions found in most Western stories."

*The Complete Western Stories of Elmore Leonard* charts the evolution of Elmore's style and particular sound from the very beginning of his writing career. In five years, between 1951 and 1956, he wrote twenty-seven of the thirty stories in this volume. He carved out his turf in the Arizona and New Mexico Territories, from Bisbee to Contention, from Yuma Territorial Prison to the Jicarilla Apache Subagency in Puerco, creating dozens of memorable characters: good, bad, and really bad. (Those are the ones we like the most.)

Elmore Leonard wrote a total of eight Western novels before, during, and after his *Complete Western Stories*; he even wrote a few Western stories contained herein, after he began writing contemporary crime novels ("The Tonto Woman" and "'Hurrah for Captain Early!'").

Over time, the suffocating heat and alkali dust of the Arizona desert gave way to the mean streets of Detroit and the subtropical weirdness of South Florida. But Elmore will be the first to tell you, they're all derived from what he learned writing *these* Western stories; he just changed the setting and the century.

—GREGG SUTTER, LOS ANGELES, 2004

*Thanks to Joel Lyczak for providing the original magazine covers gracing the endpapers of this volume. Also for supplying and hunting down copies of missing stories.*

# 1

## Trail of the Apache

Original title: Apache Agent

*Argosy*, December 1951

UNDER THE THATCHED roof ramada that ran the length of the agency office, Travisin slouched in a canvas-backed chair, his boots propped against one of the support posts. His gaze took in the sun-beaten, gray adobe buildings, all one-story structures, that rimmed the vacant quadrangle. It was a glaring, depressing scene of sun on rock, without a single shade tree or graceful feature to redeem the squat ugliness. There was not a living soul in sight. Earlier that morning, his White Mountain Apache charges had received their two-weeks' supply of beef and flour. By now they were milling about the cook fires in front of their wickiups, eating up a two-weeks' ration in two days. Most of the Indians had built their wickiups three miles farther up the Gila, where the flat, dry land began to buckle into rock-strewn hills. There the thin, sparse Gila cottonwoods grew taller and closer together and the mesquite and prickly pear thicker. And there was the small game that sustained them when their government rations were consumed.

At the agency, Travisin lived alone. By actual count there were forty-two Coyotero Apache scouts along with the interpreter, Barney Fry, and his wife, a Tonto woman, but as the officers at Fort Thomas looked at it, he was living alone. There is no question that to most young Eastern gentlemen on frontier station, such an alien means of existence would have meant nothing more than a very slow way to die, with boredom reading the services. But, of course, they were not Travisin.

FROM WHIPPLE BARRACKS, through San Carlos and on down to Fort Huachuca, it went without argument that Eric Travisin was the best Apache campaigner in Arizona Territory. There was a time, of course, when this belief was not shared by all and the question would pop up often, along the trail, in the barracks at Fort Thomas, or in a Globe barroom. Barney Fry's name would always come up then—though most discounted him for his one-quarter Apache blood. But that was a time in the past when Eric Travisin was still new; before the sweltering sand-rock Apache country had burned and gouged his features, leaving his gaunt face deepchiseled and expressionless. That was while he was learning that it took an Apache to catch an Apache. So, for all practical purposes, he became one. Barney Fry taught him everything he knew about the Apache; then he began teaching Fry. He relied on no one entirely, not even Fry. He followed his own judgment, a judgment that his fellow

officers looked upon as pure animal instinct. And perhaps they were right. But Travinis understood the steps necessary to survival in an enemy element. They weren't included in Cook's "Cavalry Tactics": you learned them the hard way, and your being alive testified that you had learned well. They said Travinis was more of an Apache than the Apaches themselves. They said he was cold-blooded, sometimes cruel. And they were uneasy in his presence; he had discarded his cotillion demeanor the first year at Fort Thomas, and in its place was the quiet, pulsing fury of an Apache war dance.

This was easy enough for the inquisitive to understand. But there was another side to Eric Travinis.

