

White Slave

By Stephen Gauer

Who ain't a slave? Tell me that.

—Herman Melville

*I am as free as Nature first made man,
'Ere the base Laws of Servitude began,
When wild in woods the noble Savage ran.*

—John Dryden

Friendly Cove



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Part 1

Friendly Cove, Nootka Island, Spring of 1803

1 Heads up

Late in the afternoon of Tuesday, March 22, the Boston lay at anchor near the eastern shore of Nootka Island, five miles north of the village, in twenty five fathoms of water, her stern line tied to a solitary fir tree that marked the southern end of a small beach of gray pebbles. A steady fall of fresh water poured from the black rock beside the tree; the water had filled the ship's cisterns and continued to flow down the rock face and into the ocean. The afternoon was drab and gray, low clouds sagging on the green slopes and curves that surrounded the ship in every direction. A day cold enough to see your breath, and dark enough below, in steerage, that Jewitt needed the amber light of oil lamps to do his work. He was cleaning muskets, a tedious and dirty job that quickly blackened his hands with the coking that he scraped from the barrels. He was alone below decks and sang softly to himself as he worked, the song that he loved about comin' through the rye.

He paused when he heard sounds above him on deck. Two voices giving commands and the slow, stop-and-start groan of the block and tackle as the long boat was pulled out of the water. The sounds stopped. Jewitt began to sing again, and then he heard a roar, like an army of angry voices shouting not in English but the incomprehensible jabber of the savages, the same high-pitched syllables over and over again, like the yelps of wild, vicious dogs. Jewitt dropped the musket he was cleaning and picked up the loaded one that he always kept close at hand when he was alone on the ship. He ran up the stairs to the main deck but before he could see what was happening he felt something grab the hair on his head and pull him back, off balance, and up. The gun fell from his hand and clattered down to the floor below. An axe struck a glancing blow across his forehead with the force of a cannon shot and just before he fell down he saw the red painted face of his attacker, mad staring eyes with black strokes across the brow, twitching hole for a mouth. The man lost his grip on Jewitt's hair. Jewitt fell back down into the steerage and heard the hatch slam shut above him.

He woke up in darkness, covered in blood. He felt as though every part of his body had been punched and abused. He blinked his left eye, struggling to see. Had the lamps gone out already? He could not open his right eye. The gash on his forehead felt like a burning red-hot poker inside his skin. He

rolled onto his side, and then slowly sat up. He put his hands to his face and felt blood and tried to wipe away the blood that covered his good eye. He found a rag on the floor and used it to clean the left side of his face. There was oil in the rag but he didn't care. If he couldn't see he was useless.

Slowly, Jewitt rose to his feet. He was about to reach for a musket when the hatch opened.

"Hallo," the king said. "Hallo, Chon Chuwin, hallo."

Jewitt did not respond. Mokwila was above him. Jewitt looked up slowly, covering his closed eye with his hand, and saw a black robe and a brilliant red face. The king had a dagger in one hand and a fistful of blood in the other.

"Chuwin—come up," Mokwila said. "I order you. Come up."

"Yes," Jewitt said. "Yes."

He went to the stairs and began to climb. But he could not raise his legs properly and had to go down on his knees and crawl up the stairs one by one.

On deck, he stood up again and faced Mokwila, and then turned slowly to his left and saw his warriors, all in paint, all armed with daggers in both hands, naked, filthy with blood. They began to shout at him and wave their daggers at him. Jewitt felt faint and trembled with the cold.

Mokwila yelled at one of the warriors. The man disappeared for a moment and then returned with a cloth and a small bucket of water. Mokwila gestured for Jewitt to sit. Jewitt did so. The man washed his face quickly and roughly, squeezed the remaining water and blood from the cloth and then tied the cloth around Jewitt's head, an improvised dressing to stem the flow of blood.

Jewitt remained on his knees, peering up at Mokwila with his one good eye. He was still shaking with the cold and the fear.

Mokwila pointed the dagger at him. "Swear me, Chuwin," he said. "Swear me you will be a slave—my slave."

"Yes," Jewitt said, with no thought in his head. The horrible burning red heat in his forehead would not go away.

"Swear me," Mokwila roared.

"I swear," Jewitt said.

"Swear me!" Mokwila roared once more.

"I swear to be your slave."

"Swear you will defend me."

"I swear I will defend you."

"Swear you will fight for me in every battle."

"I swear I will fight for you in every battle."

"Swear you will work for me, make knives, make daggers, make what I want."

"I swear I will work for you, and make knives and whatever you want."

"Make what I want!" Mokuwila shouted again. He was looking at his warriors now. They began to roar their threats again, raising their weapons high in the air. Mokuwila gestured for them to lower their daggers and stand back. Slowly they did so.

Jewitt, still on his hands and knees, dropped his head as though to faint or die.

"Kiss my hand," Mokuwila said. He stretched out a blood-stained hand towards Jewitt, who raised his head and touched his lips to the king's red knuckles. He could not avoid the touch and taste of blood, thick and metallic in his mouth, like drops of iron on his tongue.

"Kiss my feet," Mokuwila said, putting his hand on the back of Jewitt's head and pushing it down towards his filthy feet. Jewitt wanted to resist but could not. He brushed the king's foot with his lips; the skin was rough with grime and smelled of salt and seawater.

"You are mine," Mokuwila said. Jewitt nodded dumbly.

For a moment there was silence. Jewitt dropped to his side and closed his eyes. He could hear the wind rising in the trees and the splash of waves on the ship's hull. He pressed the cloth against his wound and the pain diminished but only for a moment. When he removed his hand the pain was worse than ever. He had sworn to be a slave but he had no idea what that meant. Surely Mokuwila simply wanted to kill him, chop off his arms and legs, tear him limb from limb, remove his head and throw him in the ocean. Savages, they were called. Savages.

"Get up, Chuwin." Jewitt shook his head. Mokuwila laughed at his disobedience and then motioned to his warriors. They grabbed Jewitt roughly and pulled him to his feet. He wobbled for a moment and then stood there, face to face with the king. The king had large black eyes, hard and blank as coal, a prominent nose, grinning mouth. Long, wild hair, twisted into strands like human rope, framed his face.

The red paint on his face stank of grease or fat, and covered every square inch, from the hairline down to his neck. Jewitt stared. He wanted to look away, but could not.

"Come," Mowkila said. He grabbed Jewitt by the arm and pulled him to the stern of the boat, to the quarterdeck, where yet another horror greeted him.

Arranged in a semi-circle on the deck were human heads, the heads of the captain and crew, twenty or more, sitting in pools of blood.

"Stand, Chuwin," Mowkila said. "Stand there and tell me the names." He said something to one of his men, who bent down and picked up a head and showed it to Jewitt.

"Tell me the names!" Mowkila shouted.

Jewitt stared at the face on the head. The eyes were shut and the features horribly twisted and bent out of shape but Jewitt could see that it was the captain, Salter. He took a step closer to make sure. The warrior grinned madly at him. Jewitt fixed in his mind the thought that these men were not just savage and dangerous, but mad, insane, deranged, like rabid dogs requiring a pistol shot to the head to end their madness.

"Tell me the names," Mowkila said again.

"Captain Salter," Jewitt said.

"Louder," Mowkila said.

"Captain John Salter," Jewitt shouted. He thought for a moment he must end his life by jumping overboard into the frigid water where he would sink beneath the waves and end this misery and horror by drowning himself. But he could not act. He could not escape. He could not flee. He could only recite the names of dead men.

The warrior returned the head of Captain Salter to its previous position on the deck, and picked up the next head and held it out to Jewitt to identify. When Jewitt shook his head, the warrior ran his hand across the dead man's face to push the hair away and remove some of the blood. Then he stepped forward and held the head very close to Jewitt's face, close enough for Jewitt to see the forehead scar that the chief mate had said was the result of a brawl outside a Philadelphia tavern when two men had held him down while a third cut a X into his forehead. Delouisa was his name. Tough but fair. Everyone respected him. Not a man with a lighter side, but Jewitt knew the kinds of jokes that would make him

smile. How horribly dead and disfigured he looked now. The warrior pushed the eyelids open with his thumbs, and inserted a finger into each end of the mouth, created a lopsided smile on the man's face. *They have no respect for the dead, Jewitt thought. They are mad and dangerous and have no respect for the dead or anything decent.*

After Jewitt had identified all the heads collected on the quarterdeck, Mokwila thanked him, and then ordered Jewitt to pilot the ship back to the village.

"Put the ship on the beach," Mokwila said.

"I'm a blacksmith, not a sailor," he said.

"Chuwin! You sailed this boat with the Boston-men. Sail this ship to the beach now!"

Four of the warriors, without instruction from Jewitt, climbed the rigging and unfurled two of the mainsails. Jewitt went forward and cut the anchor cables. Pushed by the north wind, the bow of the ship began to point out, towards the centre of the Sound. Jewitt went to the stern and cut the stern line and the ship began to move forward. He went to the wheel and corrected the rudder angle. The ship moved slowly down the inlet, helped by the falling tide and the north wind.

Light was draining from the sky. Jewitt guessed the time was 6:30 or 7 pm. In less than an hour, the sky would go dark and then black. He could escape unseen but where would he escape to? Only to another ship, and there were no ships in Nootka Sound, no ships for dozens or hundreds or even thousands of miles. They hadn't seen another European or American ship for three months.

At the wheel, Jewitt peered at the rocky shoreline and then out at the black water ahead. There were no hazards, no rocks or reefs, as far as he knew. He hadn't seen the chart, only listened to the navigation discussion between Salter and Delouisa as they'd approached the anchorage eight days earlier. Jewitt stared at the black water. He could drive the boat onto the rocks but that would accomplish nothing. He could bear away to the east into the Sound and then south to the open ocean, but they were seven and he was one. The warriors understood how the sails worked, so surely they could pilot the boat without him. They would probably going to kill him regardless. Perhaps quickly, perhaps painfully. Jewitt tried to imagine a beheading but could not. He looked at Mokwila beside him and then back out to the black water.

Dear God, he prayed in his mind, Dear God in heaven please be merciful and spare my life.

Mokwila touched his shoulder. "Chuwin, you lied. You are a good sailor!"

Jewitt said nothing. The touch of the man's hand revolted him. The smell of the man's face and body and hair revolted him.

Finally they rounded the point and the village came into view. In the fading light, Jewitt could make out a long crescent beach, and above it, an equally long line of wooden houses, smoke rising in faint tendrils above the various roofs. Tiny shapes on the beach, canoes perhaps. The flicker of lights or lamps or candles. Did the savages have lamps and candles? Surely not, Jewitt thought.

"On the beach!" Mokwila pointed to the centre of the beach.

Jewitt steered the boat between the two rocky outcrops that marked the entrance to the inner harbour. The water flattened and the wind began to weaken. The boat slowed. Jewitt kept the wheel steady and the ship came to rest, silently and without violence, on the pebbly beach in front of the village.

With a tremendous roar and shout, the king's men climbed over the side of the Boston and jumped into the shallow water on either side of the hull. Their roars were met by an equally loud roar of voices assembled on the beach. Jewitt could see a large crowd of savages standing and waving sticks and poles in the air. Somewhere off in the distance he could hear what sounded like a drumbeat of wood on wood, heavy and clanking and unmusical.

Mokwila ordered Jewitt to get off the ship. Jewitt nodded and went to one of the storage lockers on the foredeck, where he found a rope ladder. He threw it over the starboard side of the Boston, near the bow, and carefully tied it off. He went down first and Mokwila followed him.

The water was four feet deep at the bow and so cold that Jewitt gasped as the water rose to his chest and his feet touched the bottom. This was only the third time his feet had touched ground since leaving England nine months earlier. He walked awkwardly through the water, holding his arms in the air. Behind him, Mokwila took rapid strides towards the crowd waiting on shore. He held the hem of his fur cape high in the air to keep it dry.

The crowd on the shoreline was a blur of dark faces and hair, clubs and weapons moving through the air. Jewitt thought he heard the word wo-kash repeated over and over again but he had no idea what it meant. Wo-kash, wo-kash, they shouted. Wo-kash, tyee. He could barely see because the cut on his forehead had opened up again and blood was flowing down his face. His right eye, still closed, was

useless. In the darkness, now, the savages began to look like devils waving pitchforks at him. Mokwila stayed by Jewitt's side, and shouted something at the men. They began to quiet down. A few dropped their weapons. The king continued to talk for what seemed a very long time. Jewitt understood nothing except the occasional mention of his corrupted name. Several men tried to interrupt the king, speaking very quickly and gesturing in anger at Jewitt, or so it seemed, but the king shouted at them and kept talking.

When the king stopped talking, he grabbed Jewitt by the shoulder and marched him down the beach and up a short path to the higher level of ground where the houses stood. They passed one house and then a second and finally reached what appeared to be the largest house in the village. They stood by the door for a moment. The crowd had followed them. Mokwila turned and shouted something at them, and then roughly pushed Jewitt through the door and into the house.

Inside, he smelled pungent and curling waves of fish, and hot gasping clouds of wood smoke. He coughed once, and then twice, and then a third time, and tried to bend over at the waist, thinking this might help clear his lungs, but the king pushed him forward, down the centre of the enormous room, past open fires that flickered with tiny flames and bright coals. There were people everywhere, women mostly, and children who stared at him and laughed. He heard a constant noise of clacking voices that made no sense to him. The king continued to push at him, forcing him forward. The women moved back so the two men could pass. Jewitt tried to peer into the corners and far recesses of the room but saw nothing but blackness and vague shapes. He stumbled once, and fell to his knees, put his hands down and felt the dry earth of the house floor on his outstretched palms. Someone laughed. Jewitt felt a kick to his ribs and then the king shouted something, and grabbed him by the neck and pulled him back to his feet.

In a far corner, Jewitt saw that a section had been marked off with boards and boxes. As they approached, Mokwila spoke loudly and two women came forward to greet them. They smiled at Jewitt and stroked his arm gently. Were they wives or slaves? He couldn't tell, but what did it matter? Their voices were soft and soothing and when they began to touch his head, untying the bloodied cloth that bound his wound, he closed his eyes for a moment, feeling the touch of their fingers on his skin, and when he opened them again he began to cry.

Mokwila smiled at him and gestured for him to sit. The floor was completely covered with mats. The two men sat crossed legged, while the older woman changed Jewitt's dressing, substituting a band of what felt like coarse wool for the cloth that had covered the wound on his forehead. She washed the blood from his face and neck and removed his wet shirt and put a blanket around his shoulders. Her long black hair hung down in two heavy braids that framed her face. She did not look at him. She was not beautiful but Jewitt could not take his eyes off her. Mokwila barked an order at the woman standing behind her, a younger woman with a thin face and skinny arms, who disappeared for a moment and then re-appeared with a tray that she set before Mokwila.

"You will eat," Mokwila said, and handed Jewitt a bowl filled with what looked like shrivelled peas. He asked Mokwila what it was.

"Clams," Mokwila said. "Very good." He used a large spoon to scoop the clams, dripping with some kind of liquid or oil, out of the bowl and into his mouth. The oil dribbled down his chin. The young woman came over and wiped away the oil.

Jewitt tried to eat. He scooped three tiny clams into his mouth and began to crunch them between his teeth. But the oil made him gag; worse than the oil of cod livers, worse than rancid butter, worse than the most foul-smelling, rotten and disgusting piece of food that he had ever put in his mouth in his entire life of nineteen years. But the king was watching. The two wives were watching. He carefully spit two of the clams back onto the spoon, crunched and chewed the remaining one in his mouth and managed to swallow it. He sipped the spoon again, taking the two clams and as little oil as possible. He crunched and chewed and swallowed them down. Somehow the oil passed from his mouth, down his throat and into his stomach. He had no idea how this happened. He wanted to vomit, wildly.

"The oil makes you happy, Chuwin. Happy and strong and fat. We will fatten you." Mokwila laughed as he said this, and one of the wives, the older one, smiled and for a moment Jewitt saw something genuine in her face. He knew that Mokwila smiled but only as a tactic to disarm an opponent. The captain had said the king was either happy and jovial or filled with rage, and when he was angry his hand went to his throat and stroked it as though trying to calm some powerful force or energy inside his body. Savages feel the extremes of emotion or nothing at all, the captain had said. Now the wife's

expression had become a mask again, two eyes and a nose and mouth fixed in the plain circle of her face.

Mokwila urged more clams and oil on Jewitt. He allowed the king to re-fill his bowl. Suddenly there was noise again, the jabber of male voices. A crowd of a dozen men pushed the women aside and confronted Mokwila. The man in front, short and stocky, with some kind of rough looking cloak over his body, waved his dagger in the air and shouted at Mokwila.

The king shook his head and put the tray of food down on the ground. He motioned to the younger wife, who came immediately and took it away. The king got to his feet and approached the short man and began to address him. As the man shook his head, Mokwila began to raise his voice and step towards the man, forcing him to retreat. Mokwila talked and talked, forcing the man to retreat, back and away from where Jewitt was still sitting.

A young boy, one of the king's sons, came over to Jewitt and stood and stared at him. Jewitt smiled at the boy, and gestured for him to come closer. The boy was named Satsa and looked to be nine or ten years old. He touched Jewitt on the arm and ran his fingers down to Jewitt's left hand. Jewitt showed the boy how to shake hands, and the boy laughed. They shook hands over and over again. Jewitt noticed that his shirt had been hung near the fire in order to dry, and gestured to the boy to fetch it for him. The boy brought the shirt over and handed it to Jewitt.

Jewitt pulled a small knife from the pocket of his pants and began to cut the buttons off the shirt. The boy watched. The older wife watched. Jewitt took several lengths of thread and tied them together and threaded the buttons into a necklace and tied the necklace around the boy's neck. He clapped his hands in pleasure, and the wife smiled again.

"It's a present for you," Jewitt said.

"Chuwin?" the boy said.

"Jewitt."

The boy looked puzzled for a moment. "Chuwin."

"Yes," Jewitt said finally. "Chuwin."

The boy smiled.

"Say thank you," Jewitt said.

The boy frowned.

"Thank you," Jewitt said again.

"Sank-yu."

"Thank you."

"Sank-yu."

Jewitt got up and sat on a box. The boy came over and sat on his knee. The older wife said something to him, but Satsa shook his head. He put his arms around Jewitt and gave him a hug. At this show of kind affection, Jewitt began to cry again. Why was this boy touching him except as some kind of consolation but surely the boy could not understand that for Jewitt everything was lost now, the ship and the captain and the captain's crew who kept him alive and safe for nine months. Those things and those people were lost to him now. He had nothing. A pair of worn shoes, a pair of pants, a small knife, a wet shirt without buttons.

Satsa fingered his necklace and touched Jewitt on the arm again. Mokwila returned and told Jewitt he was safe, that no harm would come to him.

"As long as you serve me, I protect you. Do you understand?"

"Yes," Jewitt said.

"You serve me. I am your king."

"Yes," Jewitt said. He did not understand why Mokwila had to say everything twice.

"You have met my son."

"Yes."

Father and son looked at each other. Jewitt expected Satsa to go to his father, but he did not. The king came over and lifted the boy playfully into the air and set him down on the ground.

"We will sleep now." The king went to the corner, where an extra layer of mats seemed to define a sleeping area, although there were no pillows or blankets that Jewitt could see. The king lay down first, and then three of his wives arranged themselves next to him. Then Satsa lay down, and finally Jewitt. He arranged his shirt, still damp, as a kind of makeshift pillow for his head, and carefully arranged himself on his side, placing his head on the shirt in a way that avoided contact with the wound. He closed his eyes and waited for the exhaustion of the day's events to force him into sleep. He could hear only whisperings

and murmurings from the other inhabitants in the house. Was the king's bed time a signal for everyone to hush and be quiet? He had no idea. He could feel a pulse of warmth from the bodies next to him. He opened his eyes, raised himself up for a moment and saw that someone had draped a fur cloak over the king.

No matter how much he tried to blank his mind, he could not. He saw the heads again and the bloodied hands of the warriors who had killed twenty-five men. How could he not re-live those scenes in his mind, over and over and over again? For a moment he shivered with fright and with cold, and then he felt a blanket being placed over him. He opened his eyes and saw the shape of a woman above him. He murmured "thank you" to her, not caring whether he was understood or not.

Time passed. The pain in his head made it impossible to sleep. A sudden commotion startled him. The king was on his feet talking loudly to someone. Then Jewitt felt a strong arm shake him and the voice of Mokwila telling him to wake up and get up.

"I'm awake, I'm awake," Jewitt said.

"There is another man on the ship," Mokwila said.

"What do you mean?"

"Are you deaf, Chuwin? There is another white man on the ship. I will have to kill him."

Jewitt began to shake his head vigorously. "No. No more killing."

"You'll come with me, Chuwin. In the morning. We go to the ship and I kill him. He attacked one of my men with his fists. I kill him. Now sleep, go to sleep."

Jewitt lay down again. He had attacked no one. Did that mean his life was safe? Who was the man on the ship? Jewitt went through the names of all the officers and crew, all the heads that he had identified on the quarterdeck, and the only one missing, the only possible crew member still alive was Thompson, the sail maker, a foul-tempered and ill mannered man in his early forties. Jewitt as a rule made no enemies of the women and men that he met, but Thompson rejected this rule at every opportunity. But still, if the sail maker was alive, he should stay alive. Better for Jewitt to be one of a pair of slaves than alone and on his own. How could he save Thompson? Jewitt lay in the darkness and wrestled with this question and in the wrestling, exhausted as he was, felt for the first time in twenty-four hours that he was doing something useful. If he could save Thompson, he could likely save himself.

Beside him, Satsa stirred for a second, and said something that Jewitt couldn't hear. The boy talked in his sleep. Jewitt's thoughts stayed with the boy and he remembered how sweetly and tenderly Satsa had put his arms around Jewitt and hugged him. And Jewitt could see from the expression on Mokwila's face that the king had been pleased by the boy's fondness for Jewitt. But why did that matter? Was the boy lonely? Did he talk to his father? What kind of father was Mokwila?

In thinking about fathers and sons, about his own dear father back in England, Jewitt was swept by sadness and homesickness. by the thought he might never see his own father again. But he crept right back out of that well of self-pity when he realized Mokwila didn't know who his father was, had never met him, of course, and for that simple reason any man the right age could be his father, and if that were the case then Thompson, a tall and strong man in his early forties, could easily pass for his father, and that would be the argument, presented by Jewitt, that Mokwila should spare the sail maker's life. Jewitt liked this plan, and after assessing it carefully in his mind, pronounced it a good plan capable of succeeding. He began to assemble the required words and phrases in his mind, superimposing his feelings about his own father. This task seemed to calm and relax him, and in minutes after starting he fell into a dark and savage sleep.

The light in the house was still murky and gray when the king rudely grabbed his arm and shook him awake. Jewitt could smell the fires starting up in the house. The power of the smoke surprised him again and he coughed. They left the house and walked down along the beach, where a crowd of savages had gathered. Mokwila said something to them and they stepped back to let Jewitt pass. The tide had gone out. The Boston lay as she had the night before, firmly grounded on the beach, now just steps away. Mokwila and Jewitt scrambled up the rope ladder and onto the deck.

Jewitt could not look at the quarterdeck. If the heads of the captain and crew were still there he did not want to see them. Mokwila led him below decks to the stern of the boat, where the captain's cabin held the white prisoner. A savage guarding the door said something to the king but Mokwila silenced him with a single word.

Thompson was inside, sitting on a chair and resting his head on the captain's dining table. He looked up as the two men entered and Jewitt cried out, "Father, are you alright?"

Mokwila laughed. Thompson had cuts to his face and nose; small streaks of blood covered his chin and cheeks. He stared at Jewitt as though he had never met the man before.

"Hallo," the king said. "Hallo, Tomesun."

Thompson glared at him. "What do you want? What the fuck do you want?"

"I want you to make sails for me. I want you to make big sails for my biggest canoes. We paddle and we sail. Just like the Boston-men."

"What?" Thompson said.

"The ship. The Boston. You are Boston-men."

Thompson looked at Jewitt. "Is everyone dead?"

"Yes."

"The captain, too?"

"Yes, father."

Mokwila began to laugh again. "He's your father?"

"Yes," Jewitt said, and he was about to launch into the speech that he assumed was required to save the life of Thompson the sail maker but Mokwila cut him off.

"Enough. I don't care if he's your father or your mother." He laughed again. "You make me knives, Chuwin, and he makes me sails. Hallo! He makes me sails!"

Thompson jumped to his feet and confronted the king. He was shorter by a good five or six inches. He raised his fists, one in front of the other, like a boxer. "Why don't I knock your block off first?" he said.

"Knock my block off?" Mokwila laughed and then said something in his language. The door opened and six savages came in. They surrounded Thompson and began to jostle him, pushing him backwards and forwards while he glared at Mokwila.

The king said a few words and they stopped moving.

"My men think they should kill you if I do not, Tomesun."

"Let them fucking well try."

"Their knives are sharp. Their hearts are strong."

"I said, let them fucking well try."

Mokwila turned to Jewitt. "Your father does a lot of fucking, does he?"

"No," Jewitt said quietly. "I don't know."

"I agree. No son would know that."

Mokwila said something to the savages and they all laughed.

He ordered Jewitt and Thompson to get off his ship. They went back up to the main deck, forward to the bow, and over the side and down the ladder.

On the beach, Mokwila gave an order to the men still gathered there. They ran to the ship and climbed aboard. Jewitt and Thompson stood and watched as they unfurled the sails and cut them from the yards, and then began chopping down the masts. Jewitt could clearly hear each brutal chop of the axes as the savages attacked the ship. He watched as one mast fell, crashing over the side of the ship along with the rigging and bits of sail still attached to the yards. The other mast fell to the other side and snapped in half on its way down. He could see piles of muskets begin to take shape on the foredeck as the savages removed the most valuable cargo from the hold. How many guns was the Boston carrying? He had no idea. Thousands, perhaps. And thousands of daggers, and knives, and hatchets and axes. But he thought about other valuables that he wanted and that the savages would not want.

"Fucking savages," Thompson said.

"They won't kill us," Jewitt said.

"Bloody hell they won't. They'll do whatever they want. Cut off our dicks, cut off our heads. Boil us alive."

Jewitt was shaking his head but Thompson didn't care. "I've heard stories. I know the worst. You don't know a damn thing, Jewitt."

"I know what I know. That we're both still alive."

He turned away from the ship and Thompson, and began to walk back to the house. He was hungry again.

At the end of the beach, just in front of Mokwila's house, he saw a terrible sight: two dozen large sticks in the ground, with the heads of the captain and crew stuck on top. Small children were playing there, shaking the base of a stick so that the head on top would move back and forth. The children laughed as they did this. Jewitt walked over to them and shouted at them to stop. At first they ignored

him, and then they laughed at him. He walked right up to one of them, a boy who might have been Satsa's age, and gestured for him to leave the stick alone. The boy's expression went blank and when Jewitt touched him on the shoulder he drew back, and then shouted something to his playmates. They all stared at Jewitt, as though he were a madman or worse, and then ran away, down to the far end of the beach.

One of the heads was still in motion on top of a stick. Jewitt put his hand on the stick to steady it. He looked up at the head, and saw that it had tilted forward. The dead eyes of the black cook were now staring down into his own.

Thompson disliked the food as much as Jewitt did. The king was generous, offering clams and dried fish drenched in the oil that made Jewitt want to vomit. He offered tough, thin rectangles of what he called "berry food". He demonstrated his eating technique which consisted of first breaking the rectangle into many small pieces and then stuffing as many of those pieces into his mouth as possible. Jewitt tried one or two pieces. They tasted like straw, with a tiny aftertaste of sweetness. He managed to swallow two but spat the third one out. Thompson spat it all out, cursing the savages for their inedible food. The king laughed and suggested they use more whale oil.

When the king had left, Thompson sat with Jewitt, warming his hands by the fire. One the king's slaves, a young girl with filthy hair and sores on her leg, tended the fire carefully, feeding it just enough fuel to stay alive. The entire back wall of the house was lined with firewood, all the way to the ceiling. To reach the top pieces, she had to climb up a series of wooden boxes stacked in front. When she wasn't tending the fire, she dozed on a mat or helped herself to a large round bowl of water that sat on one of the boxes.

"Are you sure everyone is dead?" Thompson asked again.

"Yes," Jewitt said. "Go out on the beach and see for yourself."

"Fucking savages. The captain was right. Now if we just put our heads together, we'll figure a way to escape. The long boat. We'll take the long boat."

"And go where?"

"Anywhere! Anywhere but here. We'll go south. Find a ship eventually. Find a fucking ship and get the fuck away from here."

"That makes no sense. Row the long boat on the ocean for a hundred miles or more? There are no ships."

"Of course there are ships. Another month and more traders will here."

"You think we can survive a month in the long boat. What would we eat?"

"We'll fish. If the savages can do it, we can do it. Catch some fish and fry 'em up nice. The way you're supposed to. Civilized."

Jewitt started to laugh.

"What the hell . . ." Thompson said.

"You're civilized?"

"Bloody hope so. I'm from Philadelphia, ain't I?"

Jewitt laughed again and poked the fire. The girl came over and added a small log to the centre of the coals. It burst into flame immediately, sending a wispy tendril of smoke up to the ceiling and out the narrow strip of gray light to the sky somewhere above.

Mokwila allowed Jewitt and Thompson to go back onto the ship and retrieve what they wanted before his men stripped her bare. While Thompson dove immediately into the bottom storage compartments to gather food, chocolate and liquor, Jewitt made his way directly to the captain's cabin. He took a small writing desk, several pens and pencils, some blank account books and pieces of paper, a Bible, a prayer book and a small book of sermons. His own sea chest was intact, the lock and key still in working order. He took some of his smaller blacksmithing tools: tongs, a couple of hammers, a whetstone and three files. The forge, however, was bolted to the base of the foremast and much too heavy to remove. So was the anvil. Jewitt put the small tools in his chest, along with the account books and the Bible. Mokwila gave him some room in the house to store the chest and the desk and promised that he would not disturb them, nor allow his men to take or borrow anything that belonged to Jewitt.

Thompson rescued his various sewing and mending kits, along with a substantial cache of chocolate and sweets. He took several bottles of whiskey and rum, hiding them in Jewitt's chest. There

were a dozen or more barrels of molasses and enormous stores of salted beef and pork still on the boat but no way to hide them from the king, who said he would not allow any white man's food in the village. Thompson fussed and fumed when he heard this, convinced there must be some way to rescue the meat.

"It's fucking wrong that he won't let us eat our own food. Oh my lord what I wouldn't give for a nice chunk of salty beef right now."

Jewitt, who had not developed a particular fondness for salted meat or hard tack biscuit over the course of their voyage from England, did not say anything.

"I can taste it right now," Thompson said. "Salty, salty beef!"

"You'll get used to it."

"Used to what?"

"Fish, of course."

"Oh, fuck that," he said, and spat into the fire again.

Jewitt was hungry all the time. He ate what the king, or the king's wife, offered him, but could never get down more than a swallow or two. He didn't understand why the food was so appallingly terrible: hard crunchy dried clams and mussels and dried fish, salmon or halibut he guessed (Thompson was no help since he didn't know much about fish either). The dried berry flats were inedible. Why not fresh fish from the ocean? If he had to, he would go out fishing himself.

On the third night, the wind came up and shook the trees for hours. Jewitt lay awake, feeling the pulse of the wound on his forehead and the discomfort of the hard earth beneath the mat he lay on. Satsa slept in front of him, and Thompson in behind. He could hear Thompson breathing heavily, not snoring but sucking in air through his mouth and blowing it out again. The wind rose and shook the trees mightily and subsided for a moment, and then rose again. On the ocean the ship would groan and ache with a wind like this, but here in the house Jewitt heard only the trees, and in the far distance the relentless crashing of waves on the Pacific beach that lay to the west of the village.

In his mind at this moment he had no particular plan to shape and design. The king would let him live if he was useful, he knew that. He needed a fire and an anvil, some kind of substitute forge that he

could use to work metal into the useful objects the king wanted. Was the king mad? He wasn't sure. The savages he led seemed like mean, vicious dogs. They poked at Jewitt and jeered at him when he tried to talk to them or repeat words they said. Their faces were wild and filled with either rage or mocking laughter. Thompson fumed and fussed over this; he wanted to punch and fight back. He'd been a fighter in his day, before joining the navy, he told Jewitt, a proper man of action, skilled with his fists, who commanded respect. Or so he said. Jewitt listened to his stories but refused to be impressed.

On Friday morning, Mokwila announced that there would be many visitors arriving, and that he planned a great show of weapons to welcome the visitors. There would be a feast and far more food than Jewitt and Thompson could eat, even if they ate all day long, day after day, for many many years.

"You will fire the cannon," Mokwila told Jewitt.

"I have never fired a cannon in my life."

"You will fire the cannon. Do you understand? You will fire the cannon."

Jewitt said yes, and then asked Thompson if he knew how to fire a cannon. Thompson said no, but said he would figure it out. How difficult could it be to fire a cannon?

The guests began arriving mid-day, in dozens of enormous canoes that soon filled the harbour in front of the village. Mokwila's men had arranged themselves in a long line on the beach, each holding a musket at arms' length, butt on the ground and barrel pointing at the sky. Many of them wore clothes and dresses taken from the Boston's hold. They had daggers stashed in pockets and powder horns and shot bags dangling from their necks. Some were dressed in their day to day cloaks that Jewitt had heard referred to as kotsacks, made from some kind of tree fibre or bark, painted red or blue. A few had socks draped over their heads. Jewitt laughed when he saw this, but hide his laughter from the king, who instructed him to prepare the cannon.

The cannon had been placed on two planks on the beach. Thompson had located enough gunpowder to fire off two shots. He had Satsa standing by, with a collection of lit torches, ready to light the fuse when the king gave the signal.

Mokwila was not pleased that Thompson would be firing the cannon. He shook his head at Jewitt, and then led him back to the big house and up a ladder to the roof, where he stationed himself at the

peak. With one hand he began to beat with a heavy stick on the roof; with the other, he held a large speaking trumpet to his lips and addressed his assembled greeting party.

Jewitt sat a few feet away and watched. As the canoes began to touch the beach, Mokwila beat very rapidly for a few seconds, then paused, and ordered the men to fire. The guns went off with an enormous roar. Thompson lit the fuse on the cannon and the cannon proceeded to fire with an equally impressive roar. The men then dropped their muskets and fell to the ground and began rolling around and around, as though they had been shot. Then they sprang to their feet again, yelling and dancing and prancing about. Jewitt laughed and the king smiled. Thompson simply stood at the cannon, staring at the visiting chiefs who were now stepping from their canoes and in turn staring at him.

Then one of the king's men approached the visitors. He talked for several minutes, gesturing with his hands to point out the crippled Boston, demasted but still proudly resting in the centre of the beach, the vast array of seized goods now visible on the shoreline, the assembled crowd of costumed greeters, and finally, the king himself, the mastermind of the entire operation, who had climbed down from the roof of his house and was now making his way to where the visiting chiefs stood.

The king's man introduced Mokwila to each chief. Jewitt could see that the king was saying something to each chief in a great stream of words that seemed to elicit no particular reaction from the chiefs. The chiefs wore bulky coats and vests of black fur. Many had sticks and feathers in their long hair and elaborate jewellery suspended from ears and wrists. Jewitt counted more than twenty visiting canoes and almost eighty visitors.

Mokwila led them along the beach and up the slope to the main street of the village, past the plunder from the ship to his house, the largest house, at the far end of the village.

They disappeared inside. Jewitt stood by the door and peered in. Three of Mokwila's slaves stationed at the door allowed him to come in and sit down.

A kind of stage had been arranged in the centre of the house, built from planks placed on wooden boxes. Mokwila sat down first, and then his greeter, the man who had first welcomed the chiefs on the beach, guided each visiting chief to a specific position on either side. Once the ten chiefs were seated, the other visitors arranged themselves in jagged rows to one side. The king's wives then appeared, with trays laden with food that he had not seen before, herring spawn and whale blubber, as he found out

later. The visitors ate an enormous amount of food, sending trays back for refilling over and over again. The king's greeter, a pudgy man named Kinneclimmets, ate with particular enthusiasm, whale oil dribbling down his chin, as he stuffed his face with clams and blubber. No one spoke. The women brought bowls of water as commanded by the king. There was much gurgling and slurping. Jewitt had never seen such gluttony.

When the eating was done, the women cleared away the food trays.