For three years he had been acting as agent at the Camp Gila sub-agency, charged with the health and welfare of over two hundred White Mountain Apaches. And in three years he had transformed nomadic hostiles into peaceful agriculturalists. He was a dismounted cavalry officer who sometimes laid it on with the flat of his saber, but he was completely honest. He understood them and took their side, and they respected him for it. It was better than San Carlos.

That's why the conversation at the officers' mess at Fort Thomas, thirty miles southwest, so often dwelled on him: he was a good Samaritan with a Spencer in his hand. They just didn't understand him. They didn't realize that actually he was following the line of least resistance. He was accepting the situation as it was and doing the best job with the means at hand. To Travinis it was that simple; and fortunately he enjoyed it, both the fighting and the pacifying. The fact that it made him a better cavalryman never entered his mind. He had forgotten about promotions. By this time he was too much a part of the savage everyday existence of Apache country. He looked at the harsh, rugged surroundings and liked what he saw.

He shuffled his feet up and down the porch pole and sank deeper into his camp chair. Suddenly in his breast he felt the tenseness. His ears seemed to tingle and strain against an unnatural stillness, and immediately every muscle tightened. But as quickly as the strange feeling came over him, he relaxed. He moved his head no more than two inches, and from the corner of his eye saw the Apache crouched on hands and knees at the corner of the ramada. The Indian crept like an animal across the porch, slowly and with his back arched. A pistol and a knife were at his waist, but he carried no weapon in his hands. Travinis moved his right hand across his stomach and eased open the holster flap. Now his arms were folded across his chest, with his right hand gripping the holstered pistol. He waited until the Apache was less than six feet away before he wheeled from his chair and pushed the long-barreled revolving pistol into the astonished Apache's face.

Travinis grinned at the Apache and holstered the handgun. "Maybe someday you'll do it."

The Indian grunted angrily. With victory almost in his grasp he had failed again. Gatito, sergeant of Travinis's Apache scouts, was an old man, the best tracker in the

Army, and it cut his pride deeply that he was never able to win their wager. Between the two men was an unusual bet of almost two years' standing. If at any time, while not officially occupied, the scout was able to steal up to the officer and place his knife at Travin's back, a bottle of whiskey was his. For such a prize the Indian would gladly crawl through anything. He tried constantly, using every trick he knew, but the officer was always ready. The result was a grumbling, thirsty Indian, but an officer whose senses were razor-sharp. Travin even practiced staying alive.

Gatito gave the report of the morning patrol and then added, almost as an afterthought, "Chiricahua come. Two miles away."

Travin wheeled from the office doorway. "Where?"

Gatito spoke impassively. "Chiricahua come. He come with troop from Fort."

Travin considered the Apache's words in silence, squinting through the afternoon glare toward the wooden bridge across the Gila that was the end of the trail from Thomas. They would come from that direction. "Go get Fry immediately. And turn out your boys."

## Chapter Two

SECOND LIEUTENANT William de Both, West Point's newest contribution to the "Dandy 5th," had the distinct feeling that he was entering a hostile camp as he led H troop across the wooden bridge and approached Camp Gila. As he drew nearer to the agency office, the figures in front of it appeared no friendlier. Good God, were they all Indians? After guarding the sixteen hostiles the thirty miles from Fort Thomas, Lieutenant de Both had had enough of Indians for a long time. Even with the H troopers riding four sides, he couldn't help glancing nervously back to the sixteen hostiles and expecting trouble to break out at any moment. After thirty miles of this, he was hardly prepared to face the gaunt, raw-boned Travin and his sinister-looking band of Apache scouts.

His fellow officers back at Fort Thomas had eagerly informed de Both of the character of the formidable Captain Travin. In fact, they painted a picture of him with bold, harsh strokes, watching the young lieutenant's face intently to enjoy the mixed emotions that showed so obviously. But even with the exaggerated tales of the officers' mess, de Both could not help learning that this unusual Indian agent was still the best army officer on the frontier. Three months out of the Point, he was only too eager to serve under the best.