Mokwila spoke for what seemed like a very long time. Jewitt had no timepiece and no way of knowing how long. He assumed the king was explaining the massacre on the Boston, and how he had taken two whites as slaves, and amassed huge treasures of valuable things. The chiefs stared impassively as Mokwila rambled on and on. Were they bored by the endless stream of words coming from the king's mouth?

Jewitt got to his feet and walked out the house for a moment. He could see Thompson on the beach, scowling and staring down at the water and then out at the Boston. The beach was now so full of canoes you could barely walk between them if you wanted to. Surely Thompson was not planning to steal one? Jewitt watched as Thompson left the beach, came back up the slope to the village and sat down beside one of the houses.

Mokwila was still talking when Jewitt returned to the house. Then he stopped. Kinneclimmets got up and did a pantomime of a man who has eaten too much and can't stand on his feet. He fell onto his belly, got up, and then fell again, onto his side. He twisted his face into outrageous expressions and stuck his finger into his mouth. Jewitt thought for a moment he was going to vomit as part of the performance but he did not. The chiefs laughed, although not very enthusiastically. Kinneclimmets said something, and ran his hands over his hair to smooth it down. Then he made the gesture of slitting a man's throat and the laughter doubled and tripled. Mokwila was laughing too, laughing so hard that he had to hold his sides.

Jewitt did not understand the laughter. He found the fat man grotesque and repulsive.

Kinneclimmets sat down. The king barked an order, and the wives removed a few remaining trays and bowls of water.

Three of the chiefs got up. They held bags in their hands. They walked in a small circle, removing some kind of white down from the bags and spreading it on the floor of the house. Then young Satsa

appeared, dressed in a yellow robe with an animal mask on his face. Behind him the king walked, blowing a whistle and shaking some kind of rattle in his right hand. The five figures walked in circles for a few minutes and then the men sat down again, leaving Satsa in the centre of the stage.

He began to dance, but not in a way that Jewitt had ever seen.

He twirled on his heels, then crouched and leapt up in the air. He spun around and around, and then crouched again and leaped into the air. These gyrations and leaps were accompanied by the sound of sticks beating on planks. Jewitt couldn't tell who was drumming. Satsa danced himself to exhaustion. He would take a short break and sit, and then get to his feet again and continue the dance. The chiefs began to sing, at first in a low, rumbling bass voice, then rising to a medium pitch that got louder and louder. The louder the chiefs sang, the louder and noisier the drumming became. Jewitt could see that the king knew the words to the songs sung by the chiefs. The king motioned to them as he sang, as though leading a choir. The words were incomprehensible to Jewitt, but he recognized patterns and repetitions. The melodies seem to rise and fall just a note at a time, up and down, up and down, like a man slowly testing the rungs of a ladder.

Jewitt could see that Kinneclimmets was bored. He was starting around the room, examining the king's wives as though he'd never seen them before, closing his eyes and even nodding off every now and now and then.

Jewitt got up and went outside the house again. The day was ending. He looked up and saw the first tentative stars begin to shine in the blackening sky above. He scanned the street and then the beach below but didn't see Thompson anywhere. He walked down to the water, found a log and sat on it. Faintly in the distance he could hear the chiefs singing and the sound of sticks beating on wood. He touched the wound on his forehead for a moment and flinched. He would leave it for now, but in the morning get Thompson or one of the wives to help change the dressing. The senior wife was called Clasiaca. Jewitt had asked her name, speaking English of course, and she understood what he was asking, and told him. She said it very slowly, Cla-si-a-ca, so that he would hear the syllables and pronounce it correctly. The savages sometimes sounded like they were swallowing their tongues when they spoke. Their language completely mystified him. He spoke some French and some Latin and understood how a thought or idea in one language can become the same thought or idea in another language. You map one word to a

different word, but the meaning is the same. A tree is an *arbre*. A mother is a *mater*. Where are you going is *quod vadis*. Where he would even begin with the savages' language? How could you live among them and not understand what they were saying? Thompson thought their language must be crude and ugly, incapable of rendering a white man's thoughts, but he knew nothing about languages. He couldn't read or write! He had a right to his own opinion, like any man, but Jewitt didn't think it meant very much. He would never say that to his face, but that's what he thought.

Jewitt went back to the king's house. The slaves stationed at the door had fallen asleep. Satsa was still dancing, leaping in the air and twirling and spinning like some kind of animated toy. Jewitt sat, positioning himself so he could see the boy dance, above the sprawled bodies of the slaves sleeping in front of him.

Finally the dance ended. An exhausted Satsa retired to the far corner of the house.

Mokwila barked out several orders. Slaves began to carry various objects to the centre of the stage—fine cloth, pistols and muskets, daggers, casks of gunpowder, barrels of molasses, powder horns, shot bags—so that the king could distribute them to the ten chiefs. Each man took his gifts and arranged them in a neat pile and then promptly curled up beside the pile and went to sleep. The lower ranked visitors were sent out to the beach to sleep in their canoes, escorted by the king's men equipped with muskets.

The king instructed Jewitt to find Thompson and bring him back to the house. Jewitt went outside and found him at the far end of the street, near the broad path that led to the Pacific beach.

"Just having a chew," he said, as Jewitt approached. "The very last of my tobacco, I am sorry to say."

"The king wants us."

"In good time."

"Right now, he said."

"What? They've stuffed their faces have they? Fired our guns? Dressed up like ladies? A fucking joke, I say. We should slaughter them all."

"Why won't you get along?"

Thompson grabbed Jewitt. "I ain't gonna get along, my friend. There's no fucking way I will get along. Don't forget that. Do what you want, I don't care. But I will not get along."

Jewitt did not know what to say to this. Thompson would not be convinced of any path but his own.

On the fifth night of his captivity, Jewitt woke suddenly in the darkness. He heard voices shouting outside the house, the word *e-nic* over and over again as though it was someone's name. He had no idea what was happening. The king grabbed his shoulder and told him to get up. Jewitt tried to rouse Thompson, but the older man only rolled over on his other side and continued to sleep. Jewitt got up and followed the king outside, stepping carefully to avoid the sleeping bodies that covered the floor of the house. Near the door, a mass of slaves were getting up too, chattering in low excited voices as the king swept past them, pushing them rudely aside.

Jewitt followed. Even before he turned towards the beach he could hear the sound of flames licking at wood. The Boston was on fire.

She lay as before, grounded on the beach in the shallow water of a high tide, but now enormous flames rose from the foredeck. A row of savages was watching from shore. Jewitt and Mokuila stood together for a moment, mesmerized by the sight of the burning ship. A man came up to the king and explained that a young nephew of the king's had gone aboard less than a hour before, searching for more weapons and knives, and accidentally dropped a torch into the hold.

The king was very angry. He pushed the man aside and walked quickly down to the beach. Jewitt followed, and then began to think of how they might put the fire out. With enough men wielding pails and buckets they might be able to save part of the ship. They had water and manpower, surely they could accomplish something. He was furiously trying to think of a solution when the first casks of gunpowder exploded with a tremendous roar. Even the king stopped. The savages on the beach backed away from the water and went back up to the village, to the safety of the houses, to watch the explosions onboard the Boston.

Bits and pieces of the ship were now flying through the air in enormous arcs of orange flame, accompanied by black smoke and the acrid metallic stench of gunpowder. Unafraid, Jewitt walked right to the water's edge. The king stood behind him.

The ship now lay split in two, like a piece of fruit cut down the middle. The flames were now so enormous that Jewitt could feel their heat and their power, an invisible wall that pressed on him and pushed him back. There were more explosions. Jewitt could hear the excited cries of the savages huddled by the houses behind him. They shouted after every explosion.

Jewitt turned again and saw the king had moved further away from the beach, and was now talking angrily to two men. The men ran down the beach and disappeared into the night.

"This is very bad," the king said. "Very bad."

"Yes," Jewitt said. He was thinking about the food stores still left on the boat. The fire would either consume or destroy them. Why had he and Thompson not unloaded everything? They'd had the time and the opportunity. Too late now.

"Very bad," the king said again. The anger and emotion in the king's face did not frighten him, but he could see there would be consequences for the young man who had dropped the torch. The king could deliver any punishment he wanted, any punishment he thought appropriate. Without delay or deliberation, of course. The king would act quickly, because that was the kind of man he was. Jewitt saw this every day. Every reaction seemed instinctive and immediate.

The ship was still burning and would continue to burn until nothing was left but the charred blackened skeleton of the hull. Jewitt watched again for a few moments, feeling alone and lost, as though the burning ship had abandoned him. The ship was gone, destroyed, dismembered, and along with it all evidence of the massacre and all evidence of England and all evidence of the United States. He had a few books, he had pen and paper, he had himself, his mind and his thoughts. God was with him, was he not? Jewitt looked up at the black sky and then out again across the black water hoping to see God somewhere in the emptiness and the blackness but knowing he could not see God, not touch God and not talk to God. At least, not yet, not in this life. But he could pray, and read, and study, and God would be near.

Jewitt heard voices again. He turned around and saw the two men who had disappeared a few minutes earlier. They were dragging a third man towards the king, who stood with one hand on his hip shouting at the man. In the other hand the king held a club, long and slender, with a sharp edge, made from whalebone. Jewitt had seen several of them in the house.

The third man fell to his knees in front of the king and bowed down several times. The king waited for the man to raise his head and then hit him several times with the club, directly on the ears. Jewitt wanted to help the man but knew he could do nothing. The king would have his way, or else.

The beating was over almost as quickly as it began. The injured man lay collapsed on the beach, face down. The two men dragged him up to the one of the houses and disappeared inside.

Jewitt stared at Mokwila, who then gestured for Jewitt to come to him.

Jewitt walked slowly to where Mokwila was standing. He felt disgust, not fear, but he would not show this feeling to the king.

"He will learn to be more careful," Mokwila said.

"Yes," Jewitt said.

"The village will learn something too."

"They respect you."

"Only when I force them to." He pointed at the burning hull of the Boston. "That was mine. By his carelessness he stole from me."

"It was an accident."

Mokwila laughed. "Yes, but accidents have results too. Chuwin, aren't you an accident?"

Jewitt said nothing. He was tired. He felt as though he had only enough energy to walk back to the house, go inside, crawl up in the corner, and disappear into sleep.

"Chuwin, you are a useful accident. That's what you are."

Jewitt turned and began to walk away.

The king called to him. "Chuwin!"

He turned around. Mokwila was spreading his arms wide. "This is mine, Chuwin. Everything. Everything is mine."

Jewitt nodded. He walked a few yards, and then turned around again. The Boston was still alight, but the king had disappeared.

2 Comin' through the rye

When Jewitt's head wound had healed, the king instructed him to begin making daggers and knives and other objects for trade. He had lost the forge and anvil, tied to the base of the mast of the Boston and now sitting on the bottom of the harbour, but Jewitt was confident he could improvise something to take their place.

With permission from Mokwila, he set to work with Thompson building a small lean-to at the edge of the meadow that lay between the village and the Pacific beach. The grass, a smooth and brilliant green, gave way on the eastern side of the meadow to a tiny vegetable field, planted ten or fifteen years earlier by the Spanish. A few wild onion and garlic plants still flourished there. Thompson had painstakingly plucked half a dozen of the plants, cleaned them carefully, and, with permission of the king, who had very strict rules about what the two white slaves were allowed to eat, boiled them in a pot over the fire. On tasting the onion, the king spat it out and declared it foul and inedible, but allowed Jewitt and Thompson to eat the mash of vegetables with whale blubber and oil, with they did, with tremendous relish.

"Oh, for a field of onions," Thompson said. "Onions and potatoes."

"You're dreaming again," Jewitt said. He waited for the king to get up and leave, and then whispered. "We could make salt you know. Evaporate salt water in a pan, that could work."

Thompson belched, and then stuff his mouth with another chunk of blubber. "If the fucking sun would come out."

But for a week the sun refused to come out, and they built the lean-to in the rain. Mokwila gave them ten cedar planks and with hammer and nails and two saws they fashioned a modest blacksmith's shack, open at the front, but with a proper roof, back and sides, to keep out the worst of the rain and wind. With no bellows or proper coal fire, Jewitt had to make do with a small wood fire, fed by the fir logs that Mokwila said burned hottest and cleanest. In place of an anvil, Jewitt used a flat black rock that he and Thompson had found at the far end of the Pacific beach and then dragged on a section of tattered sail cloth foot by foot, yard by yard, along the hard pebbly beach.

Without sheet metal or bricks, they had no way to construct a proper hood and chimney to vent the smoke from the fire. Jewitt spent the first two sessions at his forge coughing and gasping for breath, and then Thompson removed the planks covering the lower half of the sides of the shack, so the wind could get in and blow the smoke sideways.

With this improvised forge and anvil, Jewitt, using the tools he had rescued from the Boston, was able to fulfil his commitment to Mokwila and make useful metal items for trade. He kept his tongs, files and hammers in a sturdy locked box in the back corner of the shack and told Mokwila to tell the village men to keep their hands off.

"My men don't steal," Mokwila said. "They take only what belongs to them."

"I'm sure you're right," Jewitt said. But he saw how the villagers shared food and weapons and tools and clothes and anything else of value in their village. He didn't understand their idea of ownership, and the king made things more confusing with his claim that he owned everything: the trees and the beaches and the fish in the ocean and the water that spurted from rocks and the mussels and clams and the whales that Jewitt had yet to see.

The improvised forge and anvil, as primitive as they were, made Jewitt happy. He had Thompson make him a heavy protective apron using sailcloth and wore this as he worked away pounding and beating the metal into useful shapes. The small wood fire slowed him down considerably; he had to wait two or three times as long for the metal to heat as he would with a proper coal fire, but in the end it didn't matter. There was no particular rush, no one hurrying him along, no impatient captain checking with him every fifteen or twenty minutes. The king seemed pleased with the modest items he produced.

Some of the chiefs, mostly relatives of the king from what Jewitt could figure, brought pieces of copper to be fashioned into bracelets and necklaces for their wives. The king allowed him to do this extra work, and in return the chiefs brought him fish, salmon and halibut, and pieces of fine cloth that Thompson could turn into shirts and trousers and vests. When Jewitt asked the king where the copper came from, he only shrugged and said "We trade for food, we trade for copper. Don't you Boston-men know how to trade?" And then he laughed and punched Jewitt in the shoulder.

In fact a day rarely passed that some sort of trading delegation didn't show up in the harbour. The visitors brought food, usually fresh fish caught miles away up the inlet to the north, and traded it for

muskets, knives and other weapons. If a visiting chief spoke some English, Jewitt would try to talk to him and find out whether any European trading ships had arrived. The sea otter trade flourished for a good six months, April through to fall. Surely one of the chiefs would be sympathetic to his plight and carry a message to a visiting captain. But rather than help him, they seemed more interested in trying to buy him from Mokwila. One chief, who had never seen a white man before, stepped right up to Jewitt, ran his hand through Jewitt's short hair and sniffed his face as though he were a prospective meal. The captain had said there'd been reports of cannibalism among the savages, going back to Cook's first visit in the 1770s. Jewitt thought anything was possible with savages but nothing he'd seen or heard in the village made him think or believe Mokwila, as cruel as he could be, would allow his men to eat a fellow human being.

Thompson was obsessed with escape plans. No sooner had Jewitt got his forge fire heated, his tools prepared, his apron in place, then Thompson would show up at this side and begin explaining, in raspy whispers, how they could escape.

"The beach is full of canoes," he said. "There for the taking. By us, John Jewitt."

"But taking where?"

"We go north. This is an island. We go north and then west. We leave in the middle of the night.

You see what a sound sleeper Mokwila is. We'll be long fucking gone by the time they find out."

"Paddling a canoe without a chart."

"I saw the chart!"

"When did you see the chart?"

"Frequently. On the captain's table."

"But you can't read. Was it upside down? Right side up?"

"Goddammit, I know damn well which side is up. I saw the chart, I'm telling you."

"I don't believe you."

"It's true!!"

"We'd never make it."

Thompson was silent for a moment. He walked out of the shack, looked up at the gray lifeless sky, and then came back to Jewitt's side. "You know, Jewitt, I'm not sure you want to escape."

"What do you mean?"

"Maybe you like it here. Maybe you want to stay here."

Jewitt said nothing. He pounded on a strip of dull red metal, sending a few lazy sparks off to one side. "I do not want to stay here," he said very quietly. "Mokwila scares me. I hate the food. I hate the savages."

"That's more like it," Thompson said. "We just need a plan."

Jewitt shook his head. "There is no plan."

"There's always a plan."

"The only plan is to contact a ship."

"But how do we do that?"

"With a letter."

Thompson laughed. "What good is a fucking letter?"

"You'll see," Jewitt said.

Thompson offered to drain off blood from his finger to use as ink, but Jewitt thought he had a better solution. He gathered a small basket of blackberries from the path that led from the north end of the meadow up past the first Pacific beach, past the lake where the villagers drew fresh water, past the second Pacific beach, where the path narrow and became a jumble of tree roots and fallen branches and slimy green logs. The women spent a good part of every day out picking berries but they usually ignored Jewitt. The young ones were covered in their cedar cloaks and never met his eyes. The older ones sometimes stared but rarely said anything, and when they did he rarely understood what they said. Mokwila was the only one who spoke English.

Jewitt picked the berries quickly and hurried back to his shack.

First he squeezed the berries, catching the liquid they produced in a small wooden cup. Some of the berry skin had mixed with the juice so he strained the liquid carefully. To thicken the ink, he added some powdered charcoal from a charred fir log, and some ash from the fire. He spend the better part of

two mornings getting the proportions right, so that the ink flowed properly through the quill and onto the page. He'd taken several pens from the captain's quarters on the Boston, but he experimented with sea gull feathers, too, and found they worked just as well. The harbour beach was littered with them, giving him an ample supply for his writing experiments.

Jewitt made sure the king was away while he worked on his pen and ink experiments. Whaling season had begun; the kind would often be away days at a time, either in some sort of strange reclusive preparation at the lake, or in the actual pursuit of the whale. Every whaling expedition in April had been unsuccessful, and he came back to a house in a foul mood, kicking at slaves and berating his wives if they were slow in preparing food or lax in keeping the fire going.

An empty jam jar from the ship served as an ink bottle. Jewitt transferred one of his account books from the locked sea-chest in the house to the locked box in his blacksmith's shack. He could sit at the back of the shack, facing away from the open side, and have just enough privacy to write his journal and letters with absolute privacy.

On April 23, he wrote his first entry:

We arrived in Nootka Sound the 12th of March, 1803, all in good health, and anchored five miles above the village in twenty-five fathoms of water, muddy bottom.

The ink was a vivid green. Jewitt's handwriting was mediocre at best, but he admired it anyways, and felt that in writing about his captivity he might somehow make it more tolerable. If he died a horrible death at the hands of Mokwila or the other savages, then the journal might survive as a record of his experience. The thought of leaving something behind after his death had never occurred to him before.

Where were the whales? As the days lengthened into mid and late April, Jewitt would sometimes rise just before dawn and climb over various sleeping bodies in the gray light of the big house and make his way across the meadow to the Pacific beach west of the village. There were three beaches. The first and largest beach was filled not with sand but hard, small pebbles, the size of grape shot or smaller, and ran a full quarter mile from one black rocky headland to the next. Tall spindly trees covered the headlands, their tops blown back with the wind. The wind blew all the time and the waves crashed endlessly on the shore. Jewitt sat on one of the logs thrown up on the beach and stared at the horizon line, thinking or

pretending that he was watching for whales, but in fact simply sitting and staring at the water and the sky and the line where these two worlds met. His mind was blank but at least he was alone. Mokwila was out of the house again, in preparation for the hunt, at a secret place that he would not describe to Jewitt. He said it was an island with very special powers that Jewitt would not understand.

No matter. While the king was away, Jewitt was free to work at his forge and write in his journal, read his books and sit on the beach and watch for whales.

The sky tipped slowly into blue and the sun came up. A flash of red that forced Jewitt to look away, and then deeper blue all above him and finally the blaze of white light that promised warmth but withheld it until the sun was higher in the sky.

There were no spouting whales on the horizon line. Seagulls cawed and complained. The waves continued to crash on the hard pebble beach and the wind blew as always, from China or Japan, far to the west.

One day Jewitt met a neighbouring chief who spoke a few words of English. His name was Waugh-claugh, and he lived with his tribe, the Alousahts, far up the inlet to the east. They were a small tribe, just two hundred compared to the thousand or more under Mokwila's rule, and allied to the king in some way that Jewitt couldn't quite work out. The two men were friendly but the visitor's deference to his host was obvious. Waugh-claugh brought fresh fish to trade for guns and cloth, but Jewitt could see that he did not bargain aggressively with Mokwila. He sat directly to the right of the king in the big house during the feasting but did not complain or protest when the king interrupted him several times during the speeches.

Waugh-claugh asked him to describe the men in his own country.

"What do you mean?" Jewitt said.

"You are big. Your men -- are they big or small?"

"Mostly small," Jewitt said. "Smaller than me."

"How many wives do they take?"

"Only one."

Waugh-claugh smiled at this, and so did Mokwila. The king had nine wives. It had taken Jewitt several weeks to figure this out. He had thought Clasiaca was Satsa's mother, but she actually the mother

of an older boy, a sixteen year old, who slept in a different section of the house with his uncle and the uncle's family. Satsa's mother was a silent young woman who seemed to spend all her time weaving and sewing and rarely said a word to anyone.

The chief grinned and held up his hand. "Five wives. Where is your wife, Chuwin?"

"I have no wife."

"In England no wife?"

"I have no wife," Jewitt said again.

Waugh-claugh shook his head, as though mystified by Jewitt's bachelorhood.

"Come to my village and I find you a wife."

Before Jewitt could say anything, Kinneclimmets approached the chief and said something that made him laugh. The little man twirled in a circle, stopped, and then put his hand to his crotch and stuck his tongue out at Jewitt.

"He says your cock will fall off if you fuck one of our women," Waugh-claugh said.

"Tell him his cock is too small to be of interest to a white woman."

Waugh-claugh repeated this to Kinneclimmets, who immediately fell down on the ground laughing hysterically, and then sprang to his feet and gave Jewitt a healthy push on the shoulder, almost knocking him over. Waugh-claugh said something to him and both men laughed. Jewitt was angry now, but walked away rather than respond.

When he looked back, he saw Waugh-claugh talking to Mokwila, and then Mokwila pointing at his big house and Kinneclimmets walking away, as though ordered to leave the conversation. Waugh-claugh and Mokwila talked intently for a few minutes, turning and staring at Jewitt, then facing each other again. Later, Mokwila would not tell Jewitt what they were discussing. "You cannot question me," Mokwila said. "Go to sleep."

The king ordered Jewitt and Thompson to help with the chopping of firewood. This tedious job was handled by the dozen or so slaves that slept in each house in the village. They were mostly young men captured in war, and wore the shabbiest cloaks and were always the last in line, after Jewitt, to receive the food cooked by the women in the house. A few were girls, like the sad creature who tended the king's

fire when the wives were busy elsewhere. Jewitt had tried saying a few words to her in the savages' language but she did not respond.

To cut wood, Jewitt and Thompson prepared a toolkit of axes, hatchets and saws they had rescued from the ship. The king shook his head when Jewitt displayed the freshly sharpened, double bladed axe that he assumed would be the most effective tool for chopping down fir trees, but did not prevent the men from using them. Jewitt had no idea how the slaves chopped wood without axes.

A troop of slaves led Jewitt and Thompson north from the village for about a mile along the main path that skirted the lake and then angled right, to the north east. They went down a narrower side trail and in no time at all found themselves in a grove of enormous fir trees spiralling up to the sky. The forest floor was almost impenetrable -- a mass of shrubs and bushes and fallen logs sprouting new trees along their slimy green decaying trunks. The walking was almost impossible. Jewitt had to step carefully just to keep upright. Off in the distance he could see a group of men setting fire to the base of a tree, shouting at the tree as though encouraging it to weaken and fall. When Jewitt pointed them out to Thompson, the older man laughed and said the savages were crazy to think fire could topple trees like these.

Jewitt set to work with his freshly sharpened axe, selecting a medium size tree about a foot in diameter with sufficient clearance from the trees surrounding it that it had room to fall and not be held upright by its neighbours. Some of the trees were dead, standing in the forest like bare-limbed skeletons, slowly accumulating green on their trunks and branches. Jewitt assumed a live tree would make for better firewood that would burn longer and with less smoke. Thompson said it didn't matter, they should just down the damn trees and get them back to the village.

After twenty of minutes of vigorous chopping, twenty cuts on the low side, followed by ten cuts to the higher opposite side, Jewitt managed to fell the tree. It dropped to the ground with a satisfying whoosh, branches snapping and breaking. He broke off the smaller branches by hand, and then chopped off the larger ones, breaking these into smaller pieces in turn. He stacked everything neatly in a growing pile not far from the side path that had brought them deep into the forest.

Cutting the trunk into shorter sections took hours. The live trunk was dense and green and refused to sit still for the axe. Jewitt had to prop it on a fallen log in order to hold it in position for cutting. He tried the saw but found it awkward to hold the trunk with his foot while he manoeuvred the saw back

and forth with his arms. Finally he called Thompson over and the two of them worked together. With the trunk in position on the log, they found they could hold it steady with their feet and work both ends of the saw.

"We need a v-notch," Thompson said.

"What?"

"A notch shaped like a V to hold the fucking trunk once we've chopped it down."

While Thompson was splitting the sections into smaller pieces, Jewitt went hunting for a larger tree with clearance to fall. He found it, and tackled it like a madman, chopping away in huge swings of the axe, sweat pouring down his face, his arms, down his back.

Without realizing it, he began sing.

Gin a body meet a body

Com' through the rye

Gin a body kiss a body

Need a body cry?

He sang and he chopped and when Thompson yelled to ask how he was doing he ignored the man because he was lost in the words of the song. He'd sung that song for years, even in the choir at school, and he knew and loved every word.

Comin' through the rye poor body

Comin' through the rye

Jenny draig't a' her petticoat

Comin' through the rye.

After chopping and splitting two trees, they took a rest. One of the slaves brought them some fish, berries and water. They sat on a trunk in the cool forest without saying a word and ate the food. They could hear savages chattering away in the distance, but here, in the section they'd claimed as their own, there was no sound except the occasional rustle of leaves moving in the wind. No birdsong, no insects. The trees, confidently blocking the early afternoon sun, moved in the wind above them.

"Too many fucking trees," Thompson said at last.

"What do you mean?"

"I don't like it. Too many trees. Makes me feel closed in. Shuttered up. Below decks for the whole damn voyage."

"I don't mind," Jewitt said. He liked the time away from the village, away from the dirt and stench of the big house. The forest seemed clean by comparison. Clean and new. But that made no sense. Everything here was old, or ageless. Jewitt had no idea how old the trees were. He knew nothing about trees. You cut them down to use them for useful things, to feed fires and build ships and make chairs and tables. In England the trees were full and round and lost leaves in the winter and gained them back in the spring. But here the trees were tall and slender, jam packed against each other in the forest, thousands and millions of them all the same drab green, mile after mile after mile. You might cut a hundred down and in the time it took your to do that, a thousand would grow up to replace them. The rain! They loved the rain, you could see that here, sitting on a trunk staring at the clutter of vines and bushes and moss everywhere. Everything wet and moist with rain.

After the break, they organized the wood into piles, stacking each piece neatly at the side of the trail. Slaves loaded up enormous baskets fastened with lines over their shoulders and flat straps across their foreheads to carry the wood back to the village. Thompson carried the tools, and Jewitt loaded a basket just to see how it felt. Thompson laughed at him and called him a fool, and walked quickly back, ahead of Jewitt, who struggled to adjust the lines on the basket, until a slave, a young man who looked to be about the same age as Jewitt, came and helped him.

The basket felt as though it was filled with iron bars. Jewitt struggled to walk the first ten feet without tripping or collapsing, and then bent forward, to take more of the weight of the wood on his back. This forced him to look down at the ground as he walked. Every few feet he had to negotiate thick fibrous tree roots that broke the surface of the path. He stumbled three times and almost fell, but managed to keep his balance and stay on his feet. The lines cut into his shoulders and the strap across his forehead felt as though it was cutting a groove in his head.

The mile seemed endless. When he finally arrived back at the big house, he dropped the wood with a careless clatter at the doorway. Inside, Thompson was sprawled near the bed mats, drinking water from a large wooden spoon.

"What ... do you think you're a slave?" Thompson said. "You're bloody well acting like one."

"No," Jewitt said. "Give me some water."

"Get it yourself." He threw a spoon to Jewitt, who dropped it.

Jewitt bent over and picked it up, wiped the dirt off carefully with his finger. He took a spoonful from the water box and drank it down. "I was curious," he said.

"You were curious?" Thompson laughed. "You're a slave, Jewitt, admit it."

Jewitt said nothing. He took another spoonful of water, drank it down, and went out to look for whales.

Mokwila's half brother lived in the second biggest house in the village, where he commanded a dozen slaves and close to fifty commoners. Jewitt had made several daggers for him, and two copper bracelets for his wife. On days when the king was out whale hunting and food was short, Jewitt would go to this house if he saw smoking rising from the roof and ask for food. The man's name was Quatlazape; he spoke no English but the handful of native words that Jewitt had mastered were enough to communicate. Fish. Knife. Trade. One. Two. Three. Please. Thank-you. Klack-ko, Jewitt said. Thank-you.

Quatlazape walked with a slight limp and had several angry scars on his forehead. In full paint he was an impressive, even terrifying sight: brilliant red on his face and his forehead covered with broad strokes of black and his body decorated with lines and odd shapes and splatterings of black. Jewitt had seen him yell and roar with frightening intensity when the king, stoking the enthusiasm and loyalty of his chiefs, described an insult or injustice suffered at the hands of the Europeans, but on his own he was surprisingly calm and even meek, content to share food with Jewitt as the two men sat cross legged in silence in the corner of the house eating boiled fish or herring spawn or the fresh berries that were now in season.

Jewitt was eating quietly with Quatlazape when one of his commoners, a younger man who Jewitt did not recognize, came into the house and spoke quickly to the chief. The only word Jewitt recognized was "tomesun" and as soon as he heard that word he knew that the sailmaker was in trouble again.

The two men put their food trays down and walked quickly to Mokwila's house.

Inside, they found Thompson on his hands and knees in the dirt, shouting "Shoot me, you fucking bastard, shoot me" while the king stood next to him, pointing a musket at his head.

Jewitt went to the king. "My lord," he said. "Put the gun down. Please."

Mokwila laughed. "Chomsun -- do you now tell me what to do?" He jabbed the barrel of the gun into Thompson's ribs. "He struck my son. My son! He must die."

"Please. Put the gun down."

"He must die for his insult."

"Put the gun down."

"He must die!"

Jewitt reached forward and grabbed the barrel of the gun and forced it down into the dirt.

The king glared at Jewitt. Jewitt told Thompson to get to his feet.

Thompson got up and stood in front of the king.

"Give me the gun," Jewitt said. "Whatever Thompson did, he did not mean to hurt your son. He is a good father to me. A father who loves his son."

"He's not your father."

"He is my father! And I'll do anything to protect him. A son owes that to his father. Do you agree?"

"Yes, I agree Chuwin."

"I must protect my father. Even when he does something bad."

"He is very bad. He should die. He deserves to die."

"And a father must protect his son."

"Yes."

"Give me the gun."

Finally, reluctantly, the king allowed Jewitt to take the gun from his hands.

The king said something to Quatlazape, who was standing a few feet away. The man said a few words to the king, and then the king smiled.

"My brother says the gun is happier in Chuwin's hands than in my hands."

"Quatlazape is very wise," Jewitt said. "He understands how guns think."

"Hah," the king said, and walked out of the house.

"Fucking bastard," Thompson said. "You should have let him kill me. Then you'd have reason to kill him. These savages are hot for revenge, but we can play at that too."

"Then we'd all be dead."

"Suit me just fine, my friend. Suit me just fine."

Thompson walked away. Jewitt didn't understand what had happened to throw the king into such a murderous rage. Satsa, who had been observing the entire scene, came over to Jewitt, looking ashamed and said something but Jewitt could not understand him. Satsa didn't know enough English, and Jewitt's smattering of native words were not enough. Finally Jewitt gave up, and went outside in pursuit of Thompson.

But Thompson had disappeared.

The king was on the beach, talking to Quatlazape. Jewitt begged him to explain what had happened with Thompson. The king told him to go away, but Jewitt insisted. In a rush of words that Jewitt had trouble understanding, the king said that Thompson had been lighting some of the lamps on the king's room when Satsa and his friends came over and began pulling at Thompson's trousers. It was a childish game, nothing more. Thompson got angry and spilled the oil in one of the lamps, and then became so angry he chased young Satsa and struck him in the face, drawing blood. When the king heard what had happened, he rushed to the house and picked up the musket and prepared to shoot Thompson.

"I have the right," he said.

"Thompson was very disrespectful," Jewitt admitted.

"I should have killed him."

"It will never happen again."

"It means nothing to say that, Chuwin. I must deal with what has happened. A terrible act of disrespect. There will be a council. And who will deal with that? I will."

"If you kill Thompson, I will kill myself."

"Do not say that."

"Do you want me to die?"

"No. But there will be a council, I know it."

Jewitt didn't understand. If Mokwila was the king, surely that was the end of it. But as he found out later, the king did not rule supreme. The chiefs in the village, including Quatlazape, always retained the right to meet as a council of twelve and render their verdict on important matters to the king. If the

king disagreed with their decision, he could overrule them, but only after convincing them of the soundness of his arguments. In matters of war, revenge, insult and honour, the council provided a kind of counter-balance to the decisions made by Mokwila.

That night the council did meet and decide that Thompson should be put to death for disrespecting the honour of Mokwila's position as king. Striking Satsa, his young son, was the same as striking Mokwila himself. But Mokwila told the chiefs that as long as Jewitt was his slave, he would protect him, and if that meant protecting his father too, he would do so, and therefore not give up Thompson to the council.

Jewitt respected the king for saving Thompson's life. He expected no gratitude from Thompson himself, and did not receive any.

"This is worse than death," Thompson said. "I've fought the French and the Spaniards. I've killed men and come fucking close to being killed myself. This is worse than any fucking war."

"We're here."

"And you want to make the best of it." He shook his head in disgust. "If I had a boat and some guns I'd be out of here like a shot."

"To go where?"

"Wherever I want! And die a free man. Not a slave to these savages."

Jewitt sighed, but said nothing. There was nothing more to say to Thompson. Jewitt thought he would probably do something else to insult the king and end up dead or tortured or both. Jewitt didn't want to think about the very worst that the natives were capable of, if Mokwila were not in the village to restrain them.

3 Dear God in heaven

The days began to stretch out for twelve hours or more, and for Jewitt the summer rhythm of rising early, shortly after dawn, and working late into the evening, under a sky that refused to shed its light, began to feel natural and right. The natives ate when they were hungry, rested when they were tired, worked when work needed to be done. The chiefs rarely gave orders or instructions, and yet everything required to keep the village running day after day after day was accomplished with remarkable efficiency. Thompson grumbled that the natives were lazy and disorganized and had no sense of time. How could you run anything if you didn't have clocks and watches? He complained that he never knew what time it was. Jewitt laughed and said he was crazy. In fact it was perfectly simple to follow the sun and know how the day divided itself into morning, afternoon and evening.

Mokwila seemed obsessed with the whale hunt. Jewitt often saw him leave the village early in the morning, in a flotilla of three or four of the largest canoes, and then return late in the evening, or even the next day, in a foul mood because no whales had been sighted, or worse, a whale had been sighted, pursued, harpooned and then lost because of a broken line, or the presence of an unlucky spirit, or a curse word spoken by the one of the crew.

Jewitt had seen whales in the southern ocean, after their landing in Brazil during the passage from England, their tiny spouts throwing plumes of water into the air a quarter of a mile or more from the ship. Whalers out of New Bedford and Nantucket had often passed the Boston on their way to hunting grounds in the Pacific. But to pursue and kill a whale from a canoe? How would you do that? When Jewitt asked Mokwila about the whale hunt, the king glared at him and would not speak. If Jewitt repeated his questions, the king would say only the words, "Spirits, very bad spirits today" and then walk away in a foul mood.