Leading his troop across the square, he scanned the ragged line of men in front of the office and on the ramada. All were armed, and all stared at the approaching column as if it were bringing cholera instead of sixteen unarmed Indians. He halted the column and dismounted in front of the tall, thin man in the center. The lieutenant inspected the man's faded blue chambray shirt and gray trousers, and unconsciously adjusted his

own blue jacket.

“My man, would you kindly inform the captain that Lieutenant de Both is reporting? I shall present my orders to him.” The lieutenant was brushing trail dust from his sleeve as he spoke.

Travisin stood with hands on hips looking at de Both. He shook his head faintly, without speaking, and began to twist one end of his dragoon mustache. Then he nodded to the foremost of the Chiricahuas and turned to Barney Fry.

“Barney, that’s Pillo, isn’t it?”

“Ain’t nobody else,” the scout said matter-of-factly. “And the skinny buck on the paint is Asesino, his son-in-law.”

Travisin turned his attention to the bewildered lieutenant. “Well, mister, ordinarily I’d play games with you for a while, but under the circumstances, when you bring along company like that, we’d better get down to the business at hand without the monkeyshines. Fry, take care of our guests. Lieutenant, you come with me.” He turned abruptly and entered the office.

Inside, de Both pulled out a folded sheet of paper and handed it to Travisin. The captain sat back, propped his boots on the desk and read the orders slowly. When he was through, he shook his head and silently cursed the stupidity of men trying to control a powder-keg situation two thousand miles from the likely explosion. He read the orders again to be certain that the content was as illogical as it seemed.

HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF ARIZONA

IN THE FIELD, FORT THOMAS, ARIZONA

August 30, 1880

E. M. Travisin. Capt. 5th Cav. Reg.

Camp Gila Subagency

Camp Gila, Arizona

You are hereby directed, by order of the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, to place Pillo and the remnants of his band (numbering fifteen) on the Camp Gila White Mountain reservation. The Bureau compliments you on the remarkable job you are doing and has confidence that the sixteen hostile Chiricahuas, placed in your charge, will profit by the example of their White Mountain brothers and become peaceful farmers.

The bearer, Second Lieutenant William de Both, is, as of this writing, assigned to Camp Gila as second in command. Take him under your wing, Eric; he's young, but I think he will make a good officer.

EMON COLLIER

BRIGADIER GENERAL COMMANDING

He looked up at the lieutenant, who was gazing about the bare room, taking in the table, the rolltop desk along the back wall, the rifle rack and three straight chairs. De Both looked no more than twenty-one or -two, pink-cheeked, neat, every inch a West Point gentleman. But already, after only three months on the frontier, his face was beginning to lose that expression of anticipated adventure, the young officer's dream of winning fame and promotion in the field. The thirty miles from Fort Thomas alone presented the field as something he had not bargained for. To Travisin, it wasn't a new story. He'd had younger officers serve under him before, and it always started the same way, "...take him under your wing... teach him about the Apache." It was always the old campaigner teaching the recruit what it was all about.

To Eric Travisin, at twenty-eight, only seven years out of the Point, it was bound to be amusing. The cavalry mustache made him look older, but that wasn't it. Travisin had been a veteran his first year. It was something that he'd had even before he came West. It was that something that made him stand out in any group of men. It was the strange instinct that made him wheel and draw his handgun when Gatito stole up behind him. It was a combination of many things, but not one of them did Travisin himself understand, even though they made him the youngest captain in Arizona because of it.

And now another one to watch him and not understand. He wondered how long de Both would last.

He said, "Lieutenant, do you know why you've been sent here?"

"No, sir." De Both brought himself to attention. "I do not question my orders."

Travisin was faintly amused. "I'm sure you don't, Lieutenant. I was referring to any rumors you might have heard.... And relax."

De Both remained at attention. "I don't make it a practice to repeat idle rumors that have no basis in fact."