One of the king's regular crew on the whale hunt was a man named Motana, who had a two-inch, needle-like piece of whalebone stuck in his nose. He was tall and slim, perhaps ten years older than Jewitt, and teased his hair into wild shapes and often stuck feathers and bits of wood in it. Jewitt had done nothing to offend or disrespect Motana, but the man would often go out of his way to make offensive remarks to him, according to the king, who would then remind Motana that Jewitt was his slave and therefore none of Motana's concern. Motana handled the rudder of the canoe, and sang songs to pace

the strokes of the paddles. This was a position of considerable status in the whale canoe. Jewitt also found out, from Quatlazape, that Motana held the village position of part-time healer or shaman, responsible for casting out bad spirits that caused illness or death.

"Like a doctor?" Jewitt asked Quatlazape.

"No doctor. Bad spirits. Many bad spirits."

But Motana had not come to his aid when he was wounded by his attacker on the Boston, and Jewitt had never seen the man do anything useful in the village except steer the canoe. The small children who gathered sticks and kindling for the fires were more useful than Motana, who from what Jewitt could observe, spent inordinate amounts of time eating, sleeping, belching and farting. He spoke no English, of course, and whenever Jewitt approached him to try to establish some kind of friendly relations, Motana jeered and hooted as soon as Jewitt began the tricky process of extracting a native word or phrase from his own mouth.

Jewitt asked the king about Motana, and whether he could observe a healing, but the king would not hear of it.

"That's not for slaves, Chuwin."

"But I do my share. I work for you. I work for the chiefs."

"Do I have to repeat myself every time, Chuwin? That is not for slaves. What Motana does is very important and does not concern you."

"What if I get sick? Will Motana help me?"

The king began to laugh. "Chuwin, you are funny. His medicine will not work for you. You are a white slave. So you should not get sick in the first place!"

When Jewitt explained that his religion required him to rest on Sundays, to do no physical work, to study the words of his God and say prayers to him, the king nodded sympathetically. "Where is your God?" Mokwila asked.

"In heaven," Jewitt said.

"Where is that?"

"I can't explain. Far away."

"My god is far away. Too far away to hear me."

"My God can hear me. And his son."

"Your god has a son?" Mokwila looked at Jewitt as though he had just said something completely illogical.

"His name is Jesus."

"How can a god have a son?"

"The son is also a god."

"I see." But now Mokwila was smiling at Jewitt. "I have heard stories about your god and this son Jesus that he has. They tell me Jesus died and came back to life."

"That's right." Jewitt wondered why Mokwila was asking him questions about Christ if he already knew the story. Did Mokwila not believe what the Europeans told him, or was he just playing Jewitt, testing what he knew? Talking to Mokwila, Jewitt often felt that the king asked him questions that he already knew the answer to. Why the king did this he had no idea.

"I will let you talk to your god," Mokwila said.

Jewitt thanked him in both languages. The king laughed at the way he said klack-ko, but did not correct him.

Jewitt asked Thompson if he would like to come along. Thompson told him to piss off and leave him alone.

On the second Sunday in June, Jewitt put on a clean shirt and trousers, bundled the Bible and Book of Common Prayer under one arm, and equipped with small lunch and flask of water set out for the far end of the lake that lay just to the north of the village.

The trail was well travelled. It led to the first, second and third beaches on the Pacific side. Jewitt passed the usual berry pickers and small children tugging at roots and throwing sticks at each other. The path carried him to a bushy shoreline of the lake, and then up the west side of the lake and finally to the north shore, where Jewitt found the small clearing that opened to a beach and rocks for sitting. He sometimes came here to wash clothes in the lake, under careful instruction from the king that he was not to swim in the lake or approach the island that lay in the centre of the lake. Jewitt asked him why, but the

king would say only that Jewitt was never to visit the island, on penalty of death. This made him all the more curious, of course, but Mokwila would not answer his questions, and when he approached Quatlazape or Clasiaca, they would not answer his questions either.

He sat now, on a smooth log just feet from the edge of the lake. There was no wind this morning and the water was barely rippled. A hundred or so yards away the forbidden island, a solid mass of rock and green fir, sat benignly in the middle of the lake. When Jewitt looked up, he saw what he always saw in this world, the unending slopes of green near and far. In the distance, the hills rose to mountains and met the sky in sharp lines of green against blue. On a clear day like today he could make out the shapes of the trees silhouetted against the sky, like finely spaced teeth on a comb.

To Jewitt, the view was neither beautiful nor ugly. He felt a sense of quiet and peace and stillness sitting and staring at it. There was no motion and no movement. Far off in the distance voices rose and then disappeared into silence again. He could hear a bird squawk. The sun felt warm on his arms although most of the beach lay in shade and he knew the sand beneath his feet would feel damp and cold if he took his shoes and socks off.

He began with the Lord's Prayer, going down on his knees as though he were in church. The sand was cold on his knees. At first he spoke quietly, almost inaudibly, feeling the familiar shapes of the words in his mouth and lips. Then he spoke more loudly, allowing his voice to fill the space around him. He kept his eyes closed and tried to imagine the echoing walls and ceiling of his church, the smell of his father beside him, the harden wooden bench under his knees and the sound of the congregation, swelling like a choir, as his voice joined the voices of three hundred or more.

But his voice soon ended. No echo. Silence. Stillness. The sound of a bird. The warmth of the June sun on the back of his neck.

He prayed again, to ask forgiveness for his sins, to ask for strength and patience and more understanding of the natives and way they lived. He asked God to help him understand why they did the things they did, why they could be so murderous and so cruel and yet at the same time kind and generous. Jewitt asked God to help him understand these things.

He had been taught to love God and follow his ways, to learn and memorize the words of the Bible as though they were the most important words that existed. Jewitt knew the Bible stories and large

swaths of chapter and verse. His father tested him, saying "John, the 23rd Psalm please and not too quickly, I like to savour every word" and Jewitt would dutifully recite the six verses. He spoke the last one now, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

He said it again. And a third time.

Where was his father now? At work in the forge. Where was England? Somewhere far away. He knew that was true. England was more than twelve months away now. Jewitt felt a sudden stab of loss and loneliness that made it hard to breathe. He dropped to his hands and knees, felt the sandy beach under his palms, the heat of the sun now warming the world. He breathed slowly and steadily and took control again. England and home were far away but not beyond reach. A ship could take him back. If you could come this far you could certainly return to where you began.

He opened his eyes again and sat, cross legged, the same way he did in the big house.

He spread the books on the ground in front of him.

He began to read the parts of a Sunday service. He knew most of them by heart, but reading them on the page made them more real. Whenever he paused, he looked up. The island was there, and the vast panorama of green and rock and sky.

But how could the words on the page fill the emptiness he saw around him?

Where was God exactly?

This thought frightened him. He felt his breath quicken again.

He turned the pages of the Bible to the 23rd Psalm and spoke it aloud, and continued with the 24th and the 25th.

Psalm 25, verse four: *Show me they ways, O Lord, teach me thy paths.*

Psalm 25, verse five: *Lead me in the truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all day.*

Psalm 27, verse one: *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*

Yes, he said. Of whom shall I be afraid?

He closed the Bible and knelt again in the sand.

"O Lord," he said, "I pray that in your kindness and wisdom you grant me the strength to survive here that I might one day return to my family in England. I am weak and you are strong. I am ignorant and you are wise. I am pitiful and you are worthy of respect."

He paused. The sun was very hot on the back of his neck. He shuffled a few feet to the left to move into the shade. Two birds squawked, one right after the other. A man's deep voice bellowed somewhere in the trees, and then a woman laughed and then a man laughed.

"I put my fate in your hands."

He heard a rustle in the bushes.

"I put my trust in you."

Distracted, he paused again. He opened his eyes and looked up.

Satsa was standing there, half hidden by the bush.

Jewitt said hello. The boy smiled and said hello.

"You can come and sit with me if you like." Jewitt pointed at the log.

The boy came onto the beach and sat down. Satsa spoke few words of English, nothing much beyond hello, yes, no, please and thank you, but he seemed to always understand what Jewitt said. At first he thought that the boy merely pretended to understand, but now months later, he realized Satsa had some kind of ability to understand that didn't necessarily involve words. Jewitt had tried to explain this to Thompson, who merely laughed and then insulted the boy's intelligence.

Satsa's face had resumed its usual quiet and stillness. He simply sat on the log, hands in his lap, looking at Jewitt.

Jewitt picked up the Bible and read another verse from Psalms. Satsa listened gravely.

"I could teach you to read," Jewitt said, handing the book to the boy so he could see the words on the page.

Satsa held the book in his lap. He touched the pages and turned them backwards and forwards.

Jewitt turned the book to the title page, where the words *The Holy Bible* appeared in large letters in the centre of the page.

"The Holy Bible," he said, running his finger across the letters.

Satsa nodded and said, "the-hol-ee-bybull."

"The Holy Bible."

He flipped the pages to the end.

"This is the end."

He flipped back to the title page.

"And this is the beginning."

He made a whirring sound of pages. Satsa smiled.

"And everything in between is the word of God."

Satsa said something in his language that Jewitt did not understand.

Jewitt shook his head. "I don't understand."

Satsa spoke more words and then stopped speaking. Before Jewitt could intervene, he threw the Bible down on the ground.

Jewitt said, "Don't do that, Satsa," but the boy just smiled. Then Satsa stood up and came over to Jewitt and threw his arms around him and gave him a big hug. Then he let go of Jewitt and ran away, past the bushes, back onto the path that led to the village.

Jewitt picked up the Bible and brushed away the sand and dirt. He turned the pages to the Psalms again and read them again and waited for God to enter his heart.

Jewitt craved salt as much as Thompson did. The natives did not use salt in their food and Mkwila had forbidden Jewitt to take any from the ship, insisting that since Jewitt and Thompson were slaves of the king, they should eat the same way everyone in the village ate.

One day Jewitt secretly tried to make salt. He swiped a wooden tray from the big house and experimented by pouring a small amount of seawater in the tray and then exposing it to the sun. Evaporation should produce a few salt crystals, he thought, and enough rounds of evaporation might produce enough salt to use with the boiled fish they ate.

He put the tray on the roof of the blacksmithing shack, which meant it lay out of sight of anyone walking by. He did once or twice a day for four days in a row, and ended up with tiny scrapings of salt that he hid in a small velvet pouch.

His mistake was returning the tray without washing it in the lake first.

Mokwila looked at him suspiciously, then grabbed the tray and put his nose to it.

"I smell salt," he said. "Chuwin, why do you think you can fool me?"

"You are much too wise to fool," Jewitt said.

The king laughed. "But if you know that, why do you try?"

Jewitt said he couldn't help it, and the king laughed again.

Jewitt saw the ship just before sunset. He had spent half an hour in the blacksmithing shack, secretly writing in his journal, and then gone for his usual evening walk along the beach. The evening was calm and fair and in the last hour before sunset all the natives were in the village, preparing for the night to come. Food was short and babies were crying. Thompson was in the big house, playing a game with one of the king's sons, rolling the dice that he had brought along in his sea chest. Salter, the captain, had taken a relatively liberal view of petty gambling on the ship, allowing the men to wager small amounts on dice and card games. The native men and older children played games with smooth cylinders of whalebone that they rolled in the dirt of the house. Thompson showed them how to roll dice and they took to the game eagerly. Jewitt thought gambling was foolish and waste of time. But anything that kept Thompson quiet and out of trouble was to be welcomed.

He was sitting on a log at the far end of the first beach, pondering the problem of food and the problem of Thompson. The food problem was caused mostly by the king spending far too much time trying to catch a whale from what Jewitt could observe. He disappeared for days at a time and returned in a such a foul mood that no one dared talk to him. Jewitt knew the chiefs in most of the houses now and knew he could rely on them for a hot dinner when he needed one. Thompson called it begging and refused to do it, but Jewitt saw it as a fair exchange for the metal work he did for the chiefs. None of them spoke English, but Jewitt's needs were simple to express and never refused. Smoke above a house meant hot food inside, boiled cod or halibut, or at worst whale blubber, his least favourite food but at least something that filled his stomach. In the fall they would move north, and the salmon season would begin.

There was no solution to Thompson. He wanted to pick fights and get into trouble. Jewitt was thoroughly fed up with him.

He sat on the log on the beach and resolved in his mind to talk to Thompson one more time about his violent behaviour towards the natives, and it was at this precise moment that he saw something on the horizon line.

He stood up quickly and walked to the edge of the surf. The sun was about to set, off to his right. Directly ahead he could see a sail, very tiny and perfectly white, catching the final brilliant light of the sun before it sank into the sea.

The thought of rescue filled him with joy. He had assumed word of the massacre had kept trading ships away from Nooka since the start of the season in April. He hadn't seen a single one, nor had Thompson. Visiting chiefs sometimes mentioned that trading ships were in their territories but Jewitt had no way to judge whether these claims were true. The chiefs often tried to entice him away with promises and bribes but he saw no gain in leaving a village where he was well treated for one that might not appreciate his contributions as a blacksmith and wood chopper. Besides, Mokwila would never let him go, no matter how much he was offered for his prize slave.

He stared and he squinted at the ship. It was too far away to make out shape or markings or nationality. Most of the traders were English and American.

All he see were tiny specks of sail, moving south, away from Nooka. In a brief moment, the sun sank below the ocean, and the light that it offered dimmed, and the sky and ocean darkened by only the smallest degree, but that was enough to obscure the sail so that Jewitt could no longer see it.

With no way to signal, no way to communicate, no way to close the distance between them, Jewitt sat down again. He felt despair, and the urge to cry. But there was no point in despair, and nothing to be gained by crying. If he could get a message to a ship's captain he might have some hope of rescue. He had pen and paper, and he had access to visiting chiefs. Mokwila liked to show him off to visitors. Surely one of those visitors would help him? Surely one chief could be trusted with a letter?

One of the chiefs to the south, Wikaninis, arrived with eight canoes in search of a wife for his eldest son, a sullen-looking young man who spent most of the visit eating and scratching his bum, from what Jewitt could observe. The bride to be was Apunas, one of Mokwila's daughters, a shy girl of 16 who had refused any attempt by Jewitt to engage her in conversation. Mokwila's only comment was "she is protected"

when Jewitt asked about her. Her mother was wife number three. The two were always together, and rarely out of the house, and when they did leave the house, the mother kept a very close check on her daughter, not allowing her talk to anyone else in the village.

The chief's canoes were filled with gifts but before anyone disembarked, Kinneclimmets, in his role as official greeter, welcomed the visitors with one of his long winded speeches, accompanied by strange maniacal gestures. The visiting chief replied with a much shorter speech, presumably announcing his intention to get the king's permission for his son to marry Apunas. Jewitt still could not make sense of the native sentences. The occasional word stood out but mostly it was still incomprehensible to him.

The chief was much older than Mokwila, his face a patchwork of scars and wrinkles, his hair long and scraggly and gray. Jewitt thought he noticed some tension between them, the result of a past insult, perhaps, or act of violence or war.

Before the feast began, one of the chief's party, a young woman with a long scar across her left cheek, approached Jewitt to talk to him.

"I -- Clasiaca's sister," she said.

"I am pleased to meet you and speak English with you," Jewitt said. The scar ran all the way from the edge of her mouth to her ear. If she was Clasiaca's sister, she must directly be related to the chief, a daughter or niece perhaps. Unmarried because of the scar. Married women did not travel with visiting chiefs.

"You? English?"

"Yes."

"Mother and sister?"

"Yes," he said again. He could see that Mokwila was watching him closely.

"Mother and sister -- at home?"

"Yes," he said again. "I have a mother and father and sister at home."

"Much sadness for them."

Jewitt agreed. "They are very sad that I cannot return home, and I am sad to think that I may never see them again."

"My village -- better for you."

"Can you help me?"

"Come to my village. No trust -- Mokwila."

"Can you help me? Please."

"Come with us."

"I can write a letter. Do you see ships?"

"Come with us. My father is good. Mokwila is not good."

"Can you get a letter to a ship?"

She did not answer. Jewitt couldn't tell if she understood or not. Mokwila was only fifty yards away, still talking to the chief.

He could not move closer. He could not whisper in her ear. She continued to stand there, her eyes staring into his. She had fair skin, much fairer than the other native women, and delicate features, and except for the scar quite handsome in Jewitt's eyes. What had produced the scar? He realized he was intensely curious about her, wanting to ask many questions that she probably could not understand and certainly would not be able to answer. He could not touch her, although he wanted to. Small metal earrings dangled from each ear. Her hair, parted in the middle, hung down in the standard style, tightly braided and slick with some kind of oil. He never saw a native woman with short hair, or loose hair. Did she have lice? He'd seen that. Thompson thought it was disgusting.

There was nothing disgusting about this woman.

"Come with us," she said again.

Jewitt smiled, as though she had made a joke. The king was still there, fifty yards away, but no longer staring at them.

"I will write a letter."

"Letter?"

"A message. A note."

She nodded. "A message."

"To an English or American captain."

She kept nodding as he explained. Did she understand? There was no way to know. He would have to assume she understood.

"And you will come with us."

"No, I cannot. But you can help me."

"Help, yes."

"Are you sure?"

She frowned as though he had insulted her.

"Are you sure you can help me?"

She nodded. "I am sorry for your mother and your sister."

He'd already written three or four letters. They were safely hidden in the box in the blacksmithing shack. All he had to do was figure out a way to get one of the letters to the princess.

The king came over and asked Jewitt to fetch his best dagger to show the chief. Jewitt went immediately to his shack, retrieved the letter and placed it carefully in the waistband of his trousers. He picked up the sharpest, longest dagger and wrapped it carefully in a blue cloth.

While the king was showing the dagger to the chief, smiling and gesturing at Jewitt as he did so, Jewitt approached the princess again and asked her name.

"My name -- Chachuna," she said. "Daughter of Wikaninis."

He looked at her cloak, finely trimmed in otter fur, and realized she had no pockets. Where would she put the letter?

He decided he would give the princess a present. He asked Mokwila if he could give the princess one of his finest copper bracelets. The king smiled and said yes, a gift like that would make a favourable impression on the chief.

Jewitt had no boxes to put the bracelet in. But Clasiaca gave him a small square basket with a tight fitting lid. While everyone was feasting in the big house, he remained in the shack. He folded the letter very carefully, making it perfectly square and very flat, and placed it in the bottom of the basket. Then he placed a layer of blue cotton, folded twice, on top of the letter. He wrapped the bracelet in another piece of blue cotton and placed this on top of the folded cloth.

He gave the present to Chachuna the next morning, as they were about to leave the village. Mokwila and Wikaninis examined the bracelet carefully when Chachuna removed it from the basket and handed it to them. Both men nodded in approval and pronounced it a fine gift from Chuwin. Mokwila gave

the bracelet to Jewitt, who wrapped it again in the blue cloth and placed it carefully back in the basket, and gave the basket to Chachuna.

"Thank you," she said.

"Don't forget." Jewitt said and she nodded without smiling.

As the chief's delegation were paddling out of the harbour, Mokwila said, "I don't trust him."

"Does he trust you, my lord?"

Mokwila kept staring at the canoes and didn't answer.

Jewitt was writing in his journal when he heard shouting from the far side of the meadow. Thompson was calling someone a bastard, in a very loud voice. Jewitt put the journal away and ran outside, where he saw Thompson, fists raised, confronting Kinneclimmets. Several natives walked by, ignoring the two men completely.

"Put your fists up, you bastard," Thompson shouted.

Kinneclimmets laughed and jeered at the man. He capered and twirled on his feet, as though dancing to music only he could hear.

"Stop it, dammit, stop your damn twirlin'."

Thompson threw a punch and Kinneclimmets deftly stepped aside in time to dodge the other's man fist.

Jewitt walked up to Thompson and asked him what he was doing.

"Doing? What do you think I'm doing, Jewitt? I'm preparing to knock this savage's block off."

"And why would you be doing that?"

"This is a simple matter of self respect and none of your business."

"What did he do?"

Thompson threw another punch and again missed his target as Kinneclimmets dropped to the ground, rolled over twice and then leapt to his feet.

"The man is a goddamn puppet. Up and down, back and forth." Thompson came in closer.

"Stand still, you bastard savage. Stand still!"

"Thompson, please tell me what happened."

Kinneclimmets began to speak very quickly. Jewitt didn't understand a word except "Tomesun" and "peshak", which meant bad. Kinneclimmets turned to look at Jewitt for just a moment, but the moment was long enough for Thompson to seize the advantage with his third punch and knock Kinneclimmets to the ground. He fell in an instant, as though his legs had disappeared from under him. He lay on the ground, dazed. Several natives came over to see what was the matter with him.

"Now you've done it," Jewitt said. "You wanted trouble and now you have it."

"He spat in my face and insulted me. I will not stand for that."

"He spat in your face for no reason at all?"

"I will not stand for this any more."

"Please tell me what happened."

More natives had gathered and were now talking among themselves. Kinneclimmets had come to, but was still lying on the ground. He glared at Thompson as though his eyes alone could land a revenging blow.

"This man has been mocking me since the day we arrived. I decided he needed to be put in his place. I have every right."

"Thompson, you have no rights."

"I have every right! Listen to me. He jeered at me and I pushed him. Like this." Thompson demonstrated the push by placing his palms on Jewitt's chest and giving him a gentle push backwards. "He continued to jeer and then he spat at me. I then invited him to a proper round of fisticuffs to settle the matter."

"And he understood every word you said?"

"I don't give a good goddamn what he understood. He understood well enough that I planned to knock his block off. Which I damn well did. Goddamn savages."

The crowd of natives numbered a dozen or more now. Kinneclimmets, still on the ground, was jabbering a mile a minute to the two men standing beside him. In turn, they said something to the other men, who in turn began gesturing across the meadow at other villagers. In no time at all, Thompson and Jewitt were surrounded by a crowd of thirty angry men.

Jewitt hated crowds. Crowds meant anger and angry voices, and usually a large number of men trying to gang up on a small number of men. Thompson was an idiot who refused to learn how to control his idiocy.

Jewitt extended a hand down to Kinneclimmets and helped him to his feet.

Kinneclimmets, rising slowly, stood directly in front of Thompson, glaring at him, and massaging the side of his head with one hand. He looked angry and intimidated at the same time, like a small boy seeking revenge after losing his first fight but not certain how to proceed.

"He -- sorry," Jewitt said, in the native language. "He very sorry."

Kinneclimmets unleashed a torrent of words. He began to puff himself up. The crowd said something to him. Jewitt, frustrated because he couldn't understand what they were saying, pulled Thompson off to one side so he could stand directly in front of Kinneclimmets.

"What the hell are you saying?" Thompson shouted.

"I'm apologizing for your behaviour."

Jewitt said "sorry" again, several times, directly to Kinneclimmets, and then again to the crowd of men surrounding him. Kinneclimmets, now fully puffed out to his usual stance of comic over confidence, was testing dance steps around Jewitt. He looked absurd. He kept repeating a word that Jewitt didn't understand.

Then Kinneclimmets spoke sharply, three words very quickly. The crowd responded with an angry roar, as though called to action. But nothing happened. Kinneclimmets spoke again and the crowd roared a second time.

Thompson spoke. "We have nothing to apologize for. Nothing!"

"You be quiet," Jewitt said. He knew he had to do something. What should he do?

When the crowd roared a third time, Jewitt fell to his knees and began to mime a prayer to God. He placed his hands together and bowed his head. He spoke loudly and clearly, asking God to forgive Thompson and the savages, for they knew not what they were doing.

Thompson sneered and backed away.

Kinneclimmets, who had never seen a white man pray before, motioned for the crowd to become quiet. Suddenly there was silence, and only the sound of Jewitt praying to his god for forgiveness.

Kinneclimmets walked around him, pulled his left ear, continued to walk around him and then patted him on the head. He said something, and the crowd laughed. Then Kinneclimmets fell to his knees and tried to imitate Jewitt's praying stance. He knelt for a moment and raised his hands, and then fell over onto his side. The crowd laughed again. Kinneclimmets got up and slapped Jewitt on one cheek, then on the other. Another laugh.

Jewitt, still in the position of a praying man, ignored Kinneclimmets. He was incensed by the man's mockery. He wanted to do was rise to his feet and soundly thrash the man about the ears. He had never attacked another man, but right now the urge to beat upon Kinneclimmets was almost overwhelming. But how would he attack him? With his fists? He knew nothing about boxing.

Where was Thompson? Jewitt called out to him but received no answer.

In a final gesture of arrogance and disgust, Kinneclimmets pushed Jewitt over onto his side and laughed at him. The crowd began to disburse.

Jewitt lay there for a moment, eyes closed. When he opened his eyes again, he saw Kinneclimmets looming over him. The man extended a hand and helped Jewitt to his feet. Then he walked away, across the green meadow. As Jewitt watched, Kinneclimmets raised his arms, like a child balancing on fence post, and began to walk on his tiptoes, as though the ground had become hot. Then he twirled again and danced. Jewitt stared at these strange gestures and actions, but could make no sense of them. As far as he could tell, no one was watching Kinneclimmets except two small children playing with sticks in the grass. They looked up briefly and then went back to their stick game. Kinneclimmets continue to prance his way across the meadow. When he reached the main path to the village, he began to walk normally again and then disappeared into one of the big houses.

Jewitt found Thompson sitting on one of his storage boxes in the blacksmithing shack.

"You never fight back, do you?"

"No."

"You don't even have the idea of fighting back, do you?"

"I have thought of it."

"You've *thought* of it, have you." Thompson laughed, then got up and stuck his face close to Jewitt's face. "Well, my friend, I think you're a coward."

"I do what I think is right," Jewitt said. "To save our lives."

"Didn't you hear me? I think you're a coward."

"I do what I think is right," Jewitt said again. He was annoyed that he had to defend himself. If only Thompson would behave himself, they wouldn't have to deal with these types of situations at all.

"And I don't really care what you think."

"You'd do anything to save your ass."

"Yes."

"Well, I'd rather die. Head held high."

"Or no head at all!"

Thompson shook his head, and then spat on the ground. He pushed Jewitt aside and walked out of the shack.

Jewitt suddenly felt very tired. He sat down on the big box, the one that contained all his tools. Thompson would never understand him, just as he would never understand Thompson. Why did the man want to provoke a fight he could only lose? Why? For the life of him, Jewitt could not understand that. There was always another way to settle things. Always. His father had taught him that and every time he had tested this teaching it had proven to be true. Why would his father give him bad advice? That made no sense. No, his father was right, there was always another way than just using your fists.

Later, the king asked Jewitt what had happened between Thompson and Kinneclimmets. Jewitt said they had had a small misunderstanding but that he, Jewitt, had helped them resolve things. The king laughed and said Kinneclimmets had made a fool of him by slapping him on the cheek and showing disrespect to his god.

And again, Jewitt realized that Mokwila had asked him to explain something that he already knew. Nothing happened in the village without Mokwila getting a full report. And Mokwila remembered everything he heard, everything he was told. One evening he'd asked Jewitt to recite back the names of the captain and crew of the Boston. When Jewitt faltered after the sixth name, Mokwila finished the list for him, rapidly reciting the first and last name of each crewmember as though reading from a list.

"You may not respect yourself, but you must show respect to your god," Mokwila said.

"Yes, my lord."

"We respect the salmon, and they respect us," Mokwila said.

Jewitt knew the natives thought of salmon as people who took off their salmon coats when they were living in their underground world below this one. How could salmon be people? This made no sense. A fish is a fish; a fish can't be a person. But he never said this to the king.

"Yes," Jewitt said. "It's important to respect the salmon."

"Respect is very important. You and Tomesun will be much happier if you understand this."

That night, just before going to sleep, Jewitt imagined himself alone, in a boat, heading for the open ocean. The sails were filled with wind, and he was at the wheel, steering a straight course back down to Cape Horn. The boat was filled with furs and food, and there was no one on deck except for him. He could handle the boat all by himself. The sun shone a perfect circle of white in the sky and the wind blew at a perfect fifteen knots out of the northwest. He could feel the motion of the ship underneath his feet, and see the sparkle of light on the water.

But his reverie was broken by the sound of angry voices coming from another corner of the big house, from a husband and wife who often argued before going to sleep, as though no one could hear them. Then he heard grunting and panting from another corner and he knew this came from one of the king's nephews and his wife, recently married, fucking with quiet enthusiasm, as they did almost every night.

Jewitt hated this life, the dirt and noise and lack of privacy. He hated Thompson and he hated the immutable and violent hatred Thompson felt towards the natives. He hated the way Mokwila treated him like a small child, lectured him on how to behave and what to say. Jewitt wanted to run away, but he had no idea how to accomplish this. He had heard nothing since sending off the letter with Chachuna. Jewitt wanted to be free but how could he do that while he was still a slave and his only weapon a letter addressed to a ship's captain he had never met? How could you break free when you couldn't even see the chains that bound you?

4 North to Tashees

Every fall Mokwila and his people travelled by canoe up the long inlet to the north, to Tashees, where they spent four months fishing and hunting in a location more protected from storms than Friendly Cove. The salmon would be running, enormous schools of them, caught by spear and harpoon and trapped in wooden weirs. Jewitt assumed that Tashees would be a fully equipped village waiting for their arrival, and so was surprised to hear Mokwila's order to the slaves to take the houses apart and lash the long cedar planks to pairs of canoes. In what seemed like no time at all, the only structures left standing in the village were the enormous end posts that held up the central roof beam, and the smaller corner and side posts. Once the planks were lashed to the canoes, the villagers loaded everything into boxes and baskets and piled them on the planks. Every canoe in the village, large, medium and small, was pressed into service for the voyage up the inlet. Jewitt counted more than a hundred of them.

Mokwila had ordered Jewitt and Thompson to repair the Boston's longboat the previous week, and now Jewitt realized why. With a new main and jibsail stitched by Thompson, the long sleek boat would be the perfect cargo vessel for the move north. Mokwila ordered Jewitt to remove all the seats in the longboat. Instead of rowing north, Jewitt and Thompson would sail. With just two men in the boat instead of the usual eight or nine, there was ample room for boxes, baskets, fishing gear, lines, hooks, harpoons and nets. Mokwila ordered the boat loaded so heavily that the gunwhale was less than a foot above the water line. Thompson tried to protest but the king merely raised his arm and told him to be quiet.

"He'll risk our lives by overloadin' us," Thompson muttered.

"We'll be alright with the wind at our stern," Jewitt said, with more confidence than he actually felt. The thought of moving further from the ocean was disheartening; there was no word from other tribes about the four letters he'd managed to secretly send from the village, hoping that a visiting trader from England or America might see one of the letters and come to rescue them. The new location further up the inlet meant fewer opportunities to see or signal a ship, or even get a message to one. Mokwila had promised better fishing, more food, an easier life for everyone. Jewitt was sceptical. He could see that Mokwila's failure to catch a whale had chipped away at his power in the village. Some of the chiefs

argued with him daily. Even Quatlazape, usually calm and easy going, took Mokwila to task for the poor supplies in the summer months.

But none of that seemed to matter now. As the canoes were loaded, the boxes adjusted and tied down with thick lines and ropes, the villagers seemed happy and full of purpose. The singing began almost as soon as the paddles hit the water. The melodies rose and fell by tiny steps as the male voices in each canoe gathered strength and volume, spreading out across the water like a protective shield. The water was calm, the sky still colourless but turning to blue. Jewitt could see from the waves beyond the harbour that Mokwila's forecast of a southerly wind was accurate and therefore the voyage up the inlet, with the wind behind them, would be a relatively easy one.

The king led the flotilla out of the harbour. Jewitt saw him standing in the bow of the canoe, with six paddlers behind him. He had his arms outstretched to the water in front of him, and he was singing loudly. Kinneclimmets, in the stern, handled the rudder. The canoe moved quickly out of the harbour, turned to the north and disappeared from sight.

Jewitt and Thompson pushed the longboat into knee-length water. Jewitt jumped into the bow. Thompson gave the boat one final strong push and jumped into the stern. He'd rigged a pair of oarlocks so that he could sit in the stern, next to the rudder, and still row. Jewitt, meanwhile, sitting in the bow, worked his oars awkwardly, until Thompson told him slow down, make each stroke long and hard, and stop trying to set a speed record. The boat, heavily loaded, moved sluggishly in the water; if Jewitt pulled unevenly on one oar, he would send the bow of the boat lurching to one side or the other. Thompson yelled at him from the stern to slow down and pay attention.

"At this rate, we'll be on the rocks in no time at all," he shouted. "Slow it down, boy, slow it down."

But Jewitt was finding it difficult to pay attention to the oars. The scene before him was something he had never seen before. The entire harbour was filled with canoes, transformed into cedar platforms loaded with boxes and baskets, moving slowly through the water. The village, no longer a village, had been replaced by a long lines of poles and endposts. Fish bones and offal still cluttered the beach but an air of desertion and abandonment had already fallen over the settlement. The sky, still turning to blue, promised a fair day. The sound of the native singing, often heavy and repetitive, like a bass drum

sounding over and over, seemed to fill the harbour to overflowing, even crowding out the rocks and the trees.

Ahead lay the inlet, and now past the harbour, Jewitt could look around for the first time since the massacre and try to place where he was. A large slice of open ocean to the south and the southwest, where the water and the sky came together in a nervous line of blue against blue. Everything else was mountains and trees, the mountains soft and curved, the trees still brilliantly green with summer growth. In every direction that Jewitt looked he saw slope after slope after slope of fir trees, as blank and as empty as the sky. Nowhere to escape to, which is what Jewitt had been telling Thompson for months. Nowhere to hide or survive. You could huddle on a beach and hope for rescue, that was all. The size and grandeur and emptiness of what he saw both dismayed and exhilarated him. This was God's work, was it not?

Once the longboat was safely past the rocks at the harbour's entrance, Thompson signalled to Jewitt to raise the jib while he raised the main sail. The sails flapped angrily in the wind for a moment until the men tightened and tied off the lines that controlled them. The sails bulged obediently, straining at the rigging, and the boat began to move ahead more quickly.

Behind them, dozens of canoes surged through the water. Jewitt could see Quatlazape in one canoe, and Kallicum, another brother of the king's, in a second canoe. Mokwila had instructed them to keep an eye on the longboat, to make sure Jewitt and Thompson didn't try to escape. Thompson now waved to Quatlazape, but the man ignored him.

"At least we have a little time to ourselves," Thompson shouted. "Would you tighten the jib line a tad?"

Jewitt tightened the line. Now that they were on the open water of the Sound, the singing had dropped to a mere pulse of rhythm and nothing more. Staring at the shore, Jewitt let his mind empty for a moment as he counted waterfalls and examined beaches, searched for the white patches that meant alder groves amid the fir trees. The motion of the boat reminded him of the Boston and her long voyage from England and how the constant motion of the larger boat, at first so difficult to get used to, had quickly come to seem normal and right, a shifting world where you plotted every task and errand to make sure you

didn't end up on your ass. He was enchanted by the sound of the water against the hull, a constant splashing as pleasing to the ear as a bird song or piano chord.

Because the wind was directly astern, Thompson sailed the boat at a slight angle to the wind. This reduced the risk of a violent gybe that might damage the main sail, or worse, capsize the boat, and also made the motion of the boat through the water a little smoother and more comfortable. He still worried that the boat was dangerously overloaded, with gunwhales much too close to the water, but he had confidence in his sailing skill. As long as the wind remained light they would be fine.

So the boat traced a series of long shallow-angled tacks as they proceeded north up the inlet. At the end of each tack, Thompson brought the main sail over to the other side of the boat, and Jewitt did the same with the jib. Their course took them in and out of the flotilla of canoes, now spread out in one enormous long procession on the water. Quatlazape and Kallicum had fallen behind, much to Thompson's satisfaction. He often yelled comments to Jewitt, who mostly ignored him, or put his hand to his ear and said he couldn't quite hear.

When they were hungry, they ate cooked fish, cold and a bit greasy, and herring spawn, sweet and crunchy between the teeth. Thompson shouted that he sometimes dreamed of biscuits and potatoes with gray. Jewitt said he often dreamt of meat covered with salt.

As the inlet narrowed, the wind became gustier and fussier, changing direction at whim. Thompson had to spent more time fussing with the main sail, pulling it in, then letting it out, then pulling it in again.

Finally the wind dropped and then died, forcing them to row for the last mile or so.

The inlet ended with two broad stretches of swamp or marsh. In the centre, Jewitt could make out a river, with sandy banks on both sides. To the left, an arrangement of poles that he assumed would be the location of the village.

Some of the canoes had ventured up the river, to place themselves at the far northerly end of the village. Thompson landed the boat just before the entrance to the river. He could see the current was strong enough to make rowing the longboat too much of a chore. The men quickly dropped the sails and stowed them. Thompson had it in his mind that the longboat might now provide the means of escape from the savages, although he had not clearly worked through in his mind a detailed plan of escape, nor had

he discussed this with Jewitt. But Thompson appreciated the irony that Mokwila, by ordering the men to repair and outfit the longboat, had thereby provided them with a means of escape.