Travisin felt his temper rise, but suppressed it from long practice. It wasn't the way to get things done. He circled the desk and drew a chair up behind de Both. "Here, rest your legs." He placed a firm hand on the lieutenant's shoulder and half forced him into the chair. "Mister, you and I are going to spend a lot of time together. We'll be either in this room or out on the desert with nothing to think about except what's in front of us. Conversation gets pretty thin after a while, and you might even

make up things just to hear yourself talk. You're the only other Regular Army man here, so you can see it isn't going to be a parade grounds routine. I've been here for three years now, counting White Mountain Indians and making patrols. Sometimes things get a bit hot; otherwise you just sit around and watch the desert. I probably don't look like much of an officer to you. That doesn't matter. You can keep up the spit and polish if you want, but I'd advise you to relax and play the game without keeping the rule book open all the time. ...Now, would you mind telling me what in hell the rumors are at Thomas?"

DE BOTH WAS surprised, and disturbed. He fidgeted in his chair, trying to feel official. "Well, sir, under the circumstances... Of course, as I said, there is no basis for its authenticity, but the word is that Crook is being transferred back to the Department to lead an expedition to the border. They say that he will probably ask for you. So I am being assigned here to replace you when the time comes. This is, of course, only gossip that is circulating about."

"Do you believe it?"

"Sir, I don't even think about it."

Travisin said, "You mean you don't want to think about it. Sitting by yourself at a Godforsaken Indian agency with almost two hundred and fifty White Mountains living across the street. Not to mention the scouts." He paused and smiled at de Both. "I don't know, Lieutenant, you might even like it after a while."

"I accept my orders, Captain. My desires have nothing to do with my orders."

But Travisin was not listening. Long strides took him to the doorway and he leaned out with a hand against the door frame on each side.

"Fryyyyyyyyyyyyy! Hey, Fryyyyy!"

THE MEN OF H troop looked over to the office as they prepared to mount. Barney Fry left the sergeant and strode toward the agency office. "Come in here, Barney."

The clatter of trotting horses beat across the quadrangle as Fry stepped up on the porch and entered the office. His short strides were slightly pigeon-toed and he held his head tilted down as if he were self-conscious of his appearance. He looked to be in his early twenties, but, like Travisin, his face was a hard, bronzed mask, matured beyond his age. When he took off his gray wide-brimmed hat, thick, black hair clung close to his scalp, smeared with oily perspiration.

"What do you think, Barney?"

Fry leaned against the edge of the desk. “I think probably the same thing you do. Those ’Paches aren’t goin’ to stay long at Gila even if we’d give them all the beef critters in Arizona. You notice there wasn’t any women in the band?”

“Yes, I noticed,” Travinis answered. “They’ll never learn, will they?” He looked at De Both. “You see, Lieutenant, the Bureau thinks that if they separate them from their families for a while, the hostiles will become good little Indians and make plows out of their Spencers and grow corn to eat instead of drink. What would you do if some benevolent race snatched your women and children from you and sent you to a barren rock pile over a hundred miles away? And do you know why? For something you’d been doing for the past three hundred years. For that simple but enigmatic something that makes you an Apache and not a Navajo. For that quirk of fate that makes you a tiger instead of a Persian cat. Mister, I’ve got over two hundred White Mountains here raising crops and eating government beef. I can assure you that they’re not doing it by nature! And now they sent sixteen Chiricahuas! Sixteen men with the smell of gunpowder still strong in their nostrils and blood lust in their eyes.” Travinis shook his head wearily. “And they send them here without their women.”

De Both cleared his throat before speaking. “Well, frankly, Captain, I don’t see what the problem is. Obviously, these hostiles have done wrong. The natural consequence would be a punishment of some sort. Why pamper them? They’re not little children.”

“No, they’re not little children. They’re Apaches,” Travinis reflected. “You know, I used to know an Indian up near Fort Apache by the name of Skimitozin. He was an Arivaipa. One day he was sitting in the hut of a white friend of his, a miner, and they were eating supper together. Then, for no reason at all, Skimitozin drew his handgun and shot his friend through the head. Before they hung him he said he did it to show his Arivaipa people that they should never get too friendly with the blancos. The Apache has never gotten a real break from the whites. So Skimitozin wanted to make sure that his people never got to the point of expecting one, and relaxing. Mister, I’m here to kill Indians and keep Indians alive. It’s a paradox—no question about that—but I gave up rationalizing a long time ago. Most Apaches have always lived a life of violence. I’m not here primarily to convert them; but by the same token I have to be fair—when they are fair to me.”

De Both raised an objection. “I see nothing wrong with our treatment of the Indians. As a matter of fact, I think we’ve gone out of our way to treat them decently.” He recited the words as if he were reading from an official text.

Fry broke in. “Go up to San Carlos and spend a week or two,” he said. “Especially when the government beef contractors come around with their adjusted scales and each cow with a couple of barrels of Gila water in her. Watch how the ’Pache women try to cut each other up for a bloated cow belly.” Fry spoke slowly, without excitement.

Travinis said to the lieutenant, “Fry’s not talking about one or two incidents. He’s

talking about history. You were with Pillo all the way up from Thomas. Did you see his eyes? If you did, you saw the whole story.”

### Chapter Three

THE EARLY AFTERNOON sun blazed heavily against the adobe houses and vacant quadrangle. The air was still, still and oppressive, and seemed to be thickened by the fierce, withering rays of the Arizona sun. To the east, the purplish blur of the Pinals showed hazily through the glare.

Travisin leaned loosely against a support post under the brush ramada. His gray cotton shirt was black with sweat in places, but he seemed unmindful of the heat. His sun-darkened face was impassive, as if asleep, but his eyes were only half closed in the shadow of his hat brim, squinting against the glare in the direction from which Fry would return.

Earlier that morning, the scout and six of his Coyoters had traveled upriver to inspect the tracts selected by Pillo and his band. The hostiles had erected their wickiups without a murmur of complaint and seemed to have fallen into the alien routines of reservation life without any trouble; but it was their silence, their impassive acceptance of this new life that bothered Travisin. For the two weeks the hostiles had been at Camp Gila, Travisin’s scouts had been on the alert every minute of the day. But nothing had happened. When Fry returned, he would know more.

De Both appeared in the office door behind him. “Not back yet?”

“No. He might have stopped to chin with some of the White Mountain people. He’s got a few friends there,” Travisin said. “Barney’s got a little Apache blood in him, you know.”

De Both was openly surprised. “He has? I didn’t know that!” He thought of the countless times he had voiced his contempt for the Apaches in front of Fry. He felt uncomfortable and a little embarrassed now, though Fry had never once seemed to take it as a personal affront. Travisin read the discomfort on his face. There was no sense in making it more difficult.

“HIS MOTHER was a half-breed,” Travisin explained. “She married a miner and followed him all over the Territory while he dug holes in the ground. Barney was born somewhere up in the Tonto country on one of his dad’s claims. When he was about eight or nine his ma and dad were killed by some Tontos and he was carried off and brought up in the tribe. That’s where he got his nose for scouting. It’s not just in his blood like some people think; he learned it, and he learned it from the best in the business. Then, when he was about fifteen, he came back to the world of the whites. About that time there was a campaign operating out of Fort Apache against the Tontos.

One day a patrol came across the rancheria where Barney lived and took him back to Fort Apache. All the warriors were out and only the women and children were around. He remembered enough about the white man's life to want to go back to the Indians, but he knew too much about the Apache's life for the Army to let him go; so he's been a guide since that day. He was at Fort Thomas when I arrived there seven years ago, and he's been with me ever since I've been here at Gila."

De Both was deep in thought. "But can you trust him?" he asked. "After living with the Apaches for so long."

"Can you trust the rest of the scouts? Can you trust those rocks and mesquite clumps out yonder?" Travinis looked hard into the lieutenant's eyes. "Mister, you watch the rocks, the trees, the men around you. You watch until your eyes ache, and then you keep on watching. Because you'll always have that feeling that the minute you let down, you're done for. And if you don't have that feeling, you're in the wrong business."