"Why are you laughing?" Jewitt asked him, as they began to unload the boat. The wooden boxes were enormously heavy and awkward to carry. Jewitt and Thompson dropped them on the beach just inches from the water, and let the slaves carry them over to the big houses, which were already acquiring sides and roofs as the planks were untied from the canoes, carried to the village, and hoisted into position.

"I'm a jolly fellow, Jewitt. Now that I have a boat, I am a very jolly fellow."

"Why does the boat make you jolly?"

"Think about it, my friend. Why would a boat make me jolly?"

Jewitt knew that Thompson was stupid enough to try to escape. He'd given up trying to change Thompson's mind about that. Their best bet was still to get a message to a ship's captain. Thompson thought that plan was hopeless.

"You will never get away with it," Jewitt said. "Mokwila will hunt you down and kill you."

"I'll take my chances."

Jewitt shook his head.

The river was broad at its mouth, a hundred feet or more, and then it quickly narrowed to about thirty feet in less than a quarter of a mile. Past that point were rapids of fierce white water completely impassable by boat. The river water was fresh and impossibly cold, like swallowed ice down a feverish throat. The sound of water again. Jewitt listened to it for a moment or two, and then walked back towards the village.

Twilight was falling from the sky. Above him, slopes of trees rose to meet the mountain that sheltered and shadowed the village on the west side. Here you could feel the press of the vast forest that surrounded them on three sides. At Friendly Cove, the ocean balanced the forest, reduced its infinite monotony of trees, but here the inlet water and river seemed overwhelmed by the forest. The houses in the village seemed to suffer too. They were smaller and crowded more closely together. Thompson grumbled as they moved their boxes and chests into position against the wall, not far from Mokwila's area for sleeping and eating.

They ate again from wooden trays, more boiled fish and fresh berries. Jewitt picked apart the flesh with his fingers and stuffed the larger pieces in his mouth. The fish was always overcooked and had no flavour or texture. Jewitt had almost forgotten what salt tasted like. He separated the bones and piled them neatly in the corner of the tray. By order of Mokwila, they must be taken outside and placed on the beach, at the edge of the water. Jewitt did not understand why and Mokwila would not explain it to him.

Thompson always ate the berries first, and then complained about the fish before he ate it. And then he complained about the berries and fish after he's finished. Jewitt usually ignored him. Tonight Jewitt was tired. Tonight he wanted to curl into a ball and sleep for a very long time.

Mokwila came over to him. "Chuwin -- you have done well."

"Thank you, my lord."

"You will give me the sails now."

"Yes."

"Well?"

Jewitt went out to the long boat and removed the sails, folding them awkwardly into long rectangles. He brought them back inside.

"Excellent for my bed."

The king arranged the sails on his sleeping mat as a kind of makeshift mattress.

"And now the paddles."

Assuming he meant the oars, Jewitt went out again and removed the four oars from the oarlocks.

"Excellent to hang on the wall!" The king barked an order to one of the slaves, who took the oars from Jewitt and hung them on the wall beside the king's bed.

"Did I forget anything?" the king said.

"I don't know," Jewitt said. He was now so exhausted he could barely speak.

"The rudder!"

For a third time, Jewitt went outside to the longboat. He removed the rudder from the stern and brought it to the king.

"Excellent work!" the king said. He barked another order. The slave took the rudder from Jewitt and propped it against the wall.

"Everything is now properly arranged, Chuwin. I am very pleased."

Without another word, the king promptly removed his robe, covered himself with a blanket and lay down on the new mattress and fell asleep almost instantly.

Jewitt was so tired he didn't bother to take his shirt off before lying down on a mat near the wall. Thompson lay at his feet, Satsa not far from his head. As soon as he closed his eyes, he could feel the motion of the longboat on the water, the gentle slide back and forth from wave to wave. They needed a message from a captain, and then it would make sense to escape in the longboat. Without a ship nearby to give them refuge, they would be caught in a few hours, perhaps a day at most. Jewitt was too tired to work out the details of how they might escape and so he simply lay on his side, back to the wall, and waited for sleep to overcome him. The house, more tightly jammed with people than the big house in Friendly Cove, was still alive with murmurings and whispers, people coughing and belching as they prepared to sleep. Jewitt imagined a bed, any bed, with sheets and a pillow, but the only one he could bring into view was his own bed, in a small house far away. A year had passed since the last time he had slept there. He imagined the face of his father, the face of his step-mother, the kind touch of her hand on his face the day he'd suffered from fever. Who would care for him now if he were to get sick?

Jewitt set about building another small open-sided shack to contain a simple forge and rock anvil, as he and Thompson had done in Friendly Cove. This time, he built the shack further from the village, to give him more privacy. The king did not seem to object, and by this Jewitt assumed Mokwila now trusted that he would not try to run away. He chose a spot about two hundred yards up the river bank, and then west along a small tributary stream to an opening in the forest. The ground was not level, and Jewitt had to carefully prop up the anvil on one side to create a level surface for working. He had to find firewood and ensure it was safely stacked along the far wall of the shack, out of range of rain.

Jewitt had only been at the shack a day or two when the king informed him he must learn how to fish, and come with him immediately.

Jewitt told the king he had never caught a fish in his life. Mokwila laughed. "Today will be a good day for you, then," he said. "If you have been thinking good thoughts about the salmon."

Jewitt said he wasn't sure about that, and the king laughed again.

They walked east from the village, carrying baskets to hold the fish, along a footpath that led to a low rocky outcrop that projected into the water. Several villagers were standing at the water's edge with harpoons in their hands. Mokwila barked orders at them and they surrendered their harpoons to the king and walked away, back towards the village.

"Take your shoes off," the king said.

Jewitt took his shoes off. The rocks were dry and smoother than they looked. The king quickly scrambled to the water's edge and motioned for Jewitt to follow.

He demonstrated how to hold the harpoon in one hand, the lanyard in the other. After piercing the fish, the barbed tip would come off the harpoon but the attached lanyard, a thin line no more than a fraction of an inch thick, would enable the fisherman to pull the fish out of the water.

Jewitt thought he would show little skill at harpooning a live salmon. The king quickly caught two fish, removed the barbed harpoon tip, and threw them into the basket. He re-attached the tip to the harpoon and handed it to Jewitt.

Jewitt took the harpoon. Standing at the edge of the water, feet firmly planted on the rocks, he peered down into the gray water of the inlet and saw nothing, absolutely nothing. He adjusted his stance and crouched down, so he could see more clearly into the water.

"Think like a salmon, Chuwin." The king was behind him. Jewitt ignored his words, ignored his presence, ignored the shouts he heard off in the distance, ignored everything except the patch of water he was staring at.

A sudden motion in the water. Silver perhaps, although he couldn't be sure. Jewitt paused, and threw the harpoon. The throwing placed him immediately and irrevocably off balance. In no time at all, he was in the water, the very cold water of the inlet, and sucking in air as he struggled to keep his head above the water. He pumped his legs furiously, hoping to find ground or rock or something to support him, but there was nothing.

"Chuwin, can't you swim?"

"No!"

"Can't you float? Like a whale?"

"No."

The water was so cold Jewitt felt immediate pain around his chest and began to pant. Surely the king would save him? He was now panting so furiously he couldn't talk or shout or make any noise at all. His body seemed to moving down into the water, pulled by some mysterious force. His mouth went under for a moment and he tasted foul salt water in his mouth. He lifted his head again and spat out the water.

"This way," the king said, holding out the end of the harpoon.

Jewitt grabbed the end of the harpoon. The king pulled him closer to the rock ledge he was standing on. The king reached down with his left hand, grasping Jewitt on the shoulder. Jewitt clasped his hand on the king's shoulder, and then with one powerful motion the king pulled him up and out of the water. Jewitt fell down on the rocky ledge, spewing and splattering water.

The king left him there, and resumed his fishing. He caught several more salmon, threw them into the basket, and then went back to Jewitt, who was now sitting up and rubbing his hands in his hair.

"Are you alright, Chuwin?"

"Yes."

"The air is warm. Better to be in the water today than four months from now. Better yet that I am here to save you."

Jewitt said nothing. He felt cold and humiliated. He wanted to go back to the house and change his clothes and sit in front of the fire and do nothing.

"We will try this again another day."

"Yes."

"You may go back now."

Jewitt got up and put his shoes back on. The king told him to carry the basket of fish. He picked up the basket, surprisingly heavy, and arranged the strap across his shoulder. The king walked quickly, well ahead of him, as they retraced their steps back to the village.

Jewitt handed the basket to one of the wives, who promptly began to cut and clean the fish, and prepare it for drying. Coming into the village, Jewitt had seen dozens of villagers arriving with baskets full of fish caught in the traps and weirs in the river. He didn't understand why the king had forced him to try to harpoon a salmon. Why bother, when hundreds were arriving every hour?

That night they ate fresh salmon, boiled as always. Jewitt stripped off the meat with his fingers and stuffed it into his mouth. Thompson was even messier eater than he was, and so Jewitt preferred to eat with his back to the older man. Ignoring Thompson also reduced the risk of the older man ruining the meal by complaining about fish and the lack of salt. When he ate, Jewitt liked to imagine salt on everything that he stuffed into his mouth. He could see it and touch it and therefore almost taste it. His fingers moved over the salmon, expertly peeling away the flesh and skin and leaving the bones on the tray. Mokuwila had been very clear in his instructions about eating salmon: eat only the flesh, and throw no bones on the ground. They must be gathered by the wives and slaves and taken outside to the beach and placed by the water's edge, to be reclaimed by the salmon themselves. The king frequently reminded Jewitt and Thompson that there really was no difference between men and salmon, that salmon were just men with their salmon suits on. They lived under the ground in huge salmon houses. Returning their bones was simply a gesture of respect to ensure the salmon continued to favour Mokuwila and his people with their presence.

"What would we be without salmon?" the king said.

"Still prefer salty beef myself," Thompson said.

"Salt food is foul and disgusting," the king said. "Everyone knows that."

As long as his belly was full, Jewitt no longer cared about what he ate. The fresh boiled salmon at least had texture and tasted like something. The dried clams and mussels, the dried fish and berry mats had no taste at all and required lashings of train oil to get down. He gorged on the salmon, and assumed it would be their mainstay for the fall and winter months at Tashees. There were so many salmon that the wives barely had room in the rafters of the house to hang and dry them. The smell was everywhere, in the air, in the clothes, on the skin, even the smoke from the fire seemed to reek of salmon.

Jewitt did not give up on fishing. With the king's permission, he continued to practice with the harpoon and one day managed to spear a fish. The barbed tip came off and Jewitt manhandled the lanyard without letting go. The fish eventually tired and Jewitt pulled it up out of the water, where it lay flapping on a rock for a minute or two and then died. Jewitt picked it up with both hands. It felt surprisingly solid and heavy, yet smooth to the touch, a thing of value that he had captured and killed. The dead eye

stared at Jewitt while he admired the shine of light on the scales of the fish. The sun had broken through clouds just minutes before, throwing warm late afternoon light on the rocky outcrop where he was fishing.

The king allowed him to cook the fish any way he wanted. With help from Thompson, he carefully gutted and then filleted the fish, carefully removing the bones and giving them to Clasiaca for disposal. Then he grilled the fish over the fire, and gave half to Thompson, who grudgingly admitted it that it tasted better than the overcooked boiled salmon they were used to getting. Jewitt savoured each piece. He had burned the tips of two fingers removed the fillets from the grill he had improvised but that didn't matter. Jewitt was learning he had a higher tolerance for pain than he'd previously thought. The tips of the burned fingers swelled and puckered into a blister, but no matter. Each piece of grilled salmon that he stuffed into his mouth seemed like a satisfying statement of some kind, although Jewitt could not precisely articulate what that statement was. He had caught a fish, by himself, and now he was eating it.

The days shortened into fall and the nights grew colder. There was more rain and more fog, and fewer days of sunshine. At times it would rain all day and all night for three days or more, forcing most of the villagers to remain inside the big houses. The women continued to prepare and dry the fish for winter storage. They wove baskets and mats, and replaced worn cedar cloaks with new ones. A few of the men continued to fish even on the wettest days but many simply lounged about in the houses, eating and talking, shouting out orders and instructions to the children who seemed able to amuse themselves for hours with games that involved throwing sticks and stones on the smooth dirt floor of the house.

When it was raining too hard to work at the forge, Jewitt would sometimes sit with Clasiaca or one of the other senior wives and practice speaking their language. He could now count all the way to one hundred. He knew by heart simple phrases like "My name is Jewitt", "How are you?" and "It is cold today." But his ear still struggled to separate the sounds that Clasiaca spoke, and therefore understand the words she was speaking. She would speak very slowly and Jewitt would mimic her, but as soon as she spoke at a normal speed, he felt lost and frustrated again.

Thompson jeered at him for trying to learn the language. "What the point? They're savages, aren't they? They sound like barking dogs to me. Anyway. We'll be out in the spring."

"Why do you think that?"

"They know we're here. They know what happened to the Boston. When the season starts in March, someone will come for us."

Jewitt didn't know if that was true or not. Who could know that? No one. If Thompson wanted to believe they would be rescued, that was fine. If Jewitt wanted to learn their language, that was fine too and none of Thompson's business.

One day Jewitt was careless and left his journal out. Mokwila found it, and after flipping through the pages threw it down on the ground angrily. He instructed Satsa to go and fetch Jewitt.

"Come," Satsa said. "Mokwila is angry." Satsa was speaking slowly enough in his language that Jewitt could understand every word.

"Why?"

"He has found something. Come."

Jewitt put down his tongs and walked back to the village with Satsa. As he always, Satsa held his hand. In the other hand he held a stick, which he used to smack against tree trunks as they walked along the path. The air was cold and dense with moisture. The rain had stopped hours before, but Jewitt could still feel the wetness in the air. Even with trousers, two shirts and jacket on, he felt chilled.

Mokwila was waiting for them in the big house. He was pointing at the journal, which lay on the ground at his feet.

"Why did you do that?" Mokwila said.

"Do what?"

"You know what I mean." Mokwila bent over and picked up the journal and flipped through the pages. He stopped, and pointed at the writing. "You think I don't know what this is? I know what these marks mean."

"It's only writing. My thoughts."

"I should throw it on the fire."

"Please don't."

"Did you write lies about me?"

"Please don't throw it on the fire."

Jewitt moved closer to Mokwila, thinking that he might snatch the journal away from him.

"Tell me! Did you write lies about me?"

"I write about the weather. When the sun is out, when the rain falls. How cold the day is. How many salmon you catch."

"I don't care about the salmon right now. Did you write about the Boston?"

Jewitt could not lie. He wanted to lie, in order to keep the journal. He wanted Mokwila to hand over the journal and leave him alone.

"I described what happened."

"You know nothing. I know what happened. The captain knows what happened. You do not."

"I know what I heard and saw."

"Chuwin, you know nothing. I like you but you know nothing."

Jewitt said nothing. Satsa had wandered off. They were alone in the corner of the house. Jewitt could feel the fire warming his back. If Mokwila wanted to throw the journal into the fire, nothing could stop him. Yet words might. Jewitt knew that the king could be persuaded to think further about something before acting, that his first and most immediate response was not necessarily the best one. Jewitt's father had always said, let a day pass before you act and you will be rewarded with the correct decision.

"Sit down, Chuwin."

Jewitt sat down obediently. The fire was now warming his left side. The king's face, plain and without paint, seemed to glow in the light from the fire. Jewitt could see wrinkles across the brow. How old was he? Jewitt thought 50 years or more.

"Now listen to me. Do you listen?"

"Yes."

"I know you listen! I like you. I know you listen to me."

"Yes, I listen to you."

"I will tell you what happened. I will tell you why the white men died. You will write it down with your pen and your marks."

He handed the journal back to Jewitt. Jewitt put it down for a moment, then went to his sea chest and removed a vial of ink and a couple of quill pens. He sat down again, arranging the ink and pens on the mat beside him. He held the journal on his knee, slanting the pages forward so that light from the fire could reach them.

The king sat down and began to talk. He spoke quietly and slowly, barely moving his head, his body half lit by the firelight.

"I do not hate you, Chuwin, you know that. I do not hate the Boston-men or the King-George-men. We have traded since before you were born. We are very good traders!"

"But we have been badly treated by you. Very badly treated."

"The first person to treat us very badly was Taw-ning-ton, a King-George-man who came here for the winter. We traded with him and treated him very well. He had many many of our skins on his ship. We traded for cloth and for muskets and for gun powder. We traded well but we were always fair. Do you understand, Chuwin?"

Jewitt nodded as he wrote.

"He kept his ship right in the harbour, so it would be safe from the winter storms. We gave him water and wood. These things belong to me, as I have explained. I gave them to Tawn-ing-ton."

"One day I had to go away, to meet with the tyee to the south, Wikaninis, to arrange for a wife. It was very cold that spring and the weather was very bad. It took us three days to get there, and then the winds changed and we could not get back. I had to stay for ten days."

"When I came back I was very angry to find out that Tawn-ing-ton and his ship were gone. He had stolen from me while I was away! He waited for all the men to go fishing and then came into my house when only the women were there. He came into the house and went through all my chests and boxes and stole forty of my best skins. Forty skins, Chuwin. Are you writing this down?"

Jewitt nodded and kept writing. Surely the king could see that he was writing? Why did he keep asking?

"I was very very angry because I had treated this man very well, given him good wood and water, and traded fairly with him."

"And then only twelve days after that, a messenger came from the tyee Wikaninis to say that a Spanish captain Mar-teen-ez had killed four of his chiefs. Wikaninis had killed no one, but the Spanish captain had shot four of his family men with their muskets. Wikaninis wanted to go to war."

"There is more, Chuwin. Another Boston-man, a captain whose name was Han-nah, came into our harbour to trade and we treated him fairly and were kind and hospitable to him. One day I was on board his ship and talking in English to the captain, when he accused one of my men of taking a chisel, which my man denied and before we could find out who was telling the truth and who was not, six of the captain's men had taken out pistols and began to fire on us!"

"I had to leap from the ship into the water and swim away from the boat while they were shooting at me. They killed twenty of my men that day. Twenty men!"

"So Chuwin you understand why I was angry with the Boston-men, and the Spanish-men and the King-George-men. They did very bad things to us. We only wanted to trade with them and treat them as our guests. We are good to our guests."

The king stopped speaking, and then lowered his head, as though the effort of recounting this history had exhausted him.

"When did this happen, my lord?"

"Five years have passed since Han-nah killed my men. One man was my youngest brother, Matsis."

"I am sorry," Jewitt said.

"You are sorry? I am sorry too. But sorry is not enough. When your boat arrived and was so lightly guarded I thought I might take my revenge. But your captain was fair, until he gave me that gun that did not work. You were there. You saw that."

Jewitt had been called to inspect the musket that Mokwila claimed did not work properly. Jewitt had found nothing wrong with the gun and told the captain this. The captain grew angry and accused the king of lying about the gun in an attempt to get another one.

Mokwilla's voice was beginning to rise. He stared into Jewitt's eyes. Jewitt did not dare look away. "He accused me of lying. I do not lie. The gun did not work."

"Do you not understand? You have been very bad to us for many years. You have killed us and hurt us. You have insulted us. I will not be insulted by your captain. What is he? A captain! I am a king!"

Mokwila was on his feet now, walking back and forth in front of Jewitt. Jewitt wanted to say something conciliatory, to calm him down, but did not know what to say, except that he was sorry that men had died.

"I know your god tells you to treat a man the way you want to be treated. Is that true, Chuwin?"

Jewitt nodded.

"My god tells me nothing. He is far away and tells me nothing. What I know is what my father told me, and what his father told him. I believe what my fathers tell me, not what some god tells me."

"What does your father tell you?"

Mokwila came closer to Jewitt and bent down and put his face very close to Jewitt's. The lines in his face were deep and tired and worn. He smelled of smoke and fish, like everything in the house, everything in the village.

"What does my father tell me? My father tells me to kill the man who kills my brother. The man who tries to kill me. The man who steals from me and robs me. The man who takes what belongs to me by stealing. The man who takes my women or my slaves."

"You should forgive those who hurt you."

"Chuwin, that is not right. They will hurt you more and more! I forgive a child who shits on a path where I walk because that child does not know better. I forgive a young fisherman who fails at his first fishing because he is young and has no skill. I forgive many things. But I do not forgive a man who hurts me. Why should I?"

Jewitt had no answer to the king's question, and so did not try to answer him. He knew the king was wrong, and not only because the Bible said so. Something inside him also said the king was wrong, that revenge was wrong, but he could not find the words to explain it to the king.

"I will kill a man who hurts me," Mokwila said.

"But then his brother will kill you."

"Let him try. No one can kill me."

"That is not true. Someone could kill you."

The king laughed. "Hah. Yes. Let him try."

"And if he did, what would Kallicum or Quatlazape do. Kill that man?"

"Yes," the king said. "They would kill him."

"And when would this killing stop?"

"What do you mean?"

"When would the killing stop?"

The king looked at Jewitt as though he was completely mad.

"Chuwin, the killing will stop when we have balance again. When everything is balanced and even."

"I don't understand."

"Put your journal away. I do not want to see it again."

Jewitt put the journal back in the trunk, along with the ink vial and the quills.

One morning in December, Jewitt was in the house, playing a stick game with Satsa. Mokwila came in, carrying a pistol in his right hand, and told the boy to approach him. Satsa got up from where he was sitting and stood beside his father. Mokwila suddenly raised the gun close to Satsa's ear and fired it. The boy fell down as though dead. Jewitt could see no wound or blood.

The women in the house began to wail in sorrow and grief, pulling at their hair and raising their arms in the air. Jewitt had never heard them make such a loud and horrible sound. He went to Satsa's side, but the king motioned him to stay away. Jewitt backed off, not sure what to think or do. There were a ruckus at the door and then a couple of dozen men, armed with daggers and pistols, ran into the house, came over to where Satsa still lay on the ground, and surrounded him.

Jewitt noticed that the men did not completely surround the boy. They left a space in the circle. Two men came, completely covered in animal skins. Jewitt wasn't sure, but he thought they looked like wolves or bears. Both of them had enormous masks that completely covered their heads and faces, with feathers and sticks and branches coming out the of the top. These men pranced and jumped about, as though they were wild animals and then moved into the semi circle that surrounded Satsa.

Jewitt couldn't see everything they were doing. The wail of the women was still tremendously loud. Then the two wolf-men emerged from the semi-circle. One of them had Satsa on his back. They went out the door and disappeared.

Jewitt didn't know what to make of this scene. Satsa seemed to be alive, not dead, although the women were acting as though he was dead. Then Jewitt heard another pistol shot, and the men with daggers and guns ran out the house.

Mokwila looked very serious. He came over to Jewitt and pointed the pistol at him.

"You must leave at once. I will give you food. Do not come back for seven days, or I will have to kill you. Tomesun too."

Jewitt was frightened. The king would not answer his questions. Mokwila said something to two of his wives, who began to prepare a basket of food.

Thompson took the news of their banishment more enthusiastically than Jewitt did. "Seven days out sight and sound of the savages? I don't mind. I don't mind at all." He began to organize some tools, hatchets and knives, and a bundle of clothes.

Mokwila ordered them out of the house. Jewitt carried the food and managed to find room for his journal and Bible. They would head north, along the river bank, and then west, past the blacksmithing shack, along a gently ascending path that would take them deep into the woods.

Jewitt didn't understand why they were being punished.

"I'd say we're free to do what we damn well want to do for a week," Thompson said. "While the savages prance around and fire off their pistols. Something to do with wolves, was it?"

Jewitt said he wasn't sure. "I'm not sure. They looked like wolves. They came into the house and carried Satsa out on their backs."

"But the lad was still alive?"

"He wasn't dead."

"Makes no sense to me."

Jewitt knew that Mokwila could have explained it to him but would not. There was nothing to do but make the best of it. They found a small clearing in the forest where fallen trees made it easy to put together a lean-to large enough to shelter them both from the rain. Thompson had brought a small metal

box with coals from the house, and used these coals to get a proper fire started. Jewitt spent an hour chopping wood, using deadfall within easy reach of their camp, and stockpiled it in the lean-to. At night they piled branches against the open side of the lean-to to keep out the cold and inquisitive animals that might disturb them. Jewitt had never slept in the middle of a forest before. An eerie silence fell over their camp as soon as night arrived. No sounds of birds, or animals, or insects. Thompson fell asleep immediately, snoring softly as soon as he rolled onto his back. Jewitt could not sleep the first night. He felt as though he was waiting for something in the forest to make a sound or noise that he could identify, and then he would be able to sleep. But no sound came. The night became colder and colder. Jewitt slept as close to the banked fire as he dared, and pulled the cotton jacket he used a blanket closer to his neck. He imagined animals in the forest, foxes and deer and wild bears. Surely there were wolves if the natives put on costumes that made them look like wolves? Jewitt had never encountered a wolf, or a bear. Thompson had dismissed the threat of animals, saying they were well equipped with muskets and pistols and that gunpowder was more than a match for any wild creature they might encounter.

They quickly settled into an easy rhythm. Mornings they chopped wood and fetched water. After a mid-day meal, they would explore the nearby hills and valleys following footpaths that led north and west, away from Tashees, deep into the wild country. They returned to the camp before darkness fell, and ate their second meal as the gray light slowly ebbed from the forest.

The nights were long and cold.

Thompson wanted to talk about escape plans. He had finally come to accept Jewitt's argument that commandeering the long boat and trying to make a getaway in the middle of the night would likely not succeed, and that they had a decent chance, once spring arrived, of getting a message to an English or American trading ship. Jewitt's previous attempts to do this had all failed, but what other course of action did they have?

"You write the letters and give them to visiting chiefs," Thompson said.

"Yes. Someone will help us." Jewitt thought he could sense animosity between some of the visiting chiefs and Mokwila, and this opened the possibility to getting their cooperation in the rescue plan. A chief who was suspicious or resentful of Mokwila could be more likely to help them than a chief who

was a staunch ally. The timing would have to be right, of course. The right chief, at the right time, when a trading ship was close by.

After seven days, Jewitt and Thompson tore down the lean-to and returned to the village. Two visiting chiefs from the north were feasting in Mokwila's house.

The next day, the king announced that he would permit Jewitt and Thompson to observe a very special ceremony ending the week of wolf celebrations and initiations. After the evening feast of food, three men entered the house, each with two bayonets stuck in his side. The men ran back and forth, in front of the assembled guests, singing songs and beating their chests with their fists. This went on for what seemed like a very long time, and the three men ran out of the house. Satsa walked in, went over to his father and embraced him.

Mokwila gave the two men permission to withdraw from the village to celebrate Christmas. Jewitt and Thompson went back to the clearing where they had built the lean-to, and held a simple ceremony. Jewitt read the Nativity story from the Bible, thanked God for looking after them, and then recited the Lord's Prayer. Thompson, though he claimed to be a sceptic when it came to religious matters, listened respectfully as Jewitt read and even bowed his head during the prayers.

"Dear God," Jewitt prayed. "Thanks to your grace and mercy we are still alive. As we humbly celebrate the anniversary of your birth, we pray with all our hearts and minds that the next time we celebrate this day we will be in a Christian land, not a heathen land."

"Amen," Thompson said.

"Amen," Jewitt said.

5 Fight to a death

Early in the New Year, the village moved again, to Cooptee, fifteen miles down the eastern arm of the inlet. Here the houses were set up along a narrow, flat clearing, facing west, less than ten yards from the ocean. A small river bisected the tightly packed arrangement of twelve houses. When Jewitt asked why they were moving again, Mowila said it was not for Jewitt to question his judgement.

"I'm not questioning your judgement," Jewitt said.

"We move in order to eat, have you not figured that out?"

"Yes."

"Everything we do has a reason and a purpose. I have twelve hundred mouths to feed. Now move!"

Jewitt and Thompson loaded the long boat again. Mowila instructed a slave to bring out the sails, the rudder and oars, and they re-fitted and re-rigged the boat. This time there was no wind to propel them across the water, only the sluggish hand of a gently ebbing tide. The ocean lay flat and gray and cold under the hull, like thick oil in a wash basin. The trees, as always, were lost in low-hung clouds and layered in mist and fog. Jewitt shivered as they pushed off and began to row the long boat south, along the eastern shore.

Mowila had gone ahead in the lead canoe, and the flotilla of canoes following him quickly stretched out into a long thin line of dark shapes barely visible against the gray water of the inlet. Jewitt and Thompson stayed close to shore, as instructed by the king, and at times were so close that Jewitt could see mist rising from the waterfalls that burst out of rock and tumbled down to the water surface below. The shore presented an impenetrable, inexpressive face of fir tree and rock. The rocks were black and shiny, the trees a drab, exhausted green. Occasional patches of alder, in bursts of white, gray and purple, stood out against the green.

Thompson grumbled at the lack of wind. Jewitt ignored him. They'd switched places from the previous trip, and Jewitt, now in the stern of the boat, enjoyed his view of the water ahead and the slow rush of shoreline to his left, happy to be in motion on the water again, under the enormous sky. The forest seemed to enclose and imprison him. He wanted to be able to lift his eyes and see twenty miles to a horizon line. He wanted light and open spaces, and he liked the way the ocean was never fixed, but

constantly in motion, changing shape and colour every time you looked. The forest grew, expanded or shrank, but imperceptibly, along a time scale Jewitt could not comprehend. The ocean, without guile, was alive in a completely different way.

Eventually Jewitt and Thompson fell so far behind Jewitt could see only the three or four trailing canoes in the flotilla.

"We're in no rush, we'll get there soon enough," Thompson said, taking a break from rowing.

Jewitt refused to break his rhythm. "Yes, there is no rush."

"Fucking herring for dinner, I suppose."

Just ahead, Jewitt saw an eagle struggling to lift something from the water with its claws. The bird's enormous wings flapped and fluttered without success, and then the bird changed strategy and began to drag its prey towards shore. The fish, an enormous salmon, soon came to rest on a tiny strip of brown pebbly beach, where the eagle could attack it. The bird deftly sliced the fish into several pieces, and then flew off with the large piece held firmly in its talons.

"What are you looking at?" Thompson asked. He'd resumed rowing, but in a lacklustre way that added little to the speed of the boat.

"Nothing," Jewitt said. The eagle re-appeared to claim the second and third portions of fish and then finally disappeared in the upper reaches of the forest.

Mokwila had said something about eagle down, and why he liked to put it in his hair for special ceremonies, but would not explain where he found it or what part of the bird it came from. Surely the natives didn't climb trees to raid from the eagle nests? Did down come from the eagle chicks? Why was Mokwila so unwilling to answer his questions?

Then Jewitt took a brief rest at the oars, and Thompson, suddenly re-invigorated, began to pump furiously. The boat picked up speed, rounding a tiny cape of black rock, and there before them was Cooptee. The shoreline was jammed with canoes, packed so tightly there was barely room to step between them. Two of the houses were already assembled, and spitting smoke from mid-day fires inside.

Jewitt and Thompson landed the boat at the far end of the beach and began to unpack the heavy wooden boxes they had transported. Thompson grunted each time they picked up a box and each time they placed a box down on the beach.

"We're closer to Friendly Cove, at least," Jewitt said.

"Yes, but no closer to freedom."

"That's not true. It will only take one letter. One letter."

"Letters won't do a damn thing for us." Thompson put the box down and glared at Jewitt. "I'm in my final days, John. I can feel it in my gut. Do you understand? These are final days."

Jewitt was going to remind Thompson that he needed to be patient, that a ship would come eventually, and no reasonable captain would refuse their letter requesting help but he stopped and did not repeat the words that he had already said many times before. There was no point in repeating them because Thompson had no interest in hearing them, and even if he did hear them, it would make no difference to what he thought. Jewitt had never met such a stubborn man as Thompson.

Mokwila had said their stay in Cooptee would be a short one, roughly two months, and Jewitt was glad of that because living conditions were even more crowded than in Tashees. They slept jammed into the far corner of the king's house, surrounded by boxes and chests piled right up to the ceiling. There was only room for four fires for the entire house and so even though the interior seemed more crowded with sleeping bodies, the nights felt colder. Jewitt sometimes woke in the middle of the night to the sounds of fucking, coughing and farting. If he sniffed the air too vigorously, sour body smells mixed with damp cedar and smoke and fish would invade his nostrils and make him want to vomit.

On nights when the winter storms marched up the inlet, Jewitt could hear the roof planks jostle and vibrate above him. The wind blew constantly in the trees, and the upper branches of the trees swayed and rubbed against each other, making noise like enormous ocean waves crashing and breaking on the shore. Incoming waves from the inlet stroked the beach in a continuous cycle of advance and retreat that was at once both soothing and threatening.

Across this arm of the inlet the opposite shore was less than a hundred yards away. The shore was actually part of an island, and it was just around the tip of the island, in a crescent-shaped bay, that the herring schools were most abundant. Baskets of the slim, silvery fish were soon appearing in the village. Jewitt found the meat oily and unpleasant, like an unsalted sardine, but he ate without complaint. Half the take was dried and smoked in the rafters of the houses.

One day not long after they'd arrived at Cooptee, the king instructed Jewitt to accompany him on a trip by canoe to the east, to visit a neighbouring chief, Upquesta. Jewitt thanked the king for inviting him and the king laughed and said Jewitt should wait until after the trip before thanking him.

They went in three of the larger whaling canoes, with seven men to a canoe. The king and Kinneclimmets were the in the lead canoe, which travelled a good thirty or forty yards ahead of the two trailing canoes.

Jewitt was stuck in the middle of the second canoe, paddling like mad on the right side, while his co-paddlers kept up what seemed to Jewitt a furious pace, accompanied for most of the six-hour trip with a song, or a series of songs, none of which made much sense to him. The rear paddler kept time by beating his paddle against the gunwhale of the canoe. The rhythm was simple and insistent. Jewitt could read music and understood the basics of rhythm and harmony. The beat was 4/4 time, as predictable as the fall and rise of a choirmaster's baton. Jewitt gave up trying to understand the words and syllables he was hearing and instead let the beat guide his strokes. The gunwhale of the canoe was so high he had to reach up and over the side to manipulate the paddle. The paddle felt strangely light and insubstantial in his hands. It came to a sharp at one end, for no reason that Jewitt could determine. Shouldn't a paddle be wide to get the full power of a stroke?

Jewitt blanked his mind as he paddled. He let the music drive the motion and rhythm of his arms. They canoed down the middle of the inlet, with a slight breeze behind them, and so Jewitt could not watch the shore he had in the long boat coming down from Tashees. There was no one to talk to, nothing to see except the unchanging expanse of water in front and the steep green slopes to the left and right. A cold day but no colder than any other day. Mist and gray sky and gray water, everything merging and blending together. Everything somehow blank and rich at the same time.

After two hours of paddling, Jewitt thought his arms were going to fall off. He stopped for a moment, and the paddler behind him, a squat and muscular man with angry scars on both cheeks, grunted something at him, and tapped him on the shoulder with a wet paddle. The drops of salt water soaked through his shirt and felt cold and greasy against this skin.

After five hours of paddling, the inlet began to narrow. Jewitt could see a waterfront trail to the left, on the north side of the inlet, and several figures walking on the trail with large baskets strapped to

their backs. There was a jog to the right, and then an outcropping of rock. Two seals poked their heads out of the water and stared Jewitt for a moment before diving again. One more jog and then the village came into view, a single line of houses along a beach, like a scaled-down version of Friendly Cove.

Mokwila's canoe had already landed but the king remained in the canoe. The rear paddler in Jewitt's canoe steered their craft alongside the king's.

Kinneclimmets now stood in the bow of the king's canoe and raised his arms towards a brightly dressed man standing on the beach. The man was in full face paint, and wore a reddish cloak. His hair was filled with feathers and sprinkled with white eagle down. He held a large white dagger in his left hand. Several natives standing behind him carried muskets. They pointed them at the sky and fired, then cried out, in their own language, "Wocash, wocash!"

The man on the beach began to speak. Jewitt understood only the occasional word, but the man seemed to be greeting them with promises of great feasting and good food to eat. Then he began to deliver news about the village, and the successful hunting enjoyed by the chief, Upquesta. Jewitt thought he heard the words "bear" and "deer" and "wolf" but he wasn't sure.

The messenger continued to talk. Kinneclimmets stood patiently in the bow of the canoe. The king sat behind him, head bowed, as though the trip had wearied him and he wanted to sleep. Jewitt's arms were aching and he wanted to lie down and rest, but he didn't move. No one in the canoes moved.

Finally the messenger stopped speaking, gestured with his arms, and invited his guests to step out of their canoes.

The king stepped out his canoe. As Jewitt stepped out, the king approached him and said, "Do not speak until I instruct you. Is that clear?"

Jewitt nodded. The men on the beach were staring at him. One man appeared to make a joke; he said something to his neighbour and both men smiled.

The village was a small one. Jewitt counted six houses and guessed that perhaps three hundred people lived there.

The messenger led them into the largest house, at the end of the row.

The king was careful to remove his hat before entering the house. Jewitt followed him.

The house was jammed with people. As soon as Jewitt entered, men and women came over to him, and began to touch his clothes and feel his shoulders and hands. One woman went down on her hands and knees to feel the leather laces of his shoes.

The messenger spoke sharply to the people around Jewitt, and they moved back. He directed the king to sit beside Upquesta, who occupied a large chair in the centre of the floor, just to the left of one of the fires. Upquesta was even more brilliantly painted than his messenger, with an intricate pattern of red and black on his face, a pattern than Jewitt had never seen before. The chief was a small man and quite elderly, possibly sixty years old or more. He had a soft, massively wrinkled face that reminded Jewitt of rotten fruit.

Jewitt was seated to the left of Mokwila, who in turn was seated to the left of Upquesta. As soon as Jewitt sat down, several villagers returned to him, and began to touch his face. One man tried to pry his mouth open, perhaps curious to see if Jewitt had teeth.

Jewitt put up with this inspection. He was dreadfully tired from the paddling, and this fatigue made him passive and inert. When the man's fingers tried to probe his mouth, he gently pushed them away. His shoes continued to excite great curiosity, but when one elderly man persisted in trying to untie his shoelaces, he pushed the man away. There was great discussion among the villagers, but Jewitt could understand little of what they were saying.

Then the messenger called everyone to attention and there was a moment of silence. Upquesta talked first, and very slowly, and Jewitt feared that the man would talk for a very long time which would make it difficult to stay awake. But after several minutes of greetings and news about his village, the chief stopped talking suddenly and there was silence again.

Mokwila began to talk. Jewitt understood many of the words, although he would have preferred that the king's speech be completely incomprehensible, because it described in great detail how Mokwila and his men had tricked the captain and crew of the Boston into going for a salmon fishing expedition the day before their planned departure.

He described how the natives came aboard the Boston, pretending to be friendly that day, and instead used their daggers and knives to kill all the crew save Jewitt and Thompson and cut off their

heads and display those heads first on the deck of the ship and then on poles in front of the village houses.

Mokwila seemed to relish the details of the massacre. Jewitt knew the native word for blood and he heard the king use it over and over, speaking with great animation and enthusiasm as Upquesta's people listened with equally great attention. Jewitt saw a man idly pick his nose and two distracted women scratch their heads, but everyone else in the house seemed transfixed by the king's bloody tale of death and triumph over the white men.

Only Upquesta seemed unimpressed. He sat there, head bowed, nodding slightly as Mokwila talked.

Mokwila listed the name of every crew member on the Boston, and described how he instructed Jewitt to identify each man as the head was presented to him. He described the mistrust of the captain, the insults Mokwila had received, the many abuses suffered by Mokwila's people over the years at the hands of the Spanish, the English and the Americans despite the generosity and many gifts of wood and water and fish offered by the natives.

Jewitt was afraid the king would speak for an hour or more. He knew that both Kinneclimmets and the king were capable of this, and he had heard them give speeches in the big house to visiting chiefs that must have gone over two hours.

The king finally stopped. He paused, and then repeated Jewitt's name twice, and said in English to him, "You will talk now."

Jewitt, assuming he was supposed to remain silent throughout the ceremony and feast, was taken aback for a moment. The king stared at him and nodded. The villagers stared at him and then began to murmur amongst themselves.

Finally Jewitt took a breath and began to speak the words that Mokwila and Clasiaca had taught him.

"My name ... John Jewitt," he said. "I come ... England ... far away ... I come ... I serve Mokwila ... I paddle many mile to be here ... I happy to be your guest."

At the sound of their own language coming from a white man's mouth the villagers were astonished. They laughed with delight, slapping each other on the back. They came close to Mokwila and tried to remove his shirt. "You are a man, not a white seal!" one woman said, and laughed at Jewitt.

Jewitt tried to keep talking but he could not make himself heard over the laughter and chattering of the villagers. Mokwila was saying something to Upquesta and then the two men began to laugh.

The chief spoke again, thanking the king for telling the story of the Boston, and thanking Jewitt for proving with his short speech that he was a man and not a seal. The villagers laughed. Then he said something about food and feasting, and soon enormous trays of boiled herring spawn were placed before the king and Jewitt and the other members of their party. The king thanked the chief again, and began to eat. Jewitt began to eat, filling his mouth with the tiny fish eggs. Usually they crunched between his teeth, with a sweetish salty tang, but today's portion had been well boiled and resembled a mushy slop of overcooked oatmeal more than it did a seafood delicacy. Jewitt mimed his usual appreciation of the meal. He could see the chief's wives off to the side, in the cooking area of the house, four women in yellow cloaks and long straight hair, talking quietly among themselves. The youngest, a pretty girl of twenty or so, caught his eye and then looked away shyly.

Jewitt kept eating until the king stopped. The king announced he was finished and motioned for the trays to be taken away. Two women did this, and then the wives served equally enormous portions of herring spawn to Upquesta and his fellow nobles.

Soon everyone in the house was eating, although Jewitt couldn't see exactly where the food was coming from. Trays of herring and salmon followed the spawn. Jewitt had never seen such a quantity of food eaten at a single meal before.

After the meal, the chief provided music and dancing for his guests, but Jewitt, with permission from Mokwila, left the stuffy confines of Upquesta's house to take a short walk along the beach. It was cold, clear night, with a sky full of stars. No one was outside. He walked alone, past the long line of canoes pulled up on the beach, to the far end, where a small river emptied into the ocean.

The cold winter air seemed to clear his head. Jewitt was pleased that he had impressed the natives by speaking their language. He liked to get on with people, and surely this situation, this condition of slavery, as horrendous and unjust and uncomfortable as it was, in many ways resembled other

situations he had found himself in. Strangers on a ship. Teachers in a school. A new mother replacing the one who died. Much easier to bend your will to what surrounds you than to reject it, lock it out, declare war against it, the way Thompson did.

Jewitt looked up. He knew nothing of the stars except the Big Dipper that his father had once described to him. He found it now, and knew from its alignment how to find north, and having found north how to locate the other three directions. Cook has been the master navigator, a man who could plot a course around the globe and never once go astray. Cook must have known every constellation in the sky.

Facing east at this latitude, Jewitt imagined England, almost halfway around the planet. You could trace a line along this latitude of 49 degrees and eventually reach Europe and then trace a line north to England and his city. He imagined his father, his mother, his brother, and the safety and comfort of his home.

The next morning, Jewitt sat again with the king and the chief in the centre of the house to watch a strange ceremony. Twenty men came running into the house. Each man's side was pierced by an arrow, and each arrow was attached to a line. As the men sang and danced, they pulled on these lines to increase the pain they felt. Jewitt found it very difficult to watch this ceremony; he could see the flow of blood down the bodies of the dancers, and the half-mad, grotesque expressions on their faces frightened him. He could not understand the words they were singing. As the speed of the music increased, they danced more frenetically, waving their arms high in the air and then sweeping them down and around in huge circles, as though trying to fly. Several men fell and then stood up again, their bodies now covered in dirt from the floor of the house. Near the end, Jewitt could hear only nonsense syllables coming from their mouths, sounds like "hi" and "he" and he had no idea what any of it meant, except as a celebration of a man's ability to withstand pain without passing out. He hated pain and avoided it. When the singing finally stopped, the men untied the lines from the arrows, and then removed the arrows from their bodies, now shiny with sweat and dribbled and stained with blood and dirt. Jewitt turned away as they men removed the arrows, some gasping with pain as they pulled the arrowheads out. Jewitt breathed deeply, to stay conscious.

The king, pleased with what he had seen, congratulated Upquesta on the excellent performance of his men.

In the canoe, paddling back to Cooptee, as the men around him began to sing, Jewitt suddenly realized the opening note of the song was middle C and as he listened carefully the notes of the song became clear in his ear. From C up to D, and then a half step to D#, and back down to D, to C, to C flat and back to C. He could hear the words clearly, although he did not know what they meant, and with no effort at all he began to sing along, at first self consciously, as though his voice could not possibly blend in, a voice with no strength or solidity. The words repeated and this time Jewitt sang strongly, the rhythm of the song in perfect time with the paddling. Or was it other way around? Were they paddling to keep time with the song?

The tide carried them down the sound, as they paddled west, but as they turned north-west, up a narrower inlet, the tide ran against them and slowed their progress. Night fell and the stars returned to the sky. The steerman in Jewitt's canoe directed them closer to shore, to reduce the effect of the tide ebbing against them. As hard as Jewitt looked ahead, to the left and to the right, he could see only vague dark shapes moving past them on shore. The canoe knifed sharply through the water and water splashed the hull, but it seemed to barely move. Jewitt felt cold. He paddled more strenuously, digging deeper and harder into the water with the paddle, but that made no difference. The canoe was floating in space, surrounded by cold air and freezing water and a blackness that made it impossible to distinguish water from land.

The singing had stopped. Jewitt heard only the splash of paddles, a gurgling at the waterline, the occasional grunt from the men around him.

Finally they landed at Cooptee. Jewitt, legs cramped, shoulders aching, managed to get up and out of the canoe and helped drag it well up the beach. The canoe felt impossibly heavy, even with six men dragging it. Some of the men spoke in low voices but no one talked to Jewitt. The king had disappeared into the house. Jewitt followed him inside. He paused, waiting for his eyes to adjust to the light, the vague outline of bodies illuminated by the soft glow from the banked fires, and carefully stepped around them, to the corner by the wall that he shared with Satsa and Thompson. He had to push Thompson aside to make room. Thompson grunted, but did not wake up. Satsa, on the other side, lay curled into a small ball. Jewitt lowered himself between the two bodies, covered himself with the filthy

blue jacket that served as a blanket, and closed his eyes. The weariness pulled him down and down, like a never ending spiral, and in a moment or two he was fast asleep.

The herring and salmon were so abundant at Cooptee that it was impossible for the women to keep up with the drying and smoking required to preserve the meat of the fish for leaner times. Jewitt had never seen Mokwila and his people eat so much; four, five or six times a day they would sit down to enormous meals of boiled fish and herring spawn. Every week visitors arrived and joined in the feasting. The beach was a mass of fish bones and fish heads and other body parts, rotting and soggy in the water. Jewitt could not understand why the natives kept the houses immaculate but made such a mess along the shoreline. Mokwila said that it was not Jewitt's concern to think about such things. By the time they returned the next year, the beach would be clean and the village site ready for them again. When Jewitt, puzzled, asked who would clean up the beach in their absence, the king looked at him and laughed and pointed at a seagull perched on a nearby rock.

One day, visiting with Quatlazape, Jewitt noticed that the chief's younger wife seemed to be ill. She lay on a stack of mats, with a heavy fur cloak covering her from head to foot. With Quatlazape's permission, Jewitt went over and crouched beside her and asked her how she felt.

"I am hot," she said, "very hot."

"May I touch your forehead?" he said.

She nodded.

Jewitt felt her forehead. Jewitt knew nothing about doctors and medicine, but he could tell she was feverish.

Jewitt didn't know the word for fever. He told Quatlazape that his wife was too hot in the head. The man nodded, as though Jewitt had said something wise. Jewitt asked how long his wife had been sick, and Quatlazape said two days.

"Motana comes," he said. "He will heal her."

Jewitt knew the name but had never talked to the man. Most of the villagers were either slaves or commoners. The slaves rarely spoke, and the commoners seemed to despise Jewitt and Thompson, often making lewd comments about their tiny, soft cocks, their barbaric eating habits, their strange clothes

and incomprehensible language. Most of them ignored Jewitt when he tried to speak in them in their language. Jewitt as a rule talked only to Mokwila, and to the various chiefs and nobles who commanded the houses in the village. Motana was a commoner, unmarried, who spent most of his time fishing but also functioned as some kind of doctor or healer to the village. Mokwila was very tight lipped about many aspects of village life and what went on in the houses, and Jewitt, as much as he tried, could get no details from the king about what Motana did to heal people. This made Jewitt all the more curious, of course.

"Motana ... he heal her?" Jewitt asked Quatlazape.

"He will try, he will try."

"Please ... I watch?"

Quatlazape shrugged, then got up and walked over to his wife. He pulled the fur cloak around her more tightly and said some soothing words to her. Then he went over to the water box and brought her a large spoonful of water, which she drank slowly.

Jewitt interpreted the shrug as permission. When Motana came in later that afternoon, he asked Quatlazape's wife to stand but she could not. He ordered her to lie on her back. He removed the fur cloak that was covering her. He instructed several of the slaves to pile boxes around her, creating walls on two sides.

Motana was a small middle-aged man, with a round face and rather gloomy expression. His eyes were tiny and closely spaced, his mouth wide and in constant motion, whether he was talking or not. He wore a red headband in his hair, and a necklace that Jewitt had never seen before, with pieces of bark and fur inserted through a long strand of wire. His feet were spectacularly dirty, his cloak worn and frayed at the edges.

"Why is he here?" Motana was pointing at Jewitt.

"He asked and now he has my permission," Quatlazape said.

Motana shook his head in disapproval but did not say anything for a moment.

He went to the woman, whose name was Chiwua, and ran his fingers along her body. "She has lost her spirit," Motana said.

"I know," Quatlazape said. "Will she die?"

Motana shook his head again. He picked up something from the ground, a bird shape with a stick and began to shake it. Jewitt heard a rattling sound, stones moving against hollow wood.

Motana's lips were in motion again, and this time sounds began to come out. At first they sounded like nonsense syllables but then Jewitt began to recognize some of the words. Motana was singing a story about a spirit who had gone to live in the woods with the wolf and bear in order to become an animal himself. The wolf and bear laughed at the spirit and told him to return to the body where he belonged.

The words of the song were very repetitious, lines repeating over and over. Motana was a flat, expressionless singer, with no modulation to his voice, just repeated words and a tiny four step melody. He went on and on and then suddenly stopped. He ran his fingers an inch or two above Chiwua's body, sucked his breath in several times, and then repeated the gesture with body hands. He reached down and pulled out a piece of bone, shaped like a cylinder, and placed one end in his mouth, and then blew air at Chiwua, from the top of her head down to her toes.

The singing resumed, and then began to speed up. He moved around the woman's body now, crouching over her, his face just inches away, his hands now in constant motion, waving circles over her, as though covering her in some kind of invisible cocoon.

He did this for an hour or more. At one point Jewitt could sit no longer and went out of the house to stretch his legs. The sun had broken through clouds in the west, and the light that came down on the inlet turned the trees a brilliant green and the water a brilliant blue. Jewitt felt the warmth of the sun on his face, the first time in months he had felt such warmth and felt a sudden surge of hopefulness that he could not have put into words and yet felt deeply in his heart.

When he returned to Quatlazape's corner of the house, Motana was still singing and moving around Chiwua. He blew again with the piece of bone, this time panting heavily, as though trying to start a fire on her body. His singing grew louder and louder, and he shouted something, four or five times, and then threw himself down on the ground.

Quatlazape, who had observed the entire performance without saying a word, nodded at Motana. Motana got up, re-adjusted his headband and his necklace of bark and fur, and walked out of the house.

Quatlazape walked over to his wife and spoke gently to her. He put the fur cape over top of her again, and then brought her some food to eat. She ate a few nibbles of fish and drank more water.

Jewitt said nothing. Quatlazape said nothing when he came back and sat down beside Jewitt.

"I leave now?" Jewitt said.

Quatlazape nodded.

Jewitt got up and walked out of the house.

The next day Chiwua seemed better. She was sitting up and chatting with one of the other wives. Jewitt knew that a fever could break if you simply waited and did nothing, and after that point you would probably recover and be healthy again.

The day after that, Chiwua was completely recovered. Her husband gave full credit to Motana, who accepted a small gift of embroidered cloth as token payment. Now when Jewitt encountered Motana, the healer gave him a look of utter disdain, as though suggesting Jewitt was as lowly as a worm and Motana was the most powerful man in the village. Jewitt simply smiled at the man and kept walking.

But Motana's powers were quite useless a week later when one of the king's nephews, a boy of twelve, the only son of the king's sister, fell into the water while fishing after dark and drowned. The boy's father, Tatoosh, was one of the most powerful chiefs in the village, and occupied the favoured rear corner of the second largest house at Cooptee.

The boy was still breathing when he was brought into the house, late in the evening. Motana was called but to no avail. When the boy died, word spread quickly to all the houses. Jewitt and Thompson, asleep in the king's house, woke to the sound of wailing and crying and shrieking, as every man and every woman in the house began to grieve for the loss of the young prince.

"Good god," Thompson cried, as Jewitt poked him into consciousness. "Have the savages gone completely mad?"

No one would explain what was happening. The sound was so disturbing the two men got up and walked out of the house. Near the door, Jewitt saw Mokwila talking to Kallicum, his brother. The king explained what had happened to the boy and Jewitt said he was very sorry for the death, The king shook his head, and leaving Jewitt and Kallicum at the door, walked into his house and began to shriek and wail along with the others.

The cries drove Jewitt and Thompson away from the village, along a narrow path that led along the shoreline and then east, up a steep incline into the forest.

"What? No blankets and no fire and we're stuck here for the rest of the night?"

Jewitt told Thompson to keep quiet and walk.

A hundred yards further on there was a small lean-to where the natives had stacked firewood. The men removed enough wood to create a space where they could lie down for the night.

Thompson continued to grumble about the cold and the discomfort. Jewitt got up and ripped some branches from a tree to create a cushion underneath them. There was no wind. The night was cold, but no colder than any other night they had spent with the natives, in houses, or shacks or lean-tos, in canoes or the longboat. Jewitt had learned that as long as he knew his life was not in danger he could put up with almost any degree of discomfort knowing that it was not forever.

They were close to a quarter of the mile from the village, but the wails and shrieks from the grieving villagers could still be heard from the lean-to. The voices, so far away now, seemed to blend into one single voice of pain and despair. Jewitt had never heard anything like it. Thompson, half asleep, grumbled and muttered to himself, and then began to snore gently. The two men lay together, as they had many times in the past, alive to the warmth of each other's body and motionless in the darkness.

In the morning, a light dusting of snow greeted Jewitt when he emerged from the lean-to, stood up and looked around. His breath formed trails, like steam, that blew out in front of him and then disappeared. He rubbed his hands together. The woods were silent. He heard no voices from the village below.

Jewitt woke Thompson, who opened his eyes and muttered a curse and then got up slowly. The two men walked back down the path to the village, where an enormous fire had been lit on the beach.

Mokwila was burning bolts of cloth from the Boston and sea otter skins and some wooden chests that contained clothes and other valuables from the ship. Jewitt had no idea why he was doing this. Some kind of ritual in honour of the dead boy? But why burn things? That made no sense to him.

Later the day, the coffin containing the prince was carried into the woods by the king and several of his nobles. Jewitt and Thompson were ordered to remain in the house. The coffin would be placed in a cave, along with the boy's finest clothes and jewellery and gifts from the king and his family.

Tatoosh, the boy's father, was inconsolable with grief. He had stood by the fire, staring at the boxes and chests, his face blank and expressionless. Jewitt saw him later in the day, walking by himself on the beach talking and waving his arms. He would stop, cry out, and then start walking again.

Tatoosh had been one of the warriors on board the Boston the day of the massacre. He had killed with his own hands two of the crew, Hall and Wood, and now became convinced that the ghosts of the two dead men had returned, killed his son, and were now trying to kill him.

The king took Jewitt and Thompson to confront him.

Tatoosh sat in his corner of the house, shaking his head, and rocking back and forth. Thompson held back. Mokwila and Jewitt walked right up Tatoosh and then sat down in front of him.

"Hall and Wood very bad," Tatoosh said. "They are very very bad."

The king offered him some food but Tatoosh pushed it away.

"They will not let me eat!"

The king pointed to Jewitt and then to Thompson behind him, and asked his brother-in-law if these men were the cause of his distress.

"No, these men are good." Tatoosh took some food from the king's hand and offered it to Jewitt. Jewitt took the food and began to eat, thinking that Tatoosh might follow his example.

"You're right," the king said. "These men are good!" He smiled. "These men are so good I am going to get twenty more of them!"

Tatoosh scowled and began to rock again. "Hall and Wood are very bad."

"Listen to me," the king said.

"Very bad!!"

"Can you see them?"

Tatoosh looked up and then to his right. "Right there!"

That night, Tatoosh beat his wife and slaves so badly they had to leave the house and come to Mokwila's for safety. The slaves found room by the door, as usual, and the king's sister slept with Clasiaca, in the corner, on the far side of the king.

Mokwila seemed confounded by the behaviour of his brother-in-law. He told Jewitt that the man was being tortured by evil spirits.

"I think he is sick in the head," Jewitt said.

"What do you mean?"

Jewitt pointed at his own forehead. "He has been hurt. Right here. Injured."

The king thought about this for a moment. "In your country, your England, what would you do?"

"We would confine this man. In a room. Sometimes we would tie him up and whip him."

"Why?"

"To make him feel better."

"I don't understand, Chuwin."

"Whipping can make the person feel better."

Jewitt had never encountered any mentally disturbed people, but he had heard stories. A distant cousin who had tried to set his wife on fire. A friend of his father's sister, devastated by the death of her new-born baby, who had stopped eating, like Tatoosh, and then cut off the fingers of her left hand, convinced that they had somehow contaminated her child and caused the death. The cousin had been confined and whipped, but without success. He ran away from his village and was never seen again. The woman refused to eat and died two months later, when her weight had fallen to less than fifty pounds.

The king thought about Jewitt's words for two days and then ordered Tatoosh to be bound and tied, and brought to the king's house for the whipping.

Jewitt had cut several spruce branches and laid them at the king's feet.

Tatoosh stood there, snarling and making biting sounds whenever anyone came near. He was bound head to foot in heavy fishing line.

The king looked at Jewitt. "Chuwin, I will not do this. Tomesun must do it."

Jewitt looked at Thompson, who was shaking his head.

"Tomesun, you must whip Tatoosh."

"Do you insist?"

"Yes."

Thompson picked up the largest and heaviest branch.

Two of the king's men steadied Tatoosh by attaching lines to his waist.

Thompson delivered the first blow to Tatoosh's shoulders and arms. The man snarled and roared, and began to spit furiously. Thompson delivered another blow, this time to the chest, and followed that with blows to the head and the back of the neck.

Jewitt could not watch. He turned away and walked towards the door. The king called him back. "Chuwin, you must watch! If this is what you do in England, you must watch!"

Jewitt walked back to the king. He stared at Tatoosh's feet while Thompson beat him with the spruce branch. The man continued to snarl and spit. Finally he had no spit left and simply shook his head back and forth and made roaring noises with his mouth.

The king could stand it no longer and order Thompson to stop. Thompson seemed not to hear him and continued to beat the man. Jewitt grabbed Thompson and pulled him away, and forced him to drop the branch.

Thompson was panting with the labour of his work. "Deserved it, he did. Every fucking stroke."

Jewitt turned away and walked out of the house.

The king ordered that Tatoosh be released. The men untied him carefully. When he was free, Tatoosh sank to the ground, wounded and exhausted. The king ordered his men to return Tatoosh to his house, and so they half carried, half dragged the man out of the king's house.

Thompson, also exhausted by the brutal whipping he had delivered to Tatoosh, sank to the floor of the house and sat there for a long time.

The whipping did not cure Tatoosh. He remained as deranged as ever. He snarled and tried to bite people. He refused to eat. His wife and slaves remained with Mokwila. Eventually Tatoosh become so weak he could not walk. He lay on his bed, refusing help, snarling at anyone who approached. One morning his wife came to visit him and seeing that he was asleep, reached out to rouse him. As soon as she touched him she realized he was dead.

Mokwila's announcement that his people were going to war against the Ay-a-charts, who lived in a village of fifteen houses on the bank of a river, fifty miles to the east, took Jewitt by surprise. One of the king's daughters had married an Ay-a-chart chief, shortly before the Boston massacre, and reported mistreatment by her husband. The Ay-a-charts, despite several requests by Mokwila, had refused to allow

the woman to leave her husband and return home. She had eventually escaped, with help from three slaves. She had black bruises on her face and her arms from beatings delivered by the husband.

Mokwila, outraged, told Jewitt he had no choice but to go to war.

"How many Ay-a-charts will you fight?"

"They are two hundred, we are five hundred."

"So you will win."

"We will win."

"The husband should be punished."

"He will be. He will be punished many times."

"But why the whole village?"

"They are bad, very bad."

Mokwila said the village had a history of bad behaviour but would not explain exactly what that bad behaviour had been.

As soon as Mokwila made the war announcement, the mood of the village changed. No one smiled, no one looked happy or pleased, no one joked or teased Jewitt. There was no feasting, no dancing and no music. The men, uniformly morose and gloomy, began to bathe four or five times a day in the ocean. They would stand in the shallows, or on a rocky ledge, and beat themselves with branches and briars, often so severely they drew blood. Jewitt watched one man beat himself so severely he was covered in blood from head to foot. He went back into the ocean, washed the blood off, re-emerged and began to beat himself again.

Mokwila told Jewitt and Thompson to do the same. Drawing blood toughened your skin, he explained, and made it harder for the enemy's arrows and knives to pierce it.

"You will fight with us," Mokwila said. "So you must do what we do."

"I will wash in the ocean every day," Jewitt said. "But that's all."

The chief shrugged and walked away.

"Bloody savages," Thompson said. "But I don't mind joining a little war party. We'll take the cutlasses and pistols."

Jewitt had no stomach for violence. He'd never killed anything in his life. Thompson laughed and said he was a virgin in more ways than one.

Jewitt usually bathed once or twice a week in the lake, near the beach where he held his Sunday Bible sessions and prayers. The water was warmer than the ocean, and the thick bushes along the shoreline gave him privacy when he removed all his clothes and stepped into the shallow water to wash himself.

But the day after Mokwila announced they were going to war, Jewitt joined a couple of men, including Quatlazape, who were washing themselves in the ocean. They were at the second beach, facing the Pacific, wearing small cedar cloths around their waists. It was early March, the air still cold and raw. The ocean was calm. Breaks in the gray clouds allowed brief flashes of sunlight to polish the surface of the water and then disappear.

Jewitt stood knee deep for a moment, feeling the current surge back and forth against his legs, watching Quatlazape as the chief splashed himself with water, crouched down into an advancing wave, then stood up and began to beat himself with a spruce branch. He was chanting words that Jewitt could not quite hear. He seemed oblivious to everything going on around him. Two other chiefs, further away, sank down into the water, dipped their heads briefly below the surface, and then pulled their heads up and shouted.

Jewitt felt the unspeakable cold of the water drawing heat and life from his legs. But he felt bound to do something while standing so close to Quatlazape, although the older man was not watching him or acknowledging him in any way. Jewitt stepped a few feet forward. The water now came to his waist. He was beginning to pant with the pain of the cold. His lungs contracted and shrank; with enormous effort he pushed them out again and drew air into his lungs. A split second later, without thinking, he sank down, so that he was fully immersed in the ocean, the surface waves now tickling and scratching at his neck. His body was numb. He could feel his bottom on the sand, but his legs, splayed out in front of him, seemed to have detached themselves from his body. He couldn't move his feet or wiggle his toes. His hands waved and fluttered in the water. The sensation of cold, of deep implacable eternal cold, seemed to crowd every thought from his brain. He could think of nothing but cold and pain, and pain and cold.

For a second his eyes closed.

A wave washed over his face. He sputtered when some of the salt water leaked into his mouth. He blew the water out, and shook his head. In a single motion he somehow pushed down on the bottom of the ocean and pushed himself back up and onto his feet again. He shouted out, as though he had been stabbed or wounded, and began to walk back to the shallow water.

Was Quatlazape watching him? He couldn't tell. He didn't care.

He moved each foot as quickly as he could. As soon as he reached knee-length water, he began to feel sensation returning to his legs. He kept moving, not thinking about anything except moving, and soon was back on the beach, out of the water, safe again on land.

He turned and looked. Quatlazape and another chief were dragging a man out of the water. Each held an arm as they pulled the man quickly out of the water and brought him to rest on the high side of the beach. He was face up. They massaged his chest and his legs. The man slowly turned on his side, and then pulled himself in a ball. He lay there for a moment. Jewitt turned away, and dried his face and head with the shirt he had left on the beach. When he looked again, the man was sitting up and talking to Quatlazape.

After seven days of preparation, the men in the village were ready to wage war.

There were more than forty canoes in the flotilla. Jewitt and Thompson joined eight other men in one of the smaller boats, assigned to the middle section, Jewitt on the starboard side, Thompson on the port side. Each man had brought four pistols and cutlasses, and bags of gunpowder and shot. The natives brought daggers, and bows and arrows. They left just before dark and paddled east and then south. The night was so dark Jewitt couldn't distinguish water from land. He paddled furiously to keep with the other men in the canoe. They did not sing or chant, or beat their paddles against the side of the canoe.

They came to the mouth of a wide, slow moving river, and began to paddle upstream, keeping to one side of the river where the current was weakest. After five hours of paddling, Jewitt's shoulders were aching and his arms screaming for a rest. Thompson, to his right, continued to paddle as though it required no effort or exertion at all.

The canoes were now in tight formation, with no more than ten feet separating them. The sound of the river seemed to hide the thrash and plunge of the paddles. The men in Jewitt's canoe, paddling

perfectly in rhythm, were as one. Jewitt now felt as though he had no control over the motion of his hands and arms, the rhythm of the paddling had become so commanding and so powerful.

The river narrowed slightly. The canoes came around one bend, and then another. Jewitt could now faintly make out the separation between river and tree and sky, like varying shades of black.

The canoes rounded yet another bend. One of the men in the bow of the canoe said something very quietly, a word that sounded like "there" or "up there". The canoes slowed. One man pointed, then another man pointed. Jewitt followed their direction. Far up ahead, to the left, he could see a line of houses on a cliff above the riverbank. The houses were tightly spaced, He counted ten, maybe twelve. They were difficult to count because they seemed to blend into each other.

The sense of dread and fear that had been slowly building in the pit of Jewitt's stomach now assumed full force. He fought to push it back down, for fear of throwing up in the canoe.

The man directly ahead of Jewitt in the canoe turned around and told them they would not be attacking immediately. The king wanted to wait until closer to dawn.

"Goddammit," Thompson said. "Let's do it now. Let's get it over with."

Jewitt told Thompson to be quiet. The canoes ahead of them turned sharply to the right and headed for the shore opposite to the village.

The forty canoes lay beached in the shallows of the river bank. Some the men promptly fell asleep, dozing at their positions in the canoe. Jewitt watched Thompson sink down, draw his cap over his eyes, and quickly nod off.

Jewitt could not sleep. He tried to imagine the attack but could not. How could you point a gun at a man and shoot him? Would the enemy attack them with knives and daggers and try to cut their heads off? Would God forgive him for whatever he did tonight?

Jewitt finally slept for some time, he had no idea how long. A hand grabbed his left shoulder and shook him awake. He came to quickly, opened his eyes and saw that everything was as black as before. There was no hint of morning light in the sky.

The canoes crept away from shore and headed for the village, almost directly opposite. They landed just downstream of the first house, silently pulling their canoes just far enough onto the beach that

they would remain in position and not be swept out by the force of the current. Jewitt and Thompson jammed their weapons into their belts and arranged the powder and shot backs around their necks.

The men approached the village from the rear, creeping along a trail that led away from the river, into the forest, then back up in a series of sharp switchbacks to the cliff. They broke up into separate groups, one for each house, and waited at the door for the signal from the king to attack.

Jewitt and Thompson stood near to Mokwila, who was preparing to attack the largest house in the village. Jewitt assumed the chief was sleeping inside.

From the cliff, in the space between the houses, you could see up and down the river. Any sentry would have seen them approach and sounded the alarm. Jewitt could even see the far beach, on the other side of the river, where they had waited patiently for several hours before launching the attack.

The forty canoes, neatly arranged on the village beach, looked toy-like and harmless from the cliff. Jewitt felt something he had never felt before, the inevitability of violence, of something horrible about to happen that he would have absolutely no control over. He had survived a massacre, felt the panic and horror of it, not knowing whether the king would spare his life or remove his head as speedily as he had ordered the removal of the heads of the captain and his crew.

But that was violence done and finished. Now he stood and waited for violence about to begin. Thompson looked ready, eager perhaps, the pistol loaded and drawn. Jewitt similarly held a pistol in his own hand, heavy and awkward in his hand, now pointed down at the ground but soon to be raised to kill for the first time.

Jewitt knew he was trembling but could not stop. He hoped that Mokwila could not see his trembling.

The king looked down the line of houses. He raised his left arm to signal, and ten arms were raised in acknowledgement.

The king nodded. Quatlazape nodded. The warriors around Jewitt raised their daggers and crept closer to the door of the house.

Mokwila gave a cry, very short and very loud. His cry was answered instantly by ten other cries. He rushed into the house and the men followed. There was a tremendous roar of voices yelling and screaming, crying and shrieking. Jewitt would have covered his ears if he'd been able to.

He and Thompson remained outside, guns pointed at the door, as Mokwila had instructed. The first villager who fled was shot instantly in the chest by Thompson. The man fell to the ground, writhing in pain for a moment. Thompson lowered the pistol, pulled a second one from his waist band, and shot the man in the left eye.

Thompson killed a second man exactly the same way, and then dropped the pistol and pulled out the cutlass and began to hack and thrust at the natives who were trying to flee.

Jewitt shot one man and wounded two others. It was difficult to see who was friend and who was foe. Jewitt could only assume any man trying to attack him was an enemy. One man jumped on his back and tried to wrestle him to the ground. Jewitt threw him off, and the man fell to the ground. Mimicking Thompson, Jewitt used his cutlass to stab the man in the stomach. The blade went in quickly and easily, piercing the man's body and pinning it to the ground. Jewitt kept pushing; the blade hit ground beneath the body and scratched against dirt and rock. Blood oozed from the wound as the man tried to shout or form words of some kind. Jewitt, staring into the man's eyes, saw a look, not of pain or terror, but complete resignation. The man closed his eyes and then opened them again, and then died. The body went limp and Jewitt removed his sword. He felt as drained of life as the man lying motionless on the ground. But why was he alive and the other man dead?

The attack seemed to end almost as quickly as it began. Light from the rising sun was beginning to filter through the trees. Jewitt stabbed at several men, two of whom surrendered quickly, promising their allegiance as slaves. Jewitt was more than happy to accept their declarations. Two of Mokwila's men came over with a length of rope and began binding the hands of the slaves.

Thompson came over to Jewitt, cutlass still swinging from his right hand, and made the signal of five with all fingers outstretched using the other hand. Jewitt assumed he meant five men killed. Jewitt was about to hold up a single finger, to indicate the native he had killed, when he realized two of the enemy were approaching Thompson from behind. Jewitt shouted to Thompson to turn around. Thompson was grinning. Why did he not hear? Jewitt shouted again and raised his sword, but two daggers had already pierced Thompson in the back. One savage grabbed Thompson by the hair and pulled his head back and was about to run the dagger's edge across his throat when Jewitt, running as fast he could, rammed into the three interlocked figures, knocking them all the ground. The dagger had found its way

into Thompson's neck. Jewitt lay on top, struggling to remove the dagger. The savages fled. Jewitt got quickly to his feet and knelt beside the Thompson. Blood streamed from the man's neck. Jewitt, uncertain what to do, removed his own shirt, ripped off a sleeve, and wrapped the cloth tightly around Thompson's neck. In seconds the cloth was red and bulging with blood. Thompson, his head now angled to one side, struggled to stay conscious. His eyelids fluttered. Jewitt held his hand. Thompson's mouth opened and closed, saying nothing and then with a twitch became still. Jewitt wanted to say something but had no words to say. Thompson's head seemed to twist down, closer to the ground, as though wanting to kiss the dirt. Jewitt propped it up for a moment, felt the dead but still warm flesh of Thompson's face and then released it.