A little past four, Fry and his scouts rode in. He threw off and ran toward the agency office. Travinis met him in the doorway. "They scoot, Barney?"

FRY PAUSED TO catch his breath and wiped the sweat from his face with a grimy, brown hand. "It might be worse than that. When we got there this morning only a few of Pillo's band were around. I questioned them, but they kept trying to change the subject and get us out of there. I thought they were actin' strange, talkin' more than usual, and then it dawned on me. Gatito had spotted it right away. They'd been drinkin' tizwin. You know you got to drink a whoppin' lot of that stuff to really get drunk. I figure these boys ain't had much yet, cuz they were still too quiet. But the others were probably off at the source of supply so we rode out and tried to cut their sign. We tried every likely spot in the neighborhood until after noon, and we still couldn't find a trace of them."

Travinis considered the situation silently for a moment. "They've probably been at it since they got here. Taking their time to pick a spot we wouldn't find right away. No wonder they've been so quiet." Travinis had much to think about, for a drunken Apache will do strange things. Bloody things. He asked the scout, "What does Gatito think?"

Fry hesitated, and then said, "I don't like the way he was lickin' his lips while we were on the hunt."

Fry did not have to say more. Travinis knew him well enough to know that the scout felt Gatito could bear some extra attention. To de Both, watching the scene, it was a new experience. The captain and the quarter-breed scout talking like brothers. Saying more with eyes and gestures than with words. He looked from one to the other intently, then for the first time noticed the young Apache standing next to Travinis. A

moment ago he had not been there. But there had not been a sound or a footstep!

The young brave spoke swiftly in the Apache tongue for almost a minute and then disappeared around the corner of the office. De Both could still see vividly the red calico cloth around thick, black hair, and his almost feminine features.

Fry and Travinis began to talk again, but de Both interrupted.

“What in the name of heaven was that?”

Travinis grinned at the young officer’s astonishment. “I thought you knew Peaches. Forgot he hadn’t been around for a while.”

“Peaches!”

Travinis said, “Let’s go inside.”

They gathered around his table, lighted cigarettes, and Travinis went on. “I’d just as soon you didn’t speak his name aloud around here. You see, that young, gentle-looking Apache has one of the toughest jobs on the reservation. He’s an agency spy. Only Fry and I, and now you, know what he is. Not even any of the scouts know. The Indians suspect that someone on their side is reporting to me, but they have no idea who it is. He’s got a dangerous job, but it’s necessary. If trouble ever breaks out, we have to be able to nip it in the bud. Peaches is the only way for us to determine where the bud is.”

“May I ask what he told you just now?”

Travinis drew hard on his cigarette before replying. “He said that he knew much, but he would be back sometime before sunup tomorrow to tell what he knew. He made one last point very emphatic. He said, ‘Watch Gatito!’ ”

A REAR ROOM of the agency office adobe served as sleeping quarters for both of the officers. Their cots were against opposite walls, lockers at the feet, and two large pine-board wardrobes, holding uniforms and personal gear, were flush with the wall running along the heads of their bunks.

A full moon pointed its light through the window frame over de Both’s bed, carpeted the plank flooring with a delicate sheen, and reached as far as the gleaming upper portion of Travinis’s body, motionless on the cot. One arm was beneath the gray blanket that reached just above his waist, the other was folded across his bare chest.

A floorboard creaked somewhere near. His eyes opened at once and closed just as suddenly. Beneath the blanket his hand groped near his thigh and quietly covered the grip of his pistol. He opened his eyes slightly and glanced across the room. De Both was dead asleep. The latch on the door leading to the front office rattled faintly, and

then hinges creaked as the door began to open. Travinis quietly drew his arm from beneath the blanket and leveled the pistol at the doorway. His thumb closed on the hammer and drew it back, and the click of the cocking action was a sharp, metallic sound. The opening-door motion stopped.

“Nantan, do not shoot.” The words were just above a whisper.

Travinis threw the blanket from his legs, swung them to the floor and moved to the doorway without a sound. Peaches backed into the office as he approached.

“Chiricahua leave.”

“How long?”

“They go maybe five mile now. Gatito go with them.”

Travinis stepped back to the doorway and slammed the butt of his pistol against the wooden door. “Hey, mister, roll out!” De Both sat bolt upright. “Be ready to ride in a few minutes,” Travinis said, and ran out of the office toward Barney Fry’s adobe across the quadrangle.

In less than twenty minutes, thirteen riders streaked out of the quadrangle westward. Behind them, orange light was just beginning to show above the irregular outline of the Pinals. The morning was cool, but still, and the stillness held the promise of the blistering heat of the day to come.

The sun was only a little higher when Travinis and his scouts rode up to four wickiups along the bank of the Gila. Travinis halted the detail, but did not dismount. He sat motionless in the saddle, his senses alert to the quiet. He said something in Apache and one of the scouts threw off and cautiously entered the first wickiup. He reappeared in an instant, shaking his head from side to side. In the third hut, the scout remained longer than usual. When he reappeared he was dragging an unconscious Indian by the legs.

Travinis said, “That one of them, Barney?”

Fry swung down from his pony and leaned over the prostrate Indian, saying a few words in Apache to the scout still holding the Indian’s legs. “He’s a Chiricahua, Captain. Dead drunk. Must have been drinking for at least two days.” He nodded his head toward the Apache scout. “Ningun says there’s a jug inside with a little tizwin in it.”

Travinis pointed to two of the scouts and then swept his arm in the direction of the fourth wickiup. They kicked their ponies to a leaping start, dashed to the hut and gave it a quick inspection. In a minute they were back.

The scouts watched Travinis intently as he studied the situation. They knew what

the signs meant. They sat their ponies now with restless anticipation, fingering their carbines, checking ammunition belts, holding in the small, wiry horses that also seemed to be charged with the excitement of the moment—for there is no love lost between the Coyotero and the Chiricahua. Eric Travinis knew as well as any of them what the sign meant: sixteen drunken Apaches screaming through the countryside with blood in their eyes and a bad taste in their mouths. It was something that had to be stopped before the Indians regained their senses. Now they were loco Apaches, bloodthirsty, but a bit careless. By the next day, unless stopped, they would again be cold, patient guerrilla fighters led by the master strategist, Pillo.

FROM THE DIRECTION of the agency a scout rode into sight beating his pony to a whirlwind pace. He reined in abruptly and shouted something to Fry through the dust cloud. “We been sleepin’, Captain. He says Gatito made off with a dozen carbines and two hundred rounds of forty-fours. Must have sneaked them out sometime last night.”

In Travinis, the excitement of what lay ahead was building up continually. Now it was beginning to break through his calm surface. “We’re awake now, Barney. I figure they’ll either streak south for the Madres right away, or contact their people up near Apache by dodging through the Basin and then heading east for the reservation. I know if I was going to hide out for a while, I’d sure want my wife along. Let’s find out which it is.”

## Chapter Four

BY MIDMORNING Travinis’s scouts had followed the tracks of the hostiles to an elevated stretch of pines wedged tightly among bare, rolling hills. They halted a few hundred yards from the wooded area, in the open. Before them the land, dotted with mesquite and catclaw, climbed gradually to the pine plateau; and the sun-glare made shimmering waves, hazy and filmy white, as they looked ahead to the contrasting black of the pines. A shallow arroyo cut its way down from the ridge past where the detail stood, finally ending at the banks of the Gila, twelve miles behind them. On both sides of the crusted edges of the arroyo, the unshod tracks they had been following all morning moved straight ahead.

Ningun, the Apache scout, rode up the arroyo a hundred yards, circled and returned. He mumbled only a few words to Fry, who glanced at the pine ridge again before speaking.

“He says the tracks go all the way up. Ain’t no other place they could go.”

“Does he think they’re still up there?” Travinis asked the question without taking his eyes from the ridge.

“He didn’t say, but I know he don’t think so.” Barney Fry pulled out a tobacco