Without thinking a single thought, Jewitt went to Mokwila and told him Thompson was dead.

"What do you want to do with him?"

"He must be buried," Jewitt said.

The king nodded, and then instructed two of his men to wrap the body in cedar cloth and carry it down to the canoes.

Jewitt walked to the far end of the row of houses and fell to his knees and threw up. The acid in his stomach blazed in his mouth and burned his lips. He began to cough and for a moment could not stop coughing. He could hear Mokwila's men talking and laughing as they removed the heads of the dead men they had slain. Later, Mokwila explained to Jewitt that they also killed all the old people and young children in the village, jerking them awake in each house and stabbing them. When Jewitt asked why, Mokwila frowned and said, "It is war. We do not leave them behind."

The village was strewn with headless bodies. Jewitt somehow stepped between them and made his way back down the steep hill to the beach where the canoes were being loaded with bound slaves and severed heads.

One canoe carried the bodies of the five men from Mokwila's village slain in the raid, and the two dozen severed heads of the enemy that would be put on display in the village.

Mokwila's final act of vengeance was the destruction of the houses. His men quickly untied the lines attaching the side planks and threw the planks into the river. They set the houses on fire and stood

back to watch for a moment as the flames danced along the rooflines and threw waves of yellow heat into the early morning air.

Jewitt could not look at what lay inside the houses.

He stood on the beach waiting for the canoes to launch.

He could not look at the covered body of Thompson, laying in the stern of one of the smaller canoes.

He could not look at Mokwila, filthy with blood. The men washed their bodies in the river and Jewitt could see swirls of blood moving through the water.

His right hand was red. He had not realized how much blood was on it. He knelt in the shallows and rubbed his hand under the water until the red began to dissolve and then disappear. The water was cold but the coldness did not matter. He looked up for a moment and saw the first rays of the sun striking the surface of the river. The light on the water was beautiful but at this moment he did not understand what beauty was, or what its purpose in the world might be.

Mokwila was calling him.

Jewitt got up. His right hand was clean.

He took his place in the canoe. There were twelve men now, jammed more tightly between the bow and stern than before. A line from the stern had been attached to the bow of the canoe containing the bodies. As they paddled, Jewitt felt the pull and jerk of the canoe behind them. The men did not sing or chant or talk. They moved back down the river to the ocean. The ocean was almost flat, the same as it had been the night before. The sun was shining; Jewitt could see a cloud line far off to the west that might mean high winds and rain by late afternoon. They paddled along the endless green shoreline of one island and then around the curve of an inlet, past another island, and then across the sound, the sky an enormous, empty blue bowl above them. The trees, sharp and distinct in the brilliant sunlight, were still countless and implacable, as they had been before. Jewitt paddled without thinking because he was too tired to think beyond the one thought, that Thompson was dead and therefore he was alone. This was a simple, irrefutable piece of schoolboy logic that occupied his mind as insistently as the memory of his name or the words to a song that he loved.

The villagers buried their dead in caves whose locations were kept secret from Jewitt. With permission from the king, he buried Thompson just north of the beach where he said his prayers on Sundays. The earth was full of stones and roots, forcing Jewitt to dig for several hours before he managed to fashion a hole large enough to hold Thompson's body. The body, still wrapped in cedar cloth, tumbled easily into the hole. Jewitt replaced the earth and stones. For a marker, he nailed two strips of wood together to form a simple cross, and thrust the vertical piece of the cross down into the earth at the head of the grave.

Mokwila understood what the cross meant. He told Jewitt that Thompson had been a very fine warrior. The chiefs in the village had been impressed by the number of men he had killed.

Jewitt said nothing in reply to this.

The heads of the slain enemy were displayed on poles stuck in the beach at the far end of the village, just as the heads of the captain and his crew had been. Jewitt avoided this section of the beach for the weeks remaining in their stay at Cooptee. When the king announced it was time to return to Friendly Cove, Jewitt had his belongings packed and organized within the hour.

Part 2

Spring, 1804

6 The description of beauty

On the first anniversary of his capture, Jewitt went to the prayer beach and fell to his knees and asked God to save him by sending a ship. He recounted the sins he had committed and asked for forgiveness. He said he would never spill blood again and never take another man's life. He said he would be a good and faithful servant of the Lord for the rest of his life. He asked for forgiveness a second time, just to make sure that God had heard what he had said. Then he read from the Bible, some of his favourite verses from the Psalms, and now, reading much more slowly than he had previously, he hoped for the spirit of God to enter him so that he could remain strong. But his words seemed to fall away, almost as quickly as he said them. He looked up and out, across the surface of the lake, and saw raindrops beginning to fall. Each drop struck the surface of the lake and sent a circle of water radiating outwards. Jewitt watched this for a moment, forgetting the Psalms he had been reading from. He closed the Bible suddenly, almost dropping it.

Mokwila was waiting for him back in the house. A dank rain was falling.

"Chuwin, sit with me," the king said, gesturing with his hand for Jewitt to sit close to him.

Jewitt sat down, careful not to touch the king or block his view of the door.

"I have talked to the council."

"Yes," Jewitt said. He had no idea what the king was about to say, but experience had taught him that council decisions tended to make his life harder, not easier. As much as he worked hard to make the chiefs his allies, giving them gifts of daggers and knives and jewellery, their group decisions never reflected the goodwill he tried to create. Jewitt could not understand this.

"The council has made a decision and I agree with their decision."

"Yes," Jewitt said.

"You have been with us for a year now. You have been a slave and a good slave. You have been a good warrior. You are good."

"Yes," Jewitt said, wishing the king would say what he meant to say.

"You are good, Chuwin. Thompson was a good warrior too. Not a good man, like you, but a good warrior."

"Yes."

"How many did he kill?"

"Five men."

"That was very good."

There was a pause. Jewitt listened to the fire crackle behind his back, felt the warmth enter his body while his hands remained cold. He rubbed them together, unconsciously. He wanted the king to hurry up, but dare not tell him this.

"Yes?" Jewitt said.

"As I said, Chuwin, the council and I have reached a decision about you."

"Yes?"

The king paused again. His hair, longer and more unkempt than usual, fell in thick strands, covering his ears like dirty black rope. "We know that you hope to be rescued by a ship. We understand why you want to be rescued. But we think no ships will come for you. We think the Boston-men and the King-George-men are afraid of us. You want a ship but no ship will come. This will make you unhappy, very unhappy. So you must become one of us. You must stop thinking about ships and become one of us. Not a white person, but one of us. Then you will be happy. Much happier than you are now. Yes, much happier than you are now."

Jewitt listened but did not know what to say. He didn't know what the king meant. How could he become a native? He didn't look like a native, talk like a native, dress like a native. He was English, he always would be English. What was the king talking about?

"I don't understand," Jewitt said finally.

The king smiled. "What do you not understand, Chuwin?"

"How can I be one of you?"

"You will be one of us. Let me say how. Yes, let me say how."

Jewitt waited.

"You must marry one of our women. That will make you happy and satisfied."

Jewitt was horrified by the thought of marrying a native woman. But he didn't want to anger the king. "I don't want to marry."

"But Chuwin, you are young. Don't you like to fuck?"

Jewitt didn't know what to say to this, so he said nothing.

The king smiled. "I know you have not fucked any of our women."

Still silent.

"Chuwin, tell me. Have you fucked any of our women?"

"No."

"Did you fuck with Thompson?"

"No."

"Have you fucked a woman at all?"

"No."

Mokwila laughed. "That's good, Chuwin! With a wife, with a pretty young wife, you will learn to fuck." The king smiled at Jewitt and made a hole with two fingers of left hand and mimed fucking the hole with the index finger of his right.

Jewitt looked away from the king's hands. "My religion will not permit it," he said.

Mokwila laughed again. "Your religion allows fucking! I've seen the King-George-men and the Boston-men fuck our women after they paid for it. The Spaniards! They fucked our women and then waved their crosses at us! I know what your god says about fucking. Your Captain Salter explained it to me. He thinks it's a good idea if the man and woman are married. We agree with your god."

Jewitt was silent.

"I am good to you, Chuwin. I let you pray on the beach and read from your god book. But you must marry."

Jewitt shook his head.

"Chuwin, do not disobey me. I am your king and your lord. You call me "lord", don't you? You will be happier with a wife. We will find you a very pretty, very young wife."

Jewitt dropped his head and closed his eyes. He felt very tired. Easier to say yes than to say no. Thompson could say no, but he could not. He could not disobey the king.

"Yes," he said finally.

"You will marry," the king said.

"I will marry."

There was silence again, and Jewitt assumed the king was finished. Jewitt stood up, about to excuse himself to the king and leave the house. He needed air, he needed time to think, he needed a way to calm the panic that beginning to take root in the pit of his stomach.

The king smiled and motioned to him. "Chuwin! Sit down."

Jewitt sighed and sat down again.

"I am not finished."

"No."

"You will marry a princess. You will choose the princess you want. Next month we will journey to Upquesta's village and you will select a wife."

"Yes."

"But before that, something must happen."

The king was smiling again.

"Yes, my lord?" Jewitt said.

"You will dress like us. You will give up your King-George-men clothes. We will burn them for you."

Resigned to his fate, Jewitt knew better than to refuse or disagree. But the thought of surrendering his clothes, as raggy and worn as they were, added force to the panic he was feeling. He needed to get outside, away from the king, as quickly as possible.

"Clasiaca will give you some clothes."

"Yes."

"Do you understand what I am saying, Chuwin?"

"Yes, my lord. I understand."

The king got up and walked out of the house.

Jewitt waited for a moment, until the king was out of sight, and then wearily rose to his feet. He walked to the door. Two slaves were blocking the way and he pushed them rudely aside. One of them lost his balance and fell down onto the dirt floor of the house.

Jewitt walked out into the rain, and then north along the path to the lake.

At the prayer beach, soaked to the skin by the cold drizzle, he fell to his knees and prayed for God to save him.

The next morning, as soon as he woke up, Clasiaca came to him and asked for his clothes. In the cold months, he usually slept with his shirt and trousers on, and his heavy blue muslin jacket arranged on top of him as a blanket. Clasiaca watched as Jewitt removed the trousers and gave them to her, and then slowly unbuttoned the shirt and took it off. The cuffs and collar were badly frayed. He had worn the shirt every day for more than a year. He folded it carefully, even as he realized there was no reason to do so, and handed the shirt of Clasiaca. He sat there for a moment on the mat, naked for the first time in the big house, and felt the cold of the morning prickle his skin and send shivers up and down his body. Clasiaca did not look at him directly, nor did she look away.

She pointed to a clump of cedar cloth near her sleeping mat. "You can wear this," she said, and then disappeared outside.

Jewitt stood up. His socks and boots were gone. He walked in the dirt over to the clump of cedar cloth and held it up. It was a cloak, with a hole for his head, and two holes for his arms. The cedar felt thick and rough on his fingers, like heavy wool. He pulled the cloak over his head and down onto his body. A belt hung from the middle section of the cloak. He untied it, and wound it around his waist, and tied it off with a firm knot. He walked over to the fire burning in the centre of the house and stood there for a moment, warming himself.

The cloak felt strangely loose and insubstantial on his body. When he moved, his limbs seemed independent of his clothing. His legs were bare and exposed below the knee. Women wore dresses and perhaps this is what a dress felt like. Jewitt thought this, and as strange as the cloak felt, realized it was not a completely bad thing after all. When he crouched down, to poke at the fire with a stick, the cloak enclosed his legs.

He got up and walked to the door. The dirt under his feet felt dry and hard. The women working in the house saw him and whispered among themselves but he could not hear what they were saying.

He walked out of the house and looked out at harbour and the gray sky and the dim shapes of the mainland to the east. Two men pointed at him and laughed.

The ground near the house was soft and grassy. Jewitt walked a few steps. The grass was wet, although the rain had stopped hours before, sometime during the night, and the wetness of the grass chilled his feet.

On the beach, Clasiaca was tending the fire where Jewitt's clothes were being burned. She stood with another woman, a sister, married to Quatlazape. The two women stood holding hands and watching the fire. The clothes, already consumed by the flames, could not be seen. Jewitt stared but could see nothing of them in the flames. The terrible loneliness that he had felt since Thompson's death came over him again, in one enormous implacable wave of misery. He had never felt so alone, so utterly and completely alone.

He walked now, along the grassy path he had followed so many times before, towards the beach and ocean. He climbed over the logs and driftwood debris that cluttered the high end of the beach, and tried to walk towards the water. The pebbles under his feet felt as hard and unyielding as the bones of the dead. Each step required intense effort. He kept walking, right into the surf, the frigid crash of water that swept over his feet and swelled up to his knees.

The intense cold shocked him, but he wouldn't move.

The waves broke against his legs.

Far out to the west, a thin band of pale colour separated the gray water from the dark glowering clouds. The band stretched all the way from north and south. The band promised a weather change, a burst of sunlight, perhaps, or an afternoon of sun. Jewitt cared nothing for the weather. He was weary of the weather, the cold and the endless rain. He looked for a ship along the horizon line. From this point he knew he could see out twenty or twenty five miles until the curvature of the earth hid anything sailing further away.

It was late March and a new trading season was about to begin. Mokwila had said no ships would come to save him, but no one could be certain of that. The trade was too lucrative for them to stay away. Jewitt knew that ships would come, and whether they were English or American, one of them would save him. He knew he must write letters again, and keep writing the letters until one of them succeeded. He had thirty sheets of paper left. He needed more ink. He could do these things secretly, because the king would soon be away for days at a time on whaling trips.

A wave suddenly knocked him off his feet. He fell on his ass and was instantly soaked to the chest by the surging water. He got up and walked out of the water, back across the painful pebbles to the driftwood jumble at the edge of the beach.

He was not soaked. The cloak had kept him dry. He dried his hands and his arms across the fabric covering his chest. He climbed back over the driftwood and logs. The bark on the logs felt rough under his feet, but the slick smoothness of the driftwood was no longer slippery and dangerous. He clambered over two overturned tree roots, then for a few moment walked along the top of a long slim log, arms outstretched for balance, like a small boy. His feet held to the wet log and then he jumped down, back onto the path, and along the path to the green meadow where he and Thompson had once dug up wild onions and garlic. The meadow grass had begun to dry and now felt safe and comforting under his feet.

As Jewitt walked back to the village, he looked down at his feet to make sure his footing was safe. Some of the natives stared at him; some made jokes and laughed. Jewitt didn't care at all. He kept looking down at the ground, expecting to find rocks and roots and other dangerous things. Then he realized he didn't need to do this. His footing was fine. He adjusted the belt on the cloak and smoothed the rough fabric of the woven cedar across his chest. He looked ahead as he walked, and swung his arms. For no particular reason at all, he felt hopeful again. He began to sing the song about Scarborough Fair:

Are you going to Scarborough Fair?

Parsley sage rosemary and thyme

Remember me to one who lives there

She once was a true love of mine.

He sang loudly, not caring whether anyone could hear him or not. He knew five verses and he sang them all. He couldn't remember the last time he had sung the song. On the ship? Or in England, perhaps? He wasn't sure. But he still knew the words. He still knew the words.

The king decided that since Jewitt had been unable to select a bride from the available women in the village, they must journey by canoe to Upquesta's village.

"Upquesta has three daughters, and I know one of them will please you," the king said.

Jewitt did not want to marry a native woman. He rejected the village women, hoping the king would interpret this as a diplomatic attempt to postpone the selection of a bride.

In late April, a month after the first anniversary of his captivity, they journeyed again by canoe to Upquesta's village. The king ordered that bridal gifts of weapons, cloth and metal be placed in one of the canoes. There were three canoes. This time Jewitt was allowed to sit in the king's canoe, right in the middle, on the left side, where he now paddled with appropriate skill and authority. Kinneclimmets, the steersman in the stern, beat time against the boat with his paddle as the men sang long, repetitive songs praising their skill as warriors.

Jewitt joined in when he understood the words and the words were simply nonsense syllables like "Hii" and "Hee". The wind blew at the backs the entire trip and speeded their progress east and south, across the sound, up one inlet and down another.

Jewitt felt the pleasant exhaustion of working the paddle, but his mind was in a constant state of disruption. He could not imagine marriage of any kind, and certainly not marriage to a native woman. He meant no disrespect but he found them dour and mysterious. The younger women would not talk to him, and the older women seemed to laugh at him. Only Clasiaca, the king's senior wife, had shown him kindness. She had tended his wound the night of the massacre, brought him food whenever he needed it, and touched his face and said comforting words to him.

The king had sent word ahead that they would be arriving to select a bride for Jewitt, and so Upquesta's messenger was waiting on the beach when they landed at the village. The messenger delivered a long speech of welcome, and again the men of the village had assembled with their weapons to perform a welcoming round of fire for Mokwila and his men.

Inside the chief's house, Mokwila was escorted to the seat of honour in the centre of the house. Jewitt was placed next to him.

Upquesta, his senior wife, and his three daughters sat opposite them.

Jewitt realized he had not seen the three young women on the previous trip. The natives usually kept their young women well out of sight of strangers. In big house at Friendly Cover Jewitt noticed that Mokwila's youngest daughter, a light-skinned girl of no more than fourteen to fifteen, was never allowed

out of the house except in the company of her mother or another woman. Yet the children played freely outside, without the slightest attention from the adults of the village. Satsa was allowed to get into all sorts of scrapes and adventures with his friends, with never an angry word from his parents.

The three daughters sat to the right of their father, eyes cast down. The first two had round, plain, inexpressive faces like their mother. But the third daughter caught his attention at once. She was the youngest, he guessed sixteen or seventeen years old, but that was only a guess, because she held her cedar blanket wrapped around the back of her head and across the lower half of her face, so that Jewitt could see only her eyes and nose, forehead and part of her cheeks. She looked down and then across at Jewitt. Even in the dim light of the house, her eyes seemed to sparkle. Her skin was fair, fairer than her sisters'. She looked again at Jewitt, and Jewitt, surprised by the attention she was paying to him, felt suddenly embarrassed, as though he were blushing.

Upquesta said something to her, and Jewitt thought he caught her name, Naida. She nodded after her father spoke, and dropped the cedar blanket down below her chin, so that he could finally see her face.

She was very beautiful. Her features were delicate and regular, her skin smooth and clear. Her hair was tightly braided in two long plaits that hung down on either side of her face in the same style that all the native women favoured. She had copper earrings in both ears, large loops that swayed slightly as she moved her head.

She smiled at Jewitt. Her teeth were perfect. Jewitt smiled back. Upquesta barked out another order and food for Mokwila, Jewitt and their men appeared on large wooden trays. They ate herring spawn and oil, smoked mussels and the first of the season's salmon.

Jewitt was hungry and ate with enthusiasm. He knew that Naida was watching him, but whenever he looked at her, she looked away. The chief was smiling now.

When they finished eating, their trays were taken away. Mokwila turned to Jewitt and asked him which of the king's daughters he preferred.

"There are three. The chief will be happy to marry off any of them. Choose one, Chuwin. Choose one for your wife."

Jewitt shook his head.

"Chuwin, you know you must choose. You must do what I say. Now -- which of the three daughters do you prefer?"

Jewitt pointed to Naida.

Mokwila leapt to his feet. "Excellent! An excellent choice. The one with the fairest skin. I knew you would choose her. She will keep you warm on the coldest nights. And make you babies in short order."

The three daughters were now speaking among themselves, but only in whispers that Jewitt couldn't hear. One of the plain daughters was stroking Naida on the arm. They spoke so quickly their voices sounded like the buzzing of bees.

Mokwila ordered two of men to bring gifts from the canoe. They returned with two enormous boxes. Kinneclimmets got up and began to address Upquesta.

"Chuwin has much to offer for the daughter called Naida," he said, talking in the theatrical manner that Jewitt found both false and annoying. Kinneclimmets never stood still when he declaimed in public. He liked to hop and dance, and wave his arms about. Upquesta sat solemnly, occasionally nodding as Kinneclimmets described each weapon, each piece of cloth, each pair of earrings, each necklace, each dagger and harpoon that the men pulled from the box and lay on the ground in front of the chief.

Each article was greeted with a hearty, "Thank you" from the men and women assembled in the house. Jewitt remembered that klack-ko had been the first native word he had learned.

When all the articles had been placed on the ground, Kinneclimmets made a final circular motion with his outstretched arms and sat down again.

Mokwila got up and addressed the group.

"I have known Chuwin for many months now," he said. "Chuwin is a white man but he is a good man. Many white men are not good men. But Chuwin is a good man. He has useful skills. He makes daggers and knives and clubs for us. He makes earrings and necklaces of metal for all the chiefs of my council. He can fish. He can paddle a canoe. He is brave. He has even gone to war and killed the enemy for us."

Jewitt could see some of the villagers were surprised by these comments. They whispered to each other. One old man, skinny and grizzled, with scraggly whiskers on his chin, was grinning at Jewitt as though he was a clown or buffoon.

"All the people of my kingdom know and love Chuwin. The men and women love him. The children love him. Satsa, my youngest son, has taken Chuwin into his heart as though he is a member of our family."

"He is young and strong. He is honest. He is kind. He is not selfish like the white men who come into our kingdom and want our food and our wood and our water and not pay a fair price for them. He is not like the white men who want to cheat us when they trade with us. We know the fair price of furs. We will not be cheated."

"Chuwin is gentle with everyone in our village. He is never angry or mean. He has never hurt anyone. He is helpful. He helps the men and the women and the children. He shares. He is not one of us, but he seems to be like one of us."

The chief was nodding again, and examining Jewitt closely as the king spoke. Naida had her head bowed down. Jewitt had now decided she was the loveliest young woman he had ever seen. When she turned to say something to the sister on her right, he saw the delicate nape of her neck. He could not understand why he felt drawn to her, why he could not take his eyes off her.

The king continued to talk about Jewitt's many virtues. He gave examples of how Jewitt had helped people and made useful things for them. He recited a long list of objects created in the makeshift forge and cited specific details of acts of kindness that Jewitt himself had forgotten. The king told the story of how Jewitt had tried to spear a salmon and fallen into the water. The chief smiled when he heard this, and some of the men in the group started to laugh. The chief silenced them with the wave of one arm, and Mokwila continued.

Kinneclimmets, meanwhile, had stood up again and began to do his usual prancing routine. Then he began to shout "Wocash" after each sentence of Mokwila's.

This continued for several minutes, and then finally Mokwila finished. Kinneclimmets made a final bow and sat down.

The men and women began to shout "wocash" again, as they had before, when the gifts were presented. Then Upquesta stood, and motioned for everyone to be silent.

He began to speak about Naida. "She is my youngest daughter," he said. "A daughter I love very dearly. She has only sixteen years."

"Naida has many many skills to offer young Chuwin. She can sew, and make baskets. She can cook any fish and prepare any food he might want."

"She can make his clothes and prepare his bed. She can make babies with him and prepare the children to be kind and good."

"I love my daughter very dearly. It is hard for me to let her go."

"I do not like the white man, but Mokwila has told me Chuwin is a good man. I believe Mokwila. Mokwila has been a good friend and a good ally for many years."

Upquesta paused for a moment. He looked back at his daughter, and then at Jewitt, as though connecting them somehow with the power of his sight.

"I give permission for Chuwin to marry my daughter, Naida," he said finally.

A very loud "wokash" seemed to shake the house. Kinneclimmets jumped to his feet yet again and performed a frenetic dance that ended with his falling flat on his face on the floor, to the great amusement of the men and women.

Jewitt took an enormous breath and tried to stay calm. The sound of voices shouting unnerved him, and he was already strained in some way to a breaking point of fear and excitement. He felt shaken and overwhelmed by everything that had just taken place. How he could marry the beautiful young girl Naida? How could he possibly do that? Yet he must. Mokwila had insisted. He admitted that he wanted her. But God would not be pleased by the desire that he felt. God would not be pleased at the sight of the two of them in a marriage bed. God would not bless their marriage, would he?

The next morning, the chief presented Naida to Jewitt, asking him to promise to treat her well.

"I do promise," Jewitt said. Naida, as she had been the day before, was bundled in a cedar blanket wrapped around her shoulders. She was rather shorter than Jewitt realized, and quite slim and delicate. See her up close made his heart skip a beat.

"Repeat your promise," Upquesta said.

"I do promise to treat Naida well, to be a good husband to her," Jewitt said. He meant these words as he said them, even though he had no idea precisely how he would be a good husband. Would he be the same kind of man his father had been? Jewitt had never known his mother, only his step mother. She was a kind woman who never complained. His father made the rules, there was no doubt

about that. But he was honest and fair. But what kind of husband was that? Jewitt could not work that out clearly in his mind.

They paddled against strong winds, back to Friendly Cove. Naida sat in the rear of the canoe, well behind Jewitt, so he could not see her unless he stopped paddling and turned right around. He paddled furiously, in perfect rhythm with the other men in the canoe, hoping the exertion would somehow calm his mind, but it did not. He was trying to imagine his new life in the village, but he could not. The fear and excitement he had felt in Upquesta's house were still dancing in the pit of stomach.

When the king's party arrived back in the village, a great crowd of men and women were waiting on the beach for them. Led by Quatlazape and Kalicum, the villagers shouted "wocash" at the top of their voices as soon as the canoes entered the inner harbour.

Jewitt felt touched by the villagers' enthusiasm for his bride. But as soon as the king's canoe hit the beach, three of his wives walked into the shallow water, helped Naida step out of the canoe, and escorted her away to the big house.

Jewitt had no idea what was happening.

"You will be apart for ten days," the king said. "Go and stay with Quatlazape."

Jewitt asked the king to explain, but Mokwila ignored him. He stepped out of the canoe and headed up the hill to his house.

Left alone on the beach, Jewitt felt deserted. No one was talking to him. Kinneclimmets grinned at him and walked away.

Satsa came out of the big house and took Jewitt's hand. They walked along the beach for a few minutes. Satsa said he had asked his father if he could live with Jewitt and his new wife, and his father had said that was alright.

"But we already live together," Jewitt said. "We live together in the big house."

The boy shook his head. "You will be my father."

"But you already have a father. The king."

The boy shook his head again and then grinned. "You will be my new father. The one who protects me."

Jewitt didn't think the boy needed protection. He seemed safe from any harm. He was a prince, after all, and had a rather easy life, spending most of his days learning to hunt and fish with his uncles, but with no serious responsibilities until he married, and that event was still five or six years away. And no school! Jewitt, unlike most of his friends, had never minded the schoolroom. He liked to learn and to learn, to do arithmetic and solve problems, to write Latin and sing in the choir.

Satsa might be king one day. Satsa didn't know Latin or how to do arithmetic problems. Jewitt had read Cook's journals and knew how to read a chart and navigate a ship, how to calculate latitude based on the angle of the sun. He could have mastered the sextant and longitude too, if he had stayed in school longer.

Jewitt had tried to explain multiplication to the boy, how when you take one number and multiply it by another, you have a much larger number, but try as he might, Satsa could not understand what he was saying. There was no point in writing down the numbers because Satsa couldn't read the numbers. When Jewitt took a stick and made numbers in the sand then explained that each figure equalled the word he pronounced, one, two three, sa-huac, a-tla, catza, Satsa just looked at him and laughed. Then Satsa took the stick and made single lines in the sand, one line for the number one, two lines for the number two, and three lines for the number three.

Jewitt took the stick again and tried to show Satsa Roman numerals. He went all the way to ten, explaining each number to Satsa as he drew it in the sand. Satsa laughed and erased the numbers with his foot, and then ran off down the beach to play with his friends. Jewitt could see them at the far end of the beach, rocking one of the canoes as it lay in the water, first back and forth, and then from side to side. One of the boys pushed Satsa and he fell into the water. Satsa got up and chased the other onto the rocks that extended from the far end of the beach to a point of land that defined the eastern limit of the harbour. The boys scampered over the rocks for a moment, and then disappeared behind the rocks.

Jewitt went to his blacksmith's shack and started a fire in the makeshift forge he had assembled. Work would settle his mind. Once the fire was hot, he unlocked his tool chest and removed the tongs and hammers he needed to shape the iron harpoon he was making for the king.

The harpoon would require careful shaping and balancing. It would be much heavier than the carved whalebone harpoon the king was used to handling. He could not put Naida out of his mind as he

worked and pounded the metal, rotating the head of the harpoon a quarter turn each time. In ten days he would sleep with Naida for the first time. He would talk to her and make love to her. Jewitt had never done this before but he knew about it, he knew what to do. He'd flirted with girls and kissed them. One of them had screamed and run away, another had slapped his face, but a third had wrapped her arms around him as she kissed him roughly on the mouth and then let him run his hands over her breasts and between her legs, and laughed and said he was a pretty boy and she liked him very much but that was all he was going to get. One of his friends at the grammar school claimed he'd fucked the chambermaid in his father's house and made her pregnant, but no one believed that. Jewitt knew that most of what men said about women wasn't true, at least according to his experience. Thomson said he's sooner trust a rattlesnake than a woman with marriage on her mind, but what did that mean? He'd never been married. What did Thompson know about women? He hated the native women, said they were filthy and disgusting, covered with vermin and lice. It was true they had lice in their hair but that didn't mean they were filthy and disgusting.

Once, Jewitt had come upon two young married women while walking back from the prayer beach early on a Sunday morning. The main path followed a straight route to the village, equidistant from the lake on one side and the ocean on the other side. But a side path followed the curve of the lake. Jewitt was following this side path when he heard women's voices off to the left. He stopped for a moment, and saw, through the trees, the two young women about to bathe in the lake.

He didn't mean to stare at them but he did. He had no excuse for this except his own weakness and he knew that God could forgiveness this kind of weakness in a man. He watched the women remove their long cedar cloaks and lay them down on a rock covered with sunlight. Their bodies were beautiful. He couldn't take his eyes away. Jewitt had moved behind a tree, to better hide himself.

The women stepped into the water, and then sat down and began to wash themselves carefully. They talked and laughed, but not loud enough for Jewitt to hear and understand what they were saying. When the one woman touched her breasts, Jewitt felt himself stiffen. He felt excited and shameful at the same time. He was doing something wrong, and he knew it. But the excitement seemed to hold him in place behind the tree, as though he were trapped and couldn't move.

The women turned in the water and faced away from him.

Then he heard something or someone coming along the path.

He could either hide behind the tree or make his escape.

He began to walk south, towards the village. Two men he did not recognize came the other way. He said hello and they said hello in return.

His breathing went back to normal. His cock relaxed in his trousers again. That night he prayed to God to forgive him for spying on the women. He promised God he would never do it again.

Jewitt used his file to sharpen the point of the harpoon. God was merciful and had forgiven him, he was certain of that. He had never repeated his sin of spying on women, although he had imagined the young woman from the lake naked the next time he saw her in the village, fully clothed in her cedar cloak, waist fully cinched with a belt, eyes down in the expression of modesty that so many of the village women assumed. Jewitt realized that to see someone naked forever changed the way you saw them and thought about them. You could not reverse that, just as you could not reverse the killing of a man. Only God could do that, and Jewitt thought that would be a very unusual event to observe.

To harden the harpoon he needed to heat it to as high a temperature as possible and then plunged it into cold water. After half a dozen rounds of this, the harpoon was fully tempered and ready to be attached to the long wooden spear that the king would use to embed the sharp point in the body of the whale. Jewitt decided he would make two harpoons, and present them to the king at the end of the week. The whaling season would begin in a couple of weeks, and the king would be pleased to received the harpoons.

In the end, he had decided to put the woman and her body and her breasts completely out of his mind. He actively resisted any thought of her and made it a point to never venture close to the house where she lived. He found out from Quatlazape, who he knew would not suspect his interest in a native woman, that she had a husband, a child, a mother, two aunts and a grandfather living with her. Jewitt knew nothing more about her and did not want to know more. He prayed to God every night for two weeks to give him the strength to not think about her.

When he finished the second harpoon, Jewitt wrapped the two weapons in a cotton cloth and stored them in his locked tool chest, the same chest where he kept his journal, writing paper and ink. He took out the journal and ink and began to write entries for the past two days. He described the trip to

Upquesta's village, the greeting on the beach, the feast in the chief's big house, and how he had felt when he saw Naida for the first time. The words seemed simple and ordinary but they were the words he was most comfortable with. Her tried to describe her face, her eyes, the way she looked at him. To say someone was beautiful was easy enough, but what exactly did you mean by beautiful? Jewitt found he did not yet have the words to describe the exact nature of Naida's beauty or why she had so captured his attention that evening when they first met. He knew what happened but could not clearly explain why it had happened.

When he wrote in his journal, Jewitt usually sat with his back to the tool chest, facing the forge. The heat from the fire warmed his head and chest and hands. But this position meant he could not see anyone approaching the blacksmith shack. Perhaps the king had sent spies to observe him and knew exactly what he was doing. Jewitt knew the king revealed only the tiniest portion of his own knowledge and he understand that this was how power was wielded by the powerful.

He finished writing in the journal, frustrated that he could not express what he wanted to express. As he closed the book he thought he heard a sound, footsteps perhaps, or was it something moving in the trees above him?

He turned around, hiding the book in the chest and closing the chest quickly. He saw nothing but the smooth expanse of grass in front of the shack, and the ragged line of trees at the far side of the meadow. Off in the distance, two villagers were digging at something in the tiny vegetable field. Jewitt stopped, listened again, but heard only the light rustle of wind in the trees above him.

In Quatlazape's house, Jewitt slept against the wall, in the far left corner, next to two grandsons who whispered and chattered late into the night. Jewitt complained about this, but Quatlazape only smiled and said they were still children and their lack of concern for others around them was not to be praised, it was not to disciplined either. Jewitt did not understand the natives' approach to raising children. He knew the rules he had lived by, that his father had taught him and enforced every day of his life.

The grandsons were not the only noisy members of the family. Quatlazape himself snored, in long wheezing, head shaking waves of inhalation and exhalation. Jewitt had never heard anything like it. Occasionally a wife would push the man onto his back or his side, and the snoring would stop for a few

minutes but inevitably it would start again. Jewitt, now working long hours at the forge as well as cutting his self-imposed quota of firewood every day, woke up blank and exhausted every morning for ten days.

There were other sounds that filled Quatlazape's house every night. He could hear one couple arguing, and two or three other couples fucking briefly but loudly, every night, somewhere close to him, accompanied by grunts and heavy breathing. He could hear coughing, snoring, belching. He had heard all of these things before, but now they seemed rude and insistent, as though intended to disturb his sleep. He was irritable and unapproachable. As soon as his food was served, he would take it outside and sit on the beach and stare at the ocean's horizon line. He sometimes thought that if he stared long enough and hard enough he could will into existence a ship.

He began to write rescue letters again. At the end of his day at the forge, he would sit behind the tool chest and write, in his finest hand, short letters to unnamed ship captains asking for help. Each letter briefly explained who he was, and why he was seeking help.

I have been held Prisoner and Captive by the Natives of Nootka for more than one Year, he wrote, and I seek your Assistance in effecting my Rescue from them. I pray to God in Heaven every Day that I may be rescued from these Heathen Tribes who so cruelly slaughtered the Captain and Crew of the Boston.

In some of the letters, Jewitt wrote a detailed description of the massacre, recounting the scene on the Boston's quarterdeck where Mokwila had demanded he name each member of the crew as a severed head was displayed to him. Jewitt had described the scene in his journal, although he knew there was no need for that, because he would remember each detail of those minutes and hours for the rest of his life.

He hid the letters carefully in the bottom of his tool chest.

He needed only the absence of the king for a few days in order to pass the letters to visiting chiefs and princes. Five days after returning with Naida, the king began preparations for the whale hunt, removing himself to an island in the lake where Jewitt went to pray on Sundays. Jewitt pestered Quatlazape with questions about the whale hunt, so many questions, that the old man finally relented and began to answer them.

"Why does the king go to the island?"

"To prepare for the hunt, of course," Quatlazape said. The man liked to play with the whiskers on his chin as he spoke. He did this now, in a way that Jewitt found annoying and distracting, but he didn't say anything.

There was a long silence. "But what does he do on the island?"

Another long silence. Jewitt knew to be patient with Quatlazape. Everything he did seemed to proceed at a different speed than the other chiefs. "There are spirits to be respected. Very very powerful spirits."

"I understand."

"Do you?"

"Yes."

"What do you know about the spirits?"

"I know something. I have a God."

"Ah," Quatlazape said, and then smiled. "I know you have a God. I know you have something you look at that holds the words of your God. Mowila has told me about this. I know you go to the lake and say these words and talk to your God. I don't know if your God talks back to you. But a God is not a spirit."

Another silence. Jewitt did not speak.

"God is far away. God does not talk to us. Sometimes I wonder whether this God exists he is so far away. He may be dead."

This idea seemed to amuse Quatlazape. He let go of his whiskers for a moment and chuckled to himself.

"He may be dead. Who knows? But spirits are here, all around us. Spirits are alive."

"Yes," Jewitt said.

"Everything has a spirit."

"Can you talk to a spirit?" Jewitt asked.

Quatlazape thought about this for a moment. "Yes, you can talk to a spirit. The spirit can even talk back! But the spirit is fickle. The spirit inside you can leave and fly away, and then you get sick and die. That spirit is a spirit you want to hold on to. Always."

"What about the whale?"

"The whale is a special spirit, I would say, Chuwin. The whale is very big, and the spirit is very big too. He is a difficult spirit too. The king must do difficult things to prepare himself to talk to this spirit."

"What things?"

A long silence. "He must take in the strength and will of all the great whale hunters who went before him."

"How does he do that?"

"He touches them."

"How?"

"Chuwin, you ask too many questions." Quatlazape stopped stroking his chin whiskers for a moment. He reached out and touched Jewitt on the top of the head. This surprised Jewitt, who flinched, but quickly recovered. Quatlazape chuckled again.

"Their heads. He touches their heads."

"I don't understand."

"There are heads on the island that he touches."

"You mean human skulls."

There was no native word that Jewitt knew for the English word skull and so he said the word "skull" and as he said it pointing to his own head.

Quatlazape did not respond.

"Like on the poles in front of the village."

Quatlazape finally nodded.

"And the captain and crew of my ship."

Quatlazape nodded again.

Jewitt still was confused. Whose skulls were on the island with the king?

"I said the great hunters," Quatlazape said. "Mokwila is with them. He lies down on top of them."

Jewitt tried to picture this but could not. He then wondered what had happened to the heads of the captain and the crew of his ship. The heads had been there one day, and gone the next. The same

with the dead enemy they had killed in the raid on the village. Heads on poles one day, and gone the next.

"Did you eat them?"

Quatlazape looked horrified. "The spirits would be very upset if we did that. Do not say that, Chuwin. Never say that."

"I still don't understand."

"I said Mokwila lies down on the heads of the great whale hunters. He takes in their strength and wisdom and bravery for the hunt. The whale spirits are very powerful in this place and so are the heads of the great hunters. They are white heads."

"Skulls," Jewitt said.

Quatlazape used another word that Jewitt did not understand.

"How many?"

"Many, many."

"Hundreds? Thousands?"

"You ask too many questions. I can't answer your questions, Chuwin."

A visiting chief from the north came to trade for the daggers and harpoons that Jewitt made. Kalicum, the king's younger brother, handled the trade, refusing the request for Jewitt's iron harpoon and giving the man, who was short and very skinny, like a boy with a mature man's wrinkled face, only the poorer quality daggers and knives. The chief asked for a musket too, and the powder required to fire it.

"Do you know how to use this weapon?" Kalicum asked him. Jewitt did not like Kalicum, but he admired the man's skill at trading and the direct way he talked to people. Mokwila enjoyed charming people, winning their friendship with words, putting them at ease with jokes and light comments, but Kalicum preferred to ask for what he wanted, directly and plainly. But he was also a cruel man, who ridiculed and belittled his wives in a way that Mokwila never did.

"I know how to fire a gun," the visiting chief said.

"Show me," Kalicum said.

The visiting chief took the musket and powerbag from Kalicum and proceeded to load the gun quickly and expertly. Kalicum stared glumly at the man, refusing to be impressed.

The man raised the gun to his shoulder and fired the round out over the harbour. The sound echoed for a second or more, and then died.

The man dropped the gun to the ground and stood there with his arms crossed.

Kalicum and the man looked at each other but said nothing.

The man pointed at Jewitt. "Is this slave for sale?"

Kalicum shook his head. "He belongs to Mokwila."

"I know," the man said. "I know who he belongs to. I know all about him."

"He's not for sale."

"I will give you many furs for this slave."

"He's not for sale."

Kalicum turned and walked away.

The man looked at Jewitt. Jewitt stared at this strange man, covered in furs although the day was mild, with a body that seemed to be built of parts of different men, and a boy's body, legs and feet that were slim and delicate. His face was deeply lined, his black hair short and sparse, as though bunches of it had been pulled out.

"What is your name?"

"Chuwin," Jewitt said. "Chon-Chuwin."

The man repeated his name, and smiled, a bizarre boyish smile that split open his round face.

"You will live better with us. Come with me."

"No."

"I will give you a wife."

"I have a wife."

"Mokwila gives you a wife?"

Jewitt nodded. "A very beautiful wife."

"From where?"

"The Ai-z-charts. Chief Upquesta's daughter."

"I bet he gave you the ugly one."

"No. Naida. I picked Naida."

The man laughed. "Hah! I've heard about her. I thought she was too young." He was silent for a moment. He scratched his head, making the tufts of hair stand up. "I'll give you two wives."

"No."

"Three wives, no more."

"No thank you."

"You'll be happier with three wives. More fucking, more food."

"No thank you."

"You don't like fucking?"

Jewitt didn't say anything. He pulled the letter from the bag he was holding.

"Please help me."

The man shook his head.

Jewitt pressed the letter into the man's hand. His hand looked tiny as he grasped the paper with his thumb and index finger. "Give this to a ship. A Boston-man, King-George-man. Give this to a ship, please."

The man looked puzzled. "What is this?"

"A message. It's a message."

"And what will you give me?"

Jewitt pulled a knife from the bag and gave it to the man. He tested the sharpness of the blade by running it across his forearm, then nodded.

"This is a good knife."

"You'll take the message, then," Jewitt said.

"Yes. Fuck Kalicum. I don't mind Mkwila, but I do not like Kalicum."

"I don't like him either," Jewitt said.

"Fuck Kalicum," he said again.

The man tucked the letter inside his fur robe. He shouted instructions to his men and got into the one of the canoes. He sat in the front, and did not paddle as the flotilla slowly moved through the harbour and out into the open waters of the inlet.

Turning around, Jewitt thought he saw Kalicum staring at him, from the far end of the big house. He blinked and the man was gone.

7 Touch my lips

When the ten days were up, Mokwila allowed Jewitt to return to the big house. When he walked to the far corner of the house, where he usually slept, Naida was waiting for him with a plate of food she had prepared. Jewitt took the tray and put it on his knees, as he always did, and began to eat. He offered food to Naida but she would not eat until he had finished.

She asked him what he liked to eat.

"I like everything," he said and that was true.

She giggled when he said that, and pulled the cedar blanket up around her face.

He offered her food and she began to eat, holding the blanket with one hand, feeding herself with the other.

Jewitt told her to stop. He reached over and removed the blanket.

She was wearing a cedar cloak painted a brilliant red, edged in fur, that fell in straight lines from her neck and shoulders. Her twin plaits of hair were pulled back and fastened behind her head. Two small copper earrings dangled from her ears. She was unspeakably beautiful.

Without pausing to think, Jewitt reached out with his hand, to caress her cheek. She flinched, as though surprised.

"Please," he said.

She sat still for a moment. He touched her cheek again.

"You must want water," she said. She got up and fetched a bowl of water, handing it to Jewitt.

Jewitt took a sip and put it down.

"Did you get enough to eat, Chuwin?"

Jewitt nodded. "Please call me John."

"Chon?"

"Yes. John."

"Chon."

"Yes. John."

"Oh," she said suddenly. "You mean Jawn." She said the word quickly and precisely.

"Yes."

"My name is Naida," she said.

"I know," Jewitt said.

Jewitt did not know what to do or say. He wanted to kiss his wife but how could he do that in front of forty people?

"Come with me," he said finally. He put the food tray aside. Naida got up. She was a full foot shorter than Jewitt. She picked up the blanket and began to wrap it around her shoulders. Jewitt bent over and helped her. The edge of the blanket was trimmed in soft fur. He stood back for a moment and looked at Naida. She seemed impossibly young and delicate. How could this girl be his wife?

She followed him out of the house. Jewitt could hear the women whispering about them. Someone must have made a joke because two women laughed.

When they were outside, he took her hand and they walked side by side.

He felt as though the entire village was watching, although in fact they were not.

They crossed the meadow, past the blacksmith shack to the path that followed the three beaches on the Pacific side.

They walked to the second beach. The surf was lackadaisical, sweeping up the pebbly beach in slow foamy waves and then easing back down again. The water was metal gray, and the sky that hung over them seemed dark and glowering, as though about to burst into argument.

They sat on the driftwood root of an enormous tree.

Naida dropped the blanket again, so Jewitt could hold her hand. Touching her hand made his heart beat quickly, and the beating of his heart made it difficult to think. For now, he didn't want to think. He looked out at the horizon line, thin and straight and perfect on such a calm day. The sky promised rain. He looked up and then down at the horizon line again. He turned to face Naida.

"Thank you for the food," he said finally.

"You're welcome," she said.

A pause. He looked into her eyes. What did he see there? He wasn't sure. What did she see in his eyes?

"Clasiaca has been very kind," she said.

He wanted to ask what she had done for the ten days of separation but wasn't sure how to ask the question.

"Are you comfortable?" he said finally.

"Yes," she said.

"Did you know Clasiaca is my aunt?"

"Your father's sister?"

"Yes."

Jewitt didn't know this, of course, because no one had told him, but he was not surprised.

Everyone in Mokwila's circle of kings, chiefs and nobles seemed to be related to everyone else.

"Yes," she said again. "Clasiaca has been very kind. She is a very fine woman."

"Yes," Jewitt said.

They sat in silence. Jewitt turned to look at the ocean again.

"She is a very kind woman."

Naida picked up Jewitt's hand for the first time. He looked at her again. She was smiling.

"Do you have a mother and father, Jawn?"

Jewitt explained that his mother had died when he was very young child and so he remembered nothing about her except what his father and older brother had told him. When he was seven, his father married a widow with two children.

"So there are four of you ... a brother and the two daughters of your new mother."

"Yes."

"And how many aunts and uncles do you have?"

Jewitt counted them up. There were more than fifteen.

Naida asked him more questions about his family and as he began to talk about them, he began to relax, too, and the beat of his heart seemed to return to normal. He was still holding Naida's hand, but his heart felt normal again. He described each relative as accurately as he could. When he came to the aunt and uncle who worked a farm, he explained to Naida what a farm was and how crops are planted and harvested. But every explanation seemed to require another explanation. Money, buildings, cities, carriages, pubs, restaurants, shops, all of these things required some kind of explanation.

Naida listened politely, as though he were describing the contents of a dream.

"Do you understand what I'm saying?" he said.

"Yes," she said. "But I can't see these things."

"No."

"I will never see these things."

"I don't know."

"Unless I go to your country."

Jewitt could not imagine taking Naida to England. That was impossible. Who would understand why he found her so beautiful and why he wanted her so much? Who could possibly understand that?

Naida began to describe her family, the various brother and sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers, some in her village, some in Mokwila's village, and a few in distant villages that took many days of travel to reach.

As Naida talked, Jewitt could not absorb all the names and all the people she was describing. She had a hundred relatives. He started to laugh.

"Why are you laughing?" she said.

"Your family is too big!"

She seemed genuinely perplexed. "What do you mean, Jawn?"

"You have too many relatives."

"I don't understand."

"I'm sorry," he said. "I was making a joke."

"Oh," she said, and turned away for a moment.

He touched her cheek again.

"You are very beautiful," he said.

"I don't want to talk anymore," she said.

He got up and took her hand, and they walked to the path and then followed it north past the third beach. They looped back past the lake, and Jewitt showed Naida the beach where he prayed on Sunday, using something called a Bible, which contained the words of his God. Naida listened to this but did not say anything.

When they reached the meadow, he took her over to the blacksmith shack and explained how he used the fire in the forge and the rock anvil and his various tools to make things out of metal, and how his ability to work with metal was the reason Mokwila had spared his life.

There was no word in Naida's language for "blacksmith". Jewitt taught her how to say it.

"Blak-smit," she said finally.

"Was the captain your friend?" she asked.

"Not exactly," Jewitt said. "He was the chief of the ship."

"All those men on the ship are dead?"

"Yes."

"I don't want to die," she said.

The thought of Naida dying took Jewitt by violent force. He stopped walking for a moment and took a deep breath. The thought of losing her made him feel faint. He hardly knew her, and yet he felt he must be in love with her because he wanted to touch her and kiss her and do nothing but look into her eyes and feel saved by the miracle of her beauty.

With Mokwila's permission, Jewitt took some spare planks and fashioned a separate room in the house for Naida and Satsa. The walls were only three feet high but that was enough to create something separate from the king's area in the corner. He fashioned a crude bed platform, six inches off the dirt floor, piled with thick mats, where he and Naida could sleep cleanly and more comfortably than the other people in the house.

For the first night together, he kissed her shyly on the face and then on the lips, and she did not resist. Then she turned around, and slept curled against him. He put his arm around her and held her tightly. He was hard and rubbed against her but she did not respond.

On the second night, she took off her cloak and lay naked under the blanket with him. She turned onto her stomach and he positioned himself on top of her. She raised her ass in the air and he straddled her and then tried to enter. He pushed. She grunted and then whimpered, as though in pain. He stopped, torn between wanting to fuck her yet not wanting to hurt her. When he pulled back, she grabbed his cock and tried to put it back in. He pushed again, and she whimpered again.

On the third night, they lay together under the blanket until everyone had gone to sleep. Again, she raised her ass in the air, and again, with a hard cock he pushed into her, and kept pushing all the way until he was finally in, his hand over her mouth to quiet her cries. They moved together quickly and then he finished, and collapsed, sweaty and spent, on top of her. He kissed her back and the nape of her neck. She rolled over and he kissed her on the lips and she kissed him back, for the first time. He felt unbelievably happy. In a few minutes, he was hard again, and they fucked again, the same way, except this time he lasted longer and he felt in their movements together they had become as one body, as the Bible said they would. A third and a fourth time, and then in Naida's crescendoing cries and whimpers he realized she had felt the immense, sudden pleasure he had felt too. They slept curled against each other until Clasiaca woke them in the morning.

Mokwila inspected the mats. Finding blood that morning, he was pleased. "You're husband and wife now," he said. "This is good. This is very good, Chuwin!"

Naida smiled. Jewitt felt shamed and exposed, although there was no reason to feel shame. At home you fucked your wife in the privacy of a room, with the door shut. Here, everyone knew, everyone could hear what you did. But that didn't change what you did, or the pleasure you felt. Everyone did it and everyone felt the pleasure of doing it.

On the first Sunday after marrying Naida, Jewitt went to the prayer beach. Naida wanted to come, but Jewitt told her she could not. He described what he did at the beach, and what a Bible was, and what Christians believed. She did not understand Jesus Christ; how could a god have a son who walked on the earth and then died? Naida said Quahootze did not walk on the earth. He was a god, far away, who created everything. Gods never die.

"You don't understand," Jewitt said. "I must do this." He had no desire to turn Naida into a Christian even if she wanted to. Mokwila would not approve of that. Jewitt felt that the king was more than reasonable in allowing him time every Sunday to go to the beach and worship according to his own beliefs. What was the point of trying to explaining something to Naida that she could not understand? That would be like trying to explain to Quatlazape what it felt like to walk down the streets of London with

money in your pocket or how to calculate the latitude and longitude of your position as sea or even what a newspaper was. How could you possibly explain those things to a native?

Jewitt left his wife and walked to the prayer beach. It was a fine sunny morning in mid-May, the water of the lake reflecting the blue sky above, and the new green of spring growth reflecting the trees that as always surrounded and enclosed him.

He opened the prayer book and turned to the section on marriage, *The Form of Solemnization of Marriage* and began to read what he found there.

Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this congregation, to join together this Man and this Woman in holy Matrimony; which is an honourable estate instituted by God in the time of man's innocency ...

Jewitt put the book down.

He was married in the eyes of the natives but not in the eyes of God.

If he was not married in the eyes of God, he must be living in a state of sin.

He'd had carnal relations with a young heathen woman not once or twice or even three times, but many times.

... signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church; which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence, and first miracle that he wrought, in Cana of Galilee; and is not by any to be enterprized, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly, to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding ...

Was he a brute beast? The natives had no understanding of Christ and his Church. Did that make them brute beasts? Jewitt thought that it must, in the eyes of God, and yet God had created them, had he not? He had created everything under the sun, every creature, animal and human, every mineral, every mountain range and every ocean, every tree and every plant, every molecule of air and every drop of water in the oceans. God had created all of these creatures and all of these things.

The natives could be beasts, that was true. They killed their enemies. They were cruel. They cut off heads. They went to war for reasons Jewitt could not understand.

But they could be kind and generous. They did things that Jesus would have admired.

But they were doomed to go to hell when they died because they did not believe in Jesus Christ. They did not accept God in their hearts. They did not live a Christian life.

But how could Jewitt live a Christian life? He still believed, as he had always believed, in God who would watch over and protect him. He prayed. He tried to be good. He tried to be humble. He followed the ten commandments and read the Bible.

But he had killed a man, put a sword through his stomach and felt the tip grind into the dirt beneath him and twisted that sword until the man was dead.

God could forgive that, could he not? Jewitt had prayed for forgiveness, and while God had sent no sign of forgiveness, Jewitt, hoping for such a sign even as he knew that was wrong and selfish of him, was convinced God would in the end forgive him and allow him into heaven.

Now he was married to a heathen woman and living in sin, and worse, he was enjoying her body every night. He had *carnal lusts and appetites*.

Jewitt kept reading. The text said there were three reasons for marriage.

First, Matrimony was ordained for the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord.

Second, it was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body.

Third, it was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.

The procreation of children. He and Naida would have children. For some reason, this had not occurred to him before.

Bad enough that he was now living in sin with a heathen woman. If Naida became pregnant and had a child, surely that would be another sin they both committed?

They would both go to hell unless God forgave them.

How merciful was God?

Jewitt could not stop now. He could not undo what he had done. He could not bring the dead man back to life. He could send Naida back to her father, but that would not undo what they had done together. Nothing could be undone. Jewitt thought about this and for the first time in his life felt the

implacable permanence of his own experience. As a child you could apologize for a prank, or a lie, or a unkind word spoken in anger or frustration. As an adult, you acted in the world, and those actions could never be reversed or undone. Nothing you could say would undo them. Nothing you could say, no apology or request for forgiveness, could bring a dead man back to life.

Jewitt felt faint. He put the book down. He sat for a moment.

He waited for God to offer some kind of guidance or even a sign that all was not lost.

He waited.

Nothing.

He knelt again and said the Lord's Prayer.

Nothing.

He opened the Book of Common Prayer and read from Psalm 128 in the Matrimony section:

Blessed are all they that fear the Lord: and walk in his ways.

For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands; O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be.

Thy wife shall be as the fruitful vine: upon the walls of thy house;

Thy children like the olive branches: round about thy table.

Lo, thus shall the man be blessed: that feareth the Lord.

Jewitt feared the Lord, but did not see that he was blessed.

He called to the Lord one final time, clenching his hands together as though in fervent blinded prayer, closing his eyes as tightly as possible, bowing his head as submissively as he could.

He heard nothing.

He opened his eyes and saw nothing.

He felt emptiness and shame.

For a week he slept a foot away from his wife and did not touch her. He rose early every morning, before dawn, and walked to the ocean beach, where he removed his clothes and bathed in the water and prayed to God for forgiveness. He knew the water could not cleanse his soul, only the forgiveness of God could do that, but he didn't know what else to do, what other thoughts to think, what actions to take, what words to say. He sat in the water and felt its cold penetrate deep into every bone and muscle of his body. He did

not acclimatize to the cold or try to ignore it. The cold was God's power made manifest and real to him. The cold could kill him. One morning he sat in the ocean so long that he could not feel his body or move his limbs. For a moment he thought he would lose consciousness. He closed his eyes. A wave washed over his head. He swallowed water and began to choke. The choking forced him to move, and the movement saved him. He found the strength to stand up and shake off the cold water that coated him. He began to walk slowly into shallower water, and then onto the beach. He sat on a driftwood log for a long time, head bowed, and then head between his knees.

Mokwila was curious about his early morning ritual. "Chuwin, why do you sit in the ocean every morning? Are you preparing for war?"

Jewitt resented the question and did not want to explain himself to the king. He said simply, "No, my lord. I am not preparing for war."

"I hope you're not becoming a whale. Are you becoming a whale?"

"No."

"Good. Because then I would have to hunt you and kill you." Mokwila laughed.

But after seven days of bathing, God had still not spoken to Jewitt. Not a single word. Not a single sign. Jesus had wandered for forty days and nights in the desert before God had spoken to him. Moses had climbed to the top of the mountain in order to talk to God. Where was Jewitt to go? He had no desert and no mountain. Only trees, too many trees and the cold, implacable ocean.

Naida saw that Jewitt was troubled. She asked him what was wrong.

"My soul," he said. "My soul is what's wrong."

"Motana can help you find it," she said.

"No," he said. "Motana cannot help me find it. It's not lost."

"I don't understand," she said. "If your soul has gone away, Motana can help you find it."

"Naida, my soul had not gone away. My soul is going to Hell."

But there was no native word for Hell. Naida did not understand what he said and asked him to repeat it.

Jewitt grew impatient. "I can't explain my words to you. Why can't you speak English?"

"I do not speak English, I speak my language," Naida said. "You speak my language. You're my husband. I don't understand what's wrong."

She reached out to him, but he pushed her away. "Go away. You! That's what's wrong!"

"Yes," she said very quietly, so quietly that Jewitt could barely hear her. "You should send me away, back to my family, if you don't like me."

She began to cry.

Jewitt could not stand the sight of Naida crying. His anger drained away and disappeared. He put his arm around her and told her he would not send her away. She did not come close to him. She did not find comfort in his arms.

"I'm very lonely here," she said. "Very lonely."

"I understand," he said.

"I am shamed to cry in front of you," she said.

"It's alright," he said.

"Everyone will know."

"What other people know doesn't matter."

"Everyone will know."

Jewitt looked around the big house. No one was watching them. They were protected by the walls he had built.

"No one can see," he said. "No one can hear."

"Will you send me back to my father?"

"No. Do you want to go back?"

"No."

Jewitt did not want to send Naida back to Upquesta. He knew in his heart he had begun to love her, although he did not know how to explain this feeling to her. What did the natives know about the tenderness of love that white people felt? As much as God might think it wrong, how could it possibly be wrong to love someone as beautiful and kind as Naida? How could that possibly be wrong? Yes, he loved her and he wanted her.

Naida did not understand kissing. When Jewitt pressed his lips against hers, she pulled away and made a face.

"What are you doing?"

"I am kissing you." He said the sentence in English.

She shook her head.

He used his fingers to explain, pointing first at himself, then at his lips, then at her. "I.... kiss you."

"I-kis-yu," she said. "What is I-kis-yu?"

"Kissssss," he said again, drawing out the sound. "Like a snake."

She laughed. "Kissssssssss," she said.

He touched her lips, tracing a slim oval with his finger. He leaned forward again and placed his lips against hers. She held still and attentive, as though receiving a difficult instruction.

"I push forward, you push forward," he said.

She pushed against his chest with her hands. He laughed.

He kissed her again, this time holding the back of her head with his right hand. He did this very gently and then he felt something come alive in the kiss, a response from her that made his heart skip a beat. He pulled his hand away from her head but the pressure remained. He was kissing her and she was kissing him.

He withdrew from the kiss, edging carefully away from her, creating just enough space between them that he could easily run his finger across her brown and down her cheek. She smiled as he did this, the smile that had first won his heart in her father's house. He ran his finger across her lips and touched her teeth for a moment. She closed her mouth on his finger and then released it, and he moved his wet finger across her lips again.

He wet his lips and then drew close to her and kissed her. He was hard again, for the first time in more than a week, his blood on boil. She pulled her cloak up, doubling it around her stomach. He did the same and then pushed her down on the mat and knelt between her legs. She shook her head and tried to turn over. He told her to stay, and pulled a blanket on top of them.

In a moment he was inside and watching her face for the first time as they moved together.

For the September trip up the inlet to Tashees, Jewitt was ordered by the king to sail the long boat, as he had the year before with Thompson. Naida was assigned a place in Clasiaca's canoe, despite Jewitt's objection that his wife should travel with him.

Satsa insisted that he was old enough and strong enough to accompany Jewitt and Jewitt did not reject him. Satsa sat in the bow of the boat, handling the jib sail, while Jewitt, once the boat was fully loaded, manned the rudder and controlled the main sail.

The winds in the Sound were brisk and south easterly. As soon as the long boat cleared the entrance to the harbour, the full force of wind caught the sails, bulging them with a sudden snap, like puffy cheeks, and driving the boat north. Jewitt felt the force of the wind on the pressure he needed to control the rudder. Satsa sang out in glee as the boat rocked and pulsed in the waves. Jewitt, still far from expert at handling the boat, felt fear rise from the pit of his stomach.

The first time they tacked, the boom crossed the centre line of the boat so quickly he could barely control it. Satsa ducked and laughed, and leaned over the side of the boat to splash water in the air with his hand.

Soon they were far ahead of the enormous line of heavily laden canoes behind them.

On the second tack, the boat came close to shore. Jewitt could see a shoal of rocks approaching. He shouted to Satsa that he was coming about, but the boy did not hear. As the boom came across the centreline of the boat, it hit him neatly on the side of the head and knocked him into the water.

Jewitt panicked for a moment and shouted "Oh my God, Satsa!" He could see the boy in the water, thrashing with his arms as the heavy ocean swells pushed him up and then pulled him down.

Jewitt told himself to stay calm, to think through a solution. The boat was now twenty or thirty yards downwind of the boat. Jewitt stood up and kept his eyes locked on the boy as he quickly turned the boat in a circle in order to reverse direction. The sails made an unholy racket as they flapped in the wind, and then suddenly caught as the angle changed and they filled again and the boat heeled over so violently Jewitt thought the boxes stacked in the middle would begin to tumble into the water. The jib was too far forward to adjust and so he could do nothing while it flapped and trembled in the wind. The boat seemed to be moving at tremendous speed, now pouncing up and down in the white capped waves.

Jewitt could still the boy in the water, thrashing his arms. Jewitt tacked again quickly, and felt the boat groan and shake as the wind caught the sail again and pushed it down into the water. Jewitt was almost at Satsa now, and then suddenly he shot past, helpless to stop the boat, helpless to pick up Satsa or help him in any way.

Jewitt was past him already. Satsa was still shouting.

Jewitt turned the boat yet again, and pointed the bow directly at the bow. He let the mainsail flap free, to slow the boat as much as possible. He would have only one chance to rescue the boy as the boat went by, and he needed to steer the boat precisely so as not to run over him.

Jewitt was about to pray to God for strength, but then he stopped. He said nothing to God. He did not pray. He took a deep breath and yelled to Satsa to raise his arms as high as possible so he could pluck him from the water as the boat went past.

Jewitt tightened his grip on the rudder. The boat was tossing and pitching worse than before, but he held course as the boat came upon Satsa.

With a sudden whoosh the boat seemed to surge down into the trough of the wave as he reached over the side and into the cold water and there was Satsa with an arm somehow raised in the air. In one perfect motion Jewitt seized the boy and drew him up out of the water, close enough to the hull that Satsa could grasp the gunwhale and hang on as his body trailed in the water.

Jewitt brought the bow of the boat around and into the wind. The sail flapped so violently he thought it would tear itself into shreds but it did not. The boat slowed and then stopped, bouncing up and down in the waves.

He let go the rudder and reached over and pulled the boy into the boat.

Satsa, soaked to the skin and shivering with the cold, fell against him and knocked the two of them down onto the floorboards at the stern.

The boat was rocking with terrible violence, and the sail was screaming, and the wind seemed to be howling. Jewitt and the boy lay in the boat for a moment. The boy was exhausted and lay there with his eyes closed.

Jewitt held the rudder again and brought the bow of the boat to starboard, so they could sail at an easier angle to the wind. The wind caught and filled the main sail and then the jib. He released the line on the main sail and the boat settled down to a manageable speed and angle.

Satsa still lay at his feet, eyes closed.

There was a tiny notch in the shoreline where Jewitt realized they could find some protection from the wind. He steered the boat directly into the notch and ran the boat aground on a tiny section of beach that miraculously appeared at the very last minute. As soon as the hull hit the sand, Jewitt clambered forward and dropped the sails, tying up the main so it tightly hugged the boom, and collapsing the jib into a tight bundle at the bow.

Satsa was sitting in the stern of the bow, shaking his head, still breathing heavily.

Jewitt asked him if he was alright.

Satsa nodded.

Jewitt jumped into the shallow water and pulled the long boat a few feet higher on the beach. The boat was heavily loaded with boxes and gear. How did he find the strength to do that? He had no idea.

He sat on the beach for a moment. His left hand was shaking. He placed his right hand on top of it and the shaking stopped.

Satsa helped him tie down the boom so it wouldn't move. The boy was still soaking wet but didn't seem to mind. They pushed the boat back into the water and used the oars to swing the bow out in the direction of the Sound. Jewitt told Satsa to raise the jib and as soon as the boy did this, the wind caught it and pulled them back into the main flow of wind and water.

Under jib alone, the boat was easier to handle. Jewitt controlled the line attached to the sail and used it to slow down their speed as they fell down into a trough, and speed up again as they climbed the far side of the wave.

Then the wind began to ease and the water started to flatten. Jewitt looked back, to see the distant line of canoes, still far behind them, and when he turned towards the bow again, he saw that Satsa was pointing at some seals off the right. The water there was calm. How could that be?

They entered the water and passed the seals and it was calm.

The wind still blew, but only moderately and yet the sea was quite calm. Jewitt let the sail fill completely and they moved easily and comfortably up the inlet for the last hour or two of the trip.

They were the first to arrive at Tashees. Jewitt drove the boat right up the beach, to the left of the river, and then with Satsa's help unloaded all the boxes in the boat.

The boy acted as though nothing had happened. Once the boat was unloaded, he went off to explore in the woods.

Staring out at the water, Jewitt could see the first wave of canoes approaching.

He sat on the beach and watched them grow steadily larger as they approached. The water was flat and gray. Mist hung in the trees. Everything in the world seemed to be damp and wet. He could not put out of his mind the image of Satsa thrashing in the waves, Satsa waving his arms, Satsa needing help and rescue. The terrible motion of the boat. The unceasing sound of the wind and the flapping of the sails.

Jewitt did not tremble at these thoughts, but he felt utterly exhausted by them.

Later, when the houses were assembled, when the village was again alive with a thousand people, Mokwila came to him and thanked him for saving the boy.

Jewitt nodded his head but said nothing.

"You will be free," the king said.

"I don't understand."

"In the spring, you will be free if you want. If a ship comes."

The king walked away.

Now they fucked quietly under the blanket, in the tiny space allotted to them in the king's house. Jewitt wanted to built his own little house, somewhere off in the woods for privacy, but the king said this was not allowed. Naida's movements seemed different, more hesitant and cautious. Jewitt assumed this was because they were all jammed in so tightly together in the house at Tashees, but then he ran his hand across her stomach and felt the curve that had not been there before.

He did not know the word for pregnant. He could have asked Clasiaca but for some reason felt shy about doing so.

He mimed a rounded belly to his wife.

"Baby?" he said.

"I don't know," she said. "I think so."

No one knew. At least not yet. She looked the same. Her belly didn't show when she wore the cedar bark dress and that was the only thing she wore.

Jewitt looked at the other women in the house. Half of them could have been pregnant. How would anyone know?

Jewitt knew only that women disappeared for a few days to have their babies and then reappeared with tiny screaming creatures swaddled in blankets or tied into wooden cradles. In one house, he saw an entire row of babies. lined up in their tiny cradles.

How he could he be a father? He had no idea.

When Naida finally told Clasiaca, Clasiaca was pleased and smiled for the first time in a very long time. Clasiaca told Mokwila, who came to Jewitt and smiled at him.

"I will name the child," Mokwila said. "A good name. We'll feast. Give you presents."

"Thank you," Jewitt said.

"Are you scared, Chuwin?"

Jewitt shook his head, knowing this was a lie, but unable to do anything else.

"You're lying, but I understand why. The first child is terrifying, but the second child is a blessing."

"I want to help Naida."

"The women will help Naida. She will produce a strong son for you." Mokwila looked thoughtful for a moment, then smiled again. "He will be half a King-George-man!"

"Yes."

Mokwila repeated his remark and then laughed. "I wonder which half ... his butt or his head?" He laughed.

Jewitt did not laugh. He was afraid Naida would die giving birth. He was afraid there would be something wrong with the baby. He was afraid he wouldn't know how to be a father to his child. He was afraid this would tie him to Naida, to Mokwila, to the village, to the savages and heathens forever and ever.

"Chuwin, why are you so serious? You should be happy. A happy father!"

"Yes, my lord."

"I will give him a fine name and he will grow up to be a fine fisherman and warrior. He will have a good spirit, a generous spirit, like his father. He will be handsome like his father. He will have his mother's fair skin and gentleness. Naida is good for you because of her gentleness, I think. But she has a certain strength that is good for you too. And I know you enjoy the fucking. We can hear."

Jewitt said nothing. He didn't like to be reminded of what Mokwila and the others could hear.

"Yes," the king said. "You should be happy! Be happy, Chuwin!"

Jewitt thought at that moment he would only be happy when he was far away from Mokwila.

"And if a ship comes. Well. Maybe that will make you happy too. Happier than Naida makes you."

Jewitt could not think about Naida and his son, and also think about a ship. That was too much to think about, and too difficult a choice to think about.

Jewitt, tired of the conversation, began to walk away.

The king called out after him. "Remember, Chuwin, you are old enough to know what makes you happy. Every man knows that."

But Jewitt was no longer listening to the king. He kept walking, away from the king, away from the house, away from the village. He kept walking, to get away.

Now that news of Naida's pregnancy had been announced, her daily routine changed dramatically from the labour of cooking, sewing and basket making to rest and relaxation. She took long naps every afternoon, and went to sleep soon after the evening meal. She no longer slept with Jewitt, but beside Clasiaca, on the far side of the king.

Jewitt had no choice but to accept these changes.

"Do you want a healthy baby?" the king asked him.

"Yes."

"She must be the first to eat, at every meal. and she must do no work. When the baby is born is born, Motana will dance and sing songs."

Naida complained that she felt fine, and strong enough to do work, but Clasiaca would not allow it. They argued for two days and then the king took her aside on the third day and instructed her to obey Clasiaca.

"You will obey my instructions, and Clasiaca's instructions, or news of this will reach your father," the king told her.

She nodded, even though she did not agree.

"He likes to bend my will," she told Jewitt later. "Like a lot of old men, he thinks he's right. All the time. No one is right all the time."

They were sitting on the log he had positioned opposite the blacksmith shack, deep in the forest near Tashees. It was early in the afternoon on a Tuesday in October, and not yet time to return to the big house. The sun was shining, high above the trees, but no longer carried force or conviction. Naida adjusted the blanket around her shoulders.

"Are you warm enough?" Jewitt asked.

"I'm fine."

"I have another blanket here."

"Chuwin, I'm fine. Please. Why does everyone treat me like a feeble, sick granny?"

"We just want you to comfortable. And safe."

"I'm fine. I'm very comfortable. I'm very safe."

Jewitt, intensely curious, couldn't help but ask questions. "How do you feel?" he asked.

"I told you. I feel fine."

"But the baby. How does the baby feel?"

"Chuwin, how many times do I have to tell you? I don't feel the baby. I know he's there, inside me, but I don't feel him yet. Now stop bothering me with these questions."

Jewitt smiled. He put his arm around his wife.

"I love you, Naida."

"Yes," she said. "I know that. You tell me often enough."

"I love you very much." He began to kiss her ear, just above the copper earring. "I love you very much and I also love your ear very much." He got up and sat on the other side, and kissed her other ear. "I also love this ear. If I could be in two places at once, I would kiss both your ears at the same time."

She told him to stop. He kissed her ear again and she giggled.

Kalicum, the king's younger brother, came to Jewitt one day and told him to fetch his file from the blacksmith shack.

"Why?" Jewitt asked. Rain was falling. Jewitt was watching Naida as she napped in the corner of the house. The heat from the fire made him sleepy too.

"Don't ask why, just do it."

"It's raining. I'm sleepy."

Kalicum came over to Jewitt and pulled him roughly to his feet. "Do it!" he said again.

Jewitt was annoyed but said nothing. He put a hat on and went out into the rain. By habit, he looked out over the water for a moment but saw nothing but a flat gray plain pockmarked by drops of rain and the gloomy impenetrable mist. The forest, the mountains, the entire world had disappeared.

He followed the main trail along the river bank to the north, then took the second branch to the west. In no time at all he reached the shack, opened the chest and removed one of his files.

On the way back to the big house, he stopped for a moment by the river. He squatted down and reached into the water with one hand, felt the cold and the energy and motion of the water across the skin of his hand. Far upstream, he could hear the bubbling and tumble of the rapids. The water was always pure and clean, the cleanest and purest thing in this world. His feet were filthy and his hair was filthy. He hadn't washed in days. The coldness no longer shocked or disturbed him, but there were days in this life when he felt like shedding his skin in order to acquire a new one. Snakes did that, or so he'd been told. With a new skin, you might feel new and clean again.

Back at the house, Kalicum was waiting impatiently for Jewitt's return. Jewitt found him seated by the fire, making strange gestures with his open mouth.

"Sit down," Kalicum said. Jewitt sat down opposite him, holding the file in one hand.

Kalicum pulled his lower lip down, exposing his teeth.

"What do you want, Kalicum?"

The man released his lip and glared at Jewitt. "You are a very stupid man, Chuwin. What do you think I want when I do this?"

Kalicum pulled his lip down again, and then released it.

Jewitt was completely perplexed. "I have no idea," he said.

"File me! File my teeth."

"Why?"

"Don't ask why. Do it. Just do it."

Jewitt tried to talk his way out of Kalicum's bizarre request, but the man was insistent. He grabbed the file from Jewitt's hand and began to move it against one of his teeth. The file made a nasty rasping sound.

"I can't do that." Jewitt said.

Kalicum slapped him across the face. "Do it," he said. "For the last time, I'm telling you to do it."

Jewitt gave up and began to file one of Kalicum's front teeth. There was just space on either side of the tooth to position the file. He had to hold the man's mouth firmly in one hand while he filed with the other. Kalicum did not move or make a sound, or indicate in any way that he was feeling pain or discomfort.

Jewitt filed two upper teeth and two lower teeth. The time passed so slowly while he was doing this that it seemed to take hours. Jewitt had no watch and no way to measure time now but his own perception of time. He knew the days and the months and the years, but minutes and hours were no longer measurable and therefore had fallen away in significance. He had the rhythms of morning, noon, afternoon and night.

Jewitt tried to blank his mind as he worked away on Kalicum's teeth, but this was difficult because he had to concentrate carefully on what he was doing, or the file would slip inside Kalicum's mouth and bang against his tongue. Several times Kalicum pulled Jewitt's hand away, closed and opened his mouth several times, and then swore vehemently that he would get his revenge, although he did not explain to Jewitt what the revenge would consist of and who it would be directed at.

Finally, Kalicum gestured for Jewitt to stop and put the file down.

He put his fingers in his mouth and felt the four sharpened teeth. Jewitt, unable to look at what he had just accomplished, turned away from Kalicum.

"Good work," Kalicum said. "Good work, Chuwin."

He got up and left the house.

Jewitt only heard later, from Clasiaca, why Kalicum had wanted Jewitt to file his teeth.

"The newest wife, Yahlua, would not sleep with him," Clasiaca said sadly.

Jewitt had not met the new wife, and knew nothing about her.

"She is a niece of Wikaninis. A very pretty young girl but much too stubborn."

"I don't understand," Jewitt said.

"What don't you understand?"

"Why he needed sharp teeth."

"Chuwin, listen to me. Kalicum likes to fuck young women, everyone knows that. He bought Yahlua in order to satisfy himself."

"Yes?"

"And she would not cooperate."

"I still don't understand?"

"What don't you understand? You've lived here, with us, with the king, with the villagers long enough to understand! If she did not do what he wanted, he had to punish her and send her back."

Jewitt now did not want Clasiaca to explain the punishment.

"So he bit off her nose. No one will marry her now."

Jewitt was disgusted by what he had just done. He excused himself and left Clasiaca. She called after him but he ignored her and walked out of the house.

He stood by the beach. Then, unable to stand, he fell to his knees. He thought he would throw up. When he took a deep breath, the beach stank of rotten fish, and fish bones, and filth and waste. Two men were inspecting the bow end of a canoe, just yards away, but he didn't care. Let them see how disgusted he was.

8 Birth

One night in late November the fires were banked early in the big house. Jewitt knew the winter ceremonial was about to begin. The king had instructed him to remain in the house in order to watch and learn because one day his son would take part in the ceremonial too.

There was nervous chatter among the children assembled in the king's corner, right next to the fire, now burning only dimly and throwing barely enough light to illuminate the faces of the children closest to the flames. Jewitt had been instructed to remain in the back, against the wall, where the bodies of the villagers positioned in front of him were only outlined shapes against the fire light.

Drumming began somewhere outside, and a kind of low, heavy chanting, deep in the bass notes. Jewitt listened carefully but he could not tell where the sounds were coming from. Every few minutes there were wild howls, first one voice, then a second and third, finally an entire chorus of wolf voices howling outside in the night. Someone banked the other fires in the house so that the only source of light in the house was the king's fire, where the children stood huddled in a tight group, as though waiting for some kind of performance to begin.

The beating grew louder and louder. Jewitt realized the drum beats were in fact the sounds of the planks being struck directly behind him, and then the entire house seemed to be vibrating and shaking with the vigorous drumming on all four sides, rising in volume until Jewitt could not think of anything except the sound of the drumming and how loud and insistent it was, as though to shake the house to pieces. The younger children looked frightened; Jewitt saw one young boy, no more than five or six, put his hands to his ears to block out the horrible sound of the drumming on the sides of the house.

The drumming softened and slowed, and the wolf voices began again, one, two, three, and then suddenly dozens and dozens of voices, on all sides of the house, howling and hooting together. The voices rose and fell, rose and fell, and then went silent.

No one spoke. No one whispered. The big house was silent and dark

The children were staring at the door. Jewitt followed their eyes, and in what seemed like no more than a second or two, a pack of wolves entered the house.

Each wolf stood upright, in fur suit and mask. The light was so dim Jewitt could only make out bodies and heads, the enormous snout of each wolf jutting forward on the mask, long rows of teeth visible on the side. The wolves moved forward, howling and screeching at the children, as the children, now jammed together by the force of their predicament, tried to move away the fire, away from the advancing wolves. But they had nowhere to go. They backed up against the rear wall of the big house and stood there trembling.

Jewitt could see that one of the older children was smirking, as though refusing to believe in the power of the wolves. But the younger ones were truly scared. As the wolves drew closer, they closed their eyes, and then placed their hands over their eyes. One girl put her hands over her eyes, and then put them over her ears, and then put one hand over her eyes and one hand over her ears.

When one boy broke away from the crowd of children and tried to run for the door, the lead wolf grabbed him rudely around the waist and hoisted him over his shoulders. The children screamed. Another child tried to flee and was also grabbed, hoisted up, and pinned to the shoulders of the wolf.

The older children made a brave show of resisting. They threw up their hands and made gestures at the wolves, as though warning them away or putting some kind of curse on them. The wolves quickly surrounded the children, forcing them away from the wall and out towards centre of the house. Each wolf produced a length of rope and tied a child's hands behind his back.

Once all the children were tied and bound, they were led out of the house by the wolves, who began to howl and screech again. The drumming on the side of the house began again and soon rose to a pitch even louder than before. Jewitt, still standing at the very back of the corner of the house, thought for certain the wall planks would fall to the ground from the terrible beating they were taking from the drummers outside the house.

The wolves had disappeared. The children had disappeared with them. The parents in the house began to wail and cry for their loss. Jewitt saw one mother fall to the floor and beat her hands in the dirt. As the ferocious drumming subsided, the house was filled with wailing and crying of mothers over their lost children. Jewitt understood they were only playing, only acting a part, that their children were safe and would be returned, but he could not detect any falseness or insincerity in their displays of grief and unhappiness, misery and pain at the loss of their children.

The fathers cried too, and pulled at their hair and beat their chests.

Then the crying and wailing stopped, and again there was a kind of tremendous silence in the house. Two couples sitting directly in front of the king's fire threw enormous shadows against the far wall of the house. Each time they moved in the light, their shadows leapt and jumped across the wall, like the outlines of giants or monsters.

Two men ran into the house, and began pushing people aside, and boxes aside, and baskets aside. They pushed rudely at people, tell them to move, get out of the way, go away. They knocked over boxes. One man came over to Jewitt and yelled at him to move aside. Jewitt moved, and the man searched behind him, shaking his head in disgust when he found nothing but sleeping mats and cedar blankets. More men came through the door and joined in the search. One man cried out, "Where are the children? Where are the children?"

The king had sat throughout the entire ceremonial in his usual place of honour in the corner of the house. One of the taller men in the search party approached him very closely, far more closely than most villagers dared, and demanded to know where the children had been taken. The king said he didn't know. The man asked again, and the king repeated that he did not know, that they must keep searching until they found the children.

In minutes, the big house was in shambles, with overturned boxes and baskets, the neat piles of sleeping mats in complete disarray.

The howling of the wolves began again.

Everyone in the house ran out to the beach. When Jewitt looked out over the dark water, he thought he could see wolves in the canoes fifty yards or so from the shore, but he wasn't sure. Were they wolves? Were they children? He couldn't tell.

Suddenly some of the parents were being picked up bodily and thrown into the water. Jewitt saw two men pick up a third, swing him several times, and then hurl him into the deeper water. The man disappeared for a moment and then stood up and laughed at the two men who had thrown him into the water. He walked back towards them. They promptly picked him up and threw him back in.

Other people were pushing and splashing and laughing. It was a cold night. Jewitt shivered in spite of the blanket he'd wrapped around his shoulders. No one seemed to notice the cold, or the cold water, or the splashing at all.

There were howls from the wolves out on the water, and then complete silence.

The villagers went back into the house, all chattering noisily among themselves, comparing the various wolves and trying to decide which one had been the most ferocious.

The fires were built again and in the light Jewitt could see how much the villagers were enjoying themselves. The women brought out food and everyone ate herring spawn, and halibut and salmon. In the far corner of the house, some of the older men were performing dances. In another, three young women were learning a song from an older woman. In yet another corner, Jewitt saw Kinneclimmets stuffing food into his face, the oil running down his face as usual.

Naida was in Quatlazape's house, with Clasiaca caring for her. She'd wanted to be in the big house, to watch the ceremonial, but the king would not allow it. Jewitt had given up trying to change the king's mind or opinion about anything to do with Naida's pregnancy. The king said the King George men knew nothing about babies and nothing about woman having babies. He had never observed a woman having a baby on any of the King George men ships, so why should he consider the opinion of someone like Jewitt? Jewitt knew nothing babies, whereas the king had observed and guided and blessed the birth of many healthy babies. There were rules to be observed, and the king would ensure that Naida and Jewitt observed them.

Naida's belly seemed to grow every day. The forced idleness of the pregnancy made her both quarrelsome and inert; one moment she would simply sit next to Jewitt, quiet and alone, day dreaming perhaps or simply blank with the peculiar emptiness the natives displayed from time to time, and then the next minute she would be complaining that her back was sore, or the food was too hot, or the water not cold enough, or Jewitt not attentive enough to her needs. The days were now short and the nights long and grew longer. Naida slept poorly, and sometimes cried out in the night. Jewitt, ten feet away, on the other side of Mokwila and Clasiaca, often found himself hard with desire for his wife but unable to do anything but wait for these feelings to diminish and then disappear.

The ceremonial continued through the night and into the next day. The villagers feasted and napped, and when they woke up feasted again. Jewitt realized there was humour and trickery too. If someone caught you saying the word "wolf", he could douse you with cold water. If someone caught you sleeping, he could douse you with cold water.

Finally, on the third day, the children re-appeared, at the far end of the beach, in the company of the wolves. The children's faces were brightly painted red, and they wore elaborate costumes decorated with bird feathers and strips of red cedar. The village approached them cautiously, and staged a mock battle with the wolves to free the children. Jewitt watched as the village men pretended to beat and maul the wolves. The wolves would then strike back and pretend to eat the men. Some of the spectators were laughing, but most were serious.

Finally the children were released. The wolves made one final charge against the men, and then withdrew to the forest. As they disappeared into the trees, they raised their voices in one final howl of wolf fury.

The children came back into the village. Slowly they were cleaned up. Their face paint was removed and the special clothing they wore stored away in boxes. On the last night of the ceremonial, they gathered again in the big house to perform the dances they had learned from the wolves. One at a time, they walk to the centre space of the big house and danced, as Satsa had so many times, to the beat of three drummers striking a long plank. Jewitt still could not fathom the native dancing. He saw no sense or pattern to any of it. The boys made a great show of leaping into the air and then falling down. The girls skipped and jumped and twirled. Each child danced alone. No one danced together. None of it made any sense to Jewitt. After the dancing, each child sang a song, usually about the wolves and the forest, and how great the power of the wolf was. The songs were mostly the same, and after listening carefully to make sure he could understand the words, Jewitt would slump back and relax, close his eyes, and rest, and try to block the monotonous sound of the singing. At the end of the song, the child would proudly announce a new name.

There was another day of feasting and pranks played on some of the older members of the village. Jewitt saw two younger men throw an older man into the water and then laugh when he had

trouble getting to his feet. Jewitt went over to help, but just as he was about to extend a hand to the old man, one of the younger man intervened and helped the old man to his feet.

The ceremonial ended with a huge bonfire on the beach. The children had retrieved their ceremonial clothes and were now throwing them, with great enthusiasm, into the fire.

The king would not explain to Jewitt what he had observed during the ceremonial.

"This is what we do for the young people," he said. "They receive the power and spirit of the Wolf, and they learn how to use that power and spirit. They learn the song they will sing for the rest of the life. They learn a dance they will dance for the rest of their life. It's a spirit song and a spirit dance. Do you understand, Chuwin?"

Jewitt lied and say yes, he did understand.

The king looked at him and smiled. "I've heard the songs you sing, Chuwin. They make me laugh. You sing about love. Love!"

Jewitt could not explain to the king the meaning of the songs he sang, or how he felt when he sang them. The villagers laughed too. He didn't mind that.

The king walked away suddenly. He often did that.

With the ceremonial over, the villagers slept from dusk to dawn through the early weeks of December. Light seemed to drain from the sky by late afternoon; dawn arrived as feebly in the morning as the modest flicker of light from a twig of wood bursting into flame. Jewitt slept too, and heard again in his head the thunderous beating on the wall planks of the big house and the wild roars of human wolves.

The king agreed with Clasiaca that Friendly Cove was the best location for Naida to have her baby, not Tashees or Cooptee. Jewitt was not consulted in the matter.

They returned to the summer village in late February, two weeks earlier than usual, on the last Wednesday in the month. Jewitt was still tracking dates in his secret journal and sometimes felt that knowing the date, the day and the year were an important part of knowing who he was and where he came from, that if he lost his sense of the calendar he might lose some sense of himself.

The trip south from Cooptee was easy and uneventful. No wind, no dangerous seas, just the steady pull on the oars of the long boat as the ebb tide helped draw them south. The king had insisted that Satsa remain in the lead canoe. Jewitt was assigned a slave to man the forward oars of the boat. The slave was a teenager not much older than Satsa, taken in a village raid three years earlier. Jewitt learned his name but the young man would not respond to his questions about where he was from or whether his parents were still alive. The slave simply sat and rowed, with mechanical precision and rhythm, the fifteen miles from Cooptee to Friendly Cove. When they arrived back in the harbour, the slave insisted on unloading the boat by himself, while Jewitt could only watch and think of a way to reward the young man. He finally gave him two daggers, which the slave received with a shy smile. Jewitt forgot himself and tried to shake the man's hand. Not understanding the gesture, he backed away, and then bowed, and disappeared into one of the houses.

Naida was confined in the birthing hut last week of her pregnancy. Jewitt, by now resigned to the fact he had no say whatsoever in her care and treatment, helped arrange for the special food she would be served, black cod and a special fish broth prepared by Clasiaca and one of the junior wives of the king.

One morning he woke up and she was not in the house. Mokuwila said she had been taken to the hut for the baby's birth and he must now listen carefully to the king's instructions and do as instructed for the baby to be born healthy and normal.

"Once the baby is born, you must stay inside," the king said. "Until then you may go outside and work. But stay away from her hut. Do not visit her, do not try to talk to her."

The hut was near the lake. He could not stay away. At dusk every night, he would sneak out of the house and walk the path he used to take to the prayer beach. He would walk fifty yards past the prayer beach and there, off to the left, almost hidden in a dip in the forest floor, was the hut. A small fire burned somewhere inside; he could see a tiny wisp of pale smoke emerge from one corner of the hut. As he watched a woman entered the hut and said something to Naida, and then re-emerged. The woman paused and looked around. Jewitt, now stationed behind a tree, hid from her sight. She walked to the trail and headed back to the village.

Jewitt looked at the hut again and tried to imagine Naida inside. No one had explained what she was doing while waiting for the baby. He wanted her to be comfortable and safe.

Clasiaca awoke him in the middle of the night to announce that a baby girl had been born to Naida. She seemed neither pleased nor displeased by the news. The baby was perfectly formed and cried heartily as soon as she entered the world.

"Can I see Naida?" he asked.

"No," Clasiaca said. "You must stay inside for four days and eat only dried fish. Did the king explain nothing to you?"

Jewitt shook his head.

"Go back to sleep," she said. "There is nothing you can do."

How could he sleep? He wanted to see his wife and daughter. His baby daughter would need a name, of course, and he had already decided that she would be named after his mother, Mary, who had died when he was four. Mary Jewitt. And for a middle name he choose Louise, for no other reason that he liked the sound of it. Mary Louise Jewitt. Those were very fine names he thought.

For four days he remained in the hut, with only bits of dried salmon to eat, and nothing to occupy his time except the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. He could not write in his journal because it lay locked in the tool chest in the blacksmith shack; there was no way to fetch it or even to send Satsa to get it for him because someone would see and tell the king. He no longer feared the king's anger, no matter what shape or form it took, but his unpredictable nature meant that he was liable to toss the diary into the ocean or hurl it into the fire. Jewitt could stand the angry words, but he could not stand the loss of his diary.

He tried to read again the Bible stories he had once studied so carefully, Adam and Eve, Moses and the Ten Commandments, Job and Jonah, the wandering of Jesus in the desert, the miracles of the loaves and fishes, the crucifixion and resurrection. These were stories he had known all his life, stories he had read so often he could easily recite them by memory. But what did they mean now? If God created the world, he created the Nootka too. They didn't believe in his God, or his Bible, yet here they were, living in the world he had created. He had tried once to explain the Creation to Mokwila, and the king had listened politely and then laughed, saying Jewitt had told a story that made absolutely no sense at all,

because it was clear to anyone who thought about it that the first man must come from the body of a woman.

"God created a woman first," the king explained. "But she was lonely here in the forests."

"Where do you mean?" Jewitt asked.

The king pointed towards the lake. "Not far from here. In the forest, Chuwin."

"You mean she was here, where you live now?"

"Yes, of course. Where else would she be? Let me tell the story. She was alone in the forest.

There were creatures, but they were missing parts of themselves. The deer had no antlers, the ducks had no wings, even the wolf had no tail. The woman cried all day and all night because she was so lonely. Then one day, out on the ocean she saw a beautiful copper canoe. It was an enormous canoe, longer than four or five of our longest canoes."

"Made of copper?"

"Yes, Chuwin, made of copper. Now Qua-utz was in the bow of the canoe, and many handsome young men were the paddlers of the canoe. The sad woman cried out to Qua-utz as the canoe came closer to shore, and Qua-utz heard how sad and lonely she was, and told the young men to drive the copper canoe up on the shore so that he could visit the woman."

"The canoe landed and Qua-utz got out. The woman was still weeping. When she saw Qua-utz, she began to cry even more. Her nose began to run and she sneezed some snot onto the sand. It was probably right over there." Mkwila pointed about ten yards down the beach from where they were standing. Jewitt looked carefully at where the king was pointing, but could see nothing different about that part of the beach.

"Yes, the woman sneezed a huge snot onto the sand. Then, as she watched, the snot began to wriggle and she realized it was alive. She went over to look more closely. She knelt down in the sand to get a really close look. What do you think she saw?"

Jewitt shrugged. He had no idea.

"Chuwin, she saw the tiny body of a man! The Snot-Boy! Qua-utz told her to pick up the tiny body of Snot-Boy and place it in a tiny clam shell. She did this. Then he told her that as the Snot-Boy got bigger and bigger, she must place his body in a bigger and bigger shell. She agreed to do this."

"Then the Creator looked around and decided that the animals in this world should share in the generosity he had shown the lonely woman. So he gave a tail to the wolf, wings to the duck and antlers to the deer. He gave body parts to all the animals so they would be perfectly formed. He was a very generous Creator."

"And then what happened?" Jewitt asked.

"He left again, of course. He could not stay with the lonely woman. She had company now. The Snot-Boy grew and grew, and she found bigger and bigger shells for him to be cradled in. Finally, he grew big enough to walk and no longer needed the shells. When he became a man, he used his hard cock to give her a child, and that child is the father of all my fathers, many many years ago. We are tyees, the leaders, the chiefs, the kings. That first father had many brothers and sisters and they are the mothers and fathers of all my people in the village, and all the people in the world."

"How do you know this story?"

"What do you mean, Chuwin?"

"Please, my lord, I mean no disrespect, but how do you know this story you have just told me?"

"I learned it from my father, as he learned it from his father. How else would I know it?"

"But Adam and Eve are in the book of my God."

"But who made that book?"

Jewitt realized suddenly he wasn't sure of the answer to the king's question. He knew that very wise scholars and religious men had written the Bible. But who were they, exactly? He had no idea. "I cannot answer your question," he said finally.

The king laughed. "You believe something and you don't know who told it to you?"

"But I know it's true."

"My father and his father and his father's father knew what's true. They were told the story and then they told the story to those that followed! If I can't trust my father, who can I trust?"

"I don't know," Jewitt said.

"Do you trust your father, Chuwin?"

"Yes," Jewitt said.

"Well then!" Mokwila laughed again. "Maybe you can make Snot-Boy your Creator too. I think my story is much better than your story. There's no copper canoe in your story, is there?"

The king was laughing at him. Jewitt didn't mind. He thought the Snot-Boy story was ridiculous, but he would never say this to the king. Why couldn't God create the world in seven days? Why couldn't he create man and woman and then tempt them with the apple from the Tree of Knowledge? They were weak and gave in and ate the apple that that's how evil came into the world. The king's story said nothing about man being weak and nothing about how evil came into the world. Surely the king believed in evil? If you could not explain how evil came into the world, how could you understand anything at all?

But now the Bible could not hold his attention the way it once had. He turned the pages dutifully and read the words that were printed on them, but he could not focus his mind on the familiar stories he was trying to read; instead, his thoughts remained with Naida and the baby. He could not read words on the page when his mind was fixed on imagining her face, her hair, her eyes and her smile. He had not seen her for almost seven days. He wanted to touch her skin and kiss her lips. She would be holding the baby, their baby, in her arms, and rocking the baby back and forth, and singing songs to the baby. Jewitt pictured this in his mind as he closed the Bible and put it away again.

Baby Mary was not in her mother's arms. She was tied into a cedar bark cradle with no room to move at all. Her head was most covered by pieces of hard bark that seemed to jammed against the sides and tops of her head in a very uncomfortable fashion. Naida held the bark cradle close to her chest. She was very pale and seemed dazed. She nodded at Jewitt when she came back into the big house. Clasiaca took the baby and placed her on the ground, near the fire, while Naida sat and ate some food.

Jewitt went to her and tried to speak tender words. He wanted privacy to explain how happy he was to have a daughter. But there was no privacy, of course, there was never any privacy with the natives. Finally Naida smiled. He leaned over and kissed her on the cheek. She turned away and looked down at the baby.

"Can I hold the baby?" Jewitt said.

"Not yet," Clasiaca said. She knelt down and picked up the bark cradle, carefully untied the various strings that were holding it together, and removed the baby. Then she placed Mary in a small

wooden box lined with a tiny cedar bark blanket. She carefully placed some fabric under the baby's knees so the legs would be bent, and not straight. Three pieces of wood were positioned around the baby's head to press down its skull, and lengths of cord were tied to keep the infant in place. When she was done, Clasiaca put the cradle back down the ground. An elderly man came over and jumped over the cradle several times, shouting "yu!" each time.

Finally, Jewitt was allowed to hold the cradle. Clasiaca picked up Mary and gave her to him. Naida was watching very carefully as Jewitt took the wooden box and held it in his arms.

Baby Mary was tiny and perfect. Jewitt had thought of babies as wriggling, restless little creatures, but his daughter, tied into her cradle, seemed calm and still. All he could see was her tiny face. Her dark eyes watched him and then rolled around and around until they found him again. He touched her face so lightly he could barely feel her new born skin, and then he applied more pressure, just enough pressure to feel the incredible softness of her cheek against the tip of his finger. Her head, bound by the wood pressure plates, held no moment but the rapid flicker of her eyes. Jewitt stared at his daughter as he touched her cheek. His heart felt so enormous at that moment he thought it would burst out of his chest.

Naida motioned for him to hand the baby to her. He did so. He asked Clasiaca why the old man had jumped over the baby and shouted, and she said that was to ensure the baby would not frighten easily when she grew up. This made no sense to Jewitt but he said nothing.

Naida was giving the baby a tiny sip of water from the spoon. She tilted the cradle up, brought the spoon to Mary's lips, and allowed a few drops to trickle into her mouth.

"We can call her Mary Louise," Jewitt said.

"What are you saying, Chuwin?" Clasiaca said.

"The name for the baby. Mary Louise."

"Mokwila will name the baby."

"I want to name the baby."

"Mokwila will name the baby. That's his right as the king."

Jewitt looked at Clasiaca and then at his wife. Naida was staring down at the baby again. She placed the cradle beside her. She repeated the words Mary Louise.

"Mokwila will name the baby," Clasiaca said again.

9 Noble lady

The paddlers who accompanied the king on each whaling expedition were chosen carefully, based on skill, endurance, rank and previous success in the hunt. The king believed very strongly that success in killing a whale depended on absolute fidelity on the part of each crew member in following the rules of preparation. Anyone who showed the slightest hesitation or reluctance in following these rules, regardless of previous success, would not be invited to return, and that meant a serious loss of prestige among the men in the village.

"You will come with me on the next hunt," Mokuila instructed Jewitt. It was the middle of April, and there were only two weeks left in the season of hunting for the humpbacks that migrated down the coast in the spring.

Jewitt did not understand why the king would ask him to join the hunt. "I have never hunted a whale before," he said.

"You won't be hunting. You'll be paddling. You're strong, perhaps the strongest man I have."

"I'm not the best paddler, my lord."

"Chuwin, all that matters is your strength and your spirit. Can you raise the paddle?"

"Yes."

"Do you have the strength to do this over and over again, day and night, for as long as it takes to bring the noble lady back to our village?"

Jewitt had no idea of what would be required for the hunt, but he knew he had no choice, and he suspected his presence would not be popular with the other paddlers.

"I will be honoured to share the canoe with you," he said finally.

Mokuila laughed so hard that he started to cough. He coughed, and then cleared his throat and finally spoke again. "No, Chuwin, you will be in Kalicum's canoe, not mine. You are a new paddler. I would never have a new paddler in my canoe. You might frighten the noble lady."

Jewitt nodded. He had no reason to think the whaling trip would be anything but arduous, exhausting and difficult. Kalicum as leader of the second canoe meant further insults and jibes. The king's brother rarely missed an opportunity to comment on the whiteness of Jewitt's skin and the strange way he pronounced native words, speaking, he said, "like a dim-witted dog whose mouth is upside down."

The day after the king told Jewitt he would be joining the whaling hunt, Mokwila disappeared to the island in the lake to prepare. Again, he would not tell Jewitt what he did on the island. Jewitt knew that there was some kind of building or shrine, and that the king did something mysterious with the skulls of previous hunters.

Jewitt's own preparation, like that of the other crew members, required ritual bathing in the ocean and complete abstinence from sex with his wife for the seven days leading up to the hunt. The ritual bathing was done at the third beach, as far from the village as possible, once in the morning and once in the evening. Jewitt had to remove his clothes. He had taken to wearing two layers of the cedar bark cloak, a tighter inner one and a looser outer one, for greater warmth.

Kalicum sneered when he saw Jewitt take off the two cloaks. "Come, Chuwin, show us how your white man blood can boil up the ocean when you step in. Or can it?" He laughed, and the two natives with him laughed too. Kalicum then plunged into the water and began to swim in large counter clockwise circles, muttering something under his breath.

Jewitt, now naked and already shivering, walked boldly into the water. The surface boasted only feeble ripples at dawn. A fog bank off shore obscured the horizon line. The ocean seemed to lay before them like a vast and restless bowl of water searching for silence and rest. Jewitt ignored the cold and continued to walk, knees, thighs, cock, stomach and then once the water reached his chest he threw himself forward, paddling furiously with his hands to keep his head well above the surface of the water. Kalicum stopped swimming to watch, and said that Jewitt's movements in the water reminded him of a deformed seal with only half a brain and a disfigured tail that he harpooned on the far side of the herring spawn island near Cooptee.

Jewitt ignored the insults. He paddled furiously with both hands and both feet to stay afloat in the water. He had never swum before. How could he possibly know what to do except mimic what he had seen? The deep cold of the ocean wanted to pull him down, below the surface. His lungs felt gripped in an enormous vise; he panted, forcing his breath in and out of his body with enormous effort. He swam the circle and then his feet touched ground again.

Kalicum was swimming again, and chanting. The two other men joined the chant. Jewitt, standing on the bottom, with the water still up to his neck, began to chant too:

We search the noble lady

We search the noble lady

We love the noble lady

She brings us safely home.

Out of the water, Jewitt sat for a moment on the pebbles, head between his legs. running his hands over his shins and then rubbing his feet to bring life back into them. There was no wind, but the air was not much warmer than the water. For a moment Jewitt thought he could not stand the cold any longer, and that the only solution to this dilemma was to plead with the king to be excused.

Kalicum walked by and cracked a joke about his tiny white cock.

Jewitt ignored the joke. He looked down at his cock. It was tiny and white. He wanted to laugh but could not. He looked up again and sighed. The ocean remained as cold and gray as ever. If he had seven days of preparation for the whale hunt, that meant fourteen ritual bathings. He had completed one, and that left thirteen. An unlucky number, he thought, a very unlucky number.

He and Naida had only just resumed their fucking under the blanket at night, waiting for the baby to sleep, and then taking their usual positions, Naida on her hands and knees, Jewitt entering her from behind. They moved quickly and finished quickly and quietly. The baby might wake at any moment and need her attention, Naida had said. We can do it, but we must be quiet. Jewitt knew that he had lost something with the birth of his daughter and yet gained something too. Why was life always like that? Why couldn't you keep adding and adding, and then end up with so much more than when you began? Why did subtraction always seem to keep pace with addition? Jewitt had no answer to this question he posed to himself.

He knew that he loved Naida. He wanted to be with her, he wanted to touch her and kiss her, he wanted to be inside her. When he was inside her, he wanted to stay there forever. What a crazy idea that was. Afterwards, he felt as though his entire body was stretched and relaxed, at ease and comfortable in a way that he had never felt before. How strange it was to be shaking and boiling one minute and then so completely at peace the next minute. To shout out like an animal, and then be so still and quiet. He didn't understand it, but that didn't matter. He wanted more of it, he wanted to always have it, and have Naida. He wanted to always to be close to her in the night.

But now the rules of the whale hunt meant they must sleep apart. The king had been very clear about that. The slightest infraction of the no sex rule meant immediate expulsion from the crew, and worse, the possible failure of the hunt for that one single reason.

"You will obey, Chuwin, will you not?"

"Yes, my lord."

"You are still a new husband, but you will obey."

Jewitt told Naida she must sleep apart, as she had during the final stages of her pregnancy. She put up no disagreement or argument. She slept on the far side of Clasiaca, with the baby, still in its cradle, right beside her. If the baby cried during the night, she woke quickly to quiet her. Jewitt often woke at dawn, in the gray light of the big house, to find Naida sitting by the fire with the cradle in her arms, gently rocking back and forth, singing a tuneless little song containing words he could not hear.

His daughter, now two months old, seemed to grow longer and larger every day. He searched her face for signs of himself. Her skin seemed pale, but her eyes were dark brown, and the wisps of hair along the crown of her hair seemed as black as Naida's. Eyes and nose, cheeks and ear, were the telltale signs that he was the father and she the daughter?

He was allowed to hold the cradle and rock her gently. He fed her sips of water. He sang to her, all the songs by Robbie Burns that he knew by heart, whispered or quietly rendered in English so no one else in the big house could hear. Only his daughter could hear, and he could tell she was listening by the way she smiled at him.

The king, of course, would not for a moment consider naming her Mary Louise. There was a feast and naming ceremony shortly after her birth, celebrating as well the first big salmon runs of the season, and a visit from a tribe in the south who possessed enormous appetites, eating more food in one sitting than Jewitt had observed in all his time among the Nootka. He had seen many feasts but none as gluttonous as the one celebrating the birth of his daughter. Her name was to be Matsuka, not Mary Louise. The king forbade Jewitt from ever using an English name for his daughter.

But in his mind she was Mary Louise.

Each night, for seven nights, he went to bed, sleeping near Satsa, who was usually asleep before him. He stretched under the blanket and took a deep breath and exhaled. The thought of the whale hunt scared and excited him at the same time.

The king returned from his time of preparation at the whaler's shrine. He spoke very little. The three canoes had been prepared with all the required gear, harpoons and lines, the bladder floats that would help force the whale to the surface, ample food and water for three days.

The crews were naked, save for the woven hats they wore to keep off the sun and rain. To protect their faces, and remind the noble lady of their serious intention to woo her, they wore black paint. Jewitt had never painted his face before. Clasiaca gave him a dish of deer fat, and another dish with powdered charcoal and helped him prepare his face. The fat was rancid and stank, like the offal of a dead animal smeared across his cheeks and forehead. His skin seemed to shrink and retract as Clasiaca carefully spread the fat across every square inch of his face, top of the forehead to below his chin, and ear lobe to ear lobe. After a foundation layer, she worked the powdery charcoal into the surface.

He closed his eyes while she did this. Her touch was gentle and therefore not unpleasant. As much as the fat stank, he enjoyed the feeling of her fingers working across his face. When he opened his eyes to watch her, she did not meet his gaze.

"Sit still. You're moving too much. How can I paint you when you're squirming like a small child?"

"I'm sorry."

"This is a great honour for you, Chuwin."

Jewitt nodded instinctively.

"Stop that!"

"I'm sorry."

He held completely still as she worked the area on the left side of his face. Her expression, concentration and attention, never changed. He liked the plainness of her face, the round shape, the kindness of her features, although if someone had asked for a description he would have been hard pressed to provide one. Two eyes, a nose, cheeks and chin. Nothing remarkable or unusual. How could he describe a native face to someone who had never seen one? Naida was pretty, for certain, with delicate

features. Clasiaca was plain instead of pretty, but perhaps there was a kind of beauty in that, a kind of beauty that only came out once you knew the person and saw that they were good. Clasiaca had been the first of the wives to show comfort to him the night of the massacre. He remembered the way she had touched his face and cleaned the wound, and changed the dressing. She had spoken words he had not understood but he knew now they would have been kind words.

For a moment, thinking this, Jewitt thought he might cry. He blinked and blinked again. He had cried as a small boy, until his father told him to stop, and after that he had never cried again.

"Are you alright?" Clasiaca asked. She had finished applying the charcoal powder and now closed the contained carefully.

"Yes," Jewitt said. He took a deep breath. He felt such a powerful urge to repay Clasiaca's kindness but could think of no way to do this.

He thanked her, and touched her shoulder. She looked down at his hand, still resting on her shoulder, and then gave him a very puzzled look.

"Are you sure you're alright?" she asked him.

He nodded. He tried to smile but the paint made it difficult to move his mouth. He made exaggerated motions with his mouth and jaw, as though recovering from a punch.

"What are you doing, Chuwin?"

"Testing my face," he said.

"Why?"

"To make sure it's still there."

Clasiaca did not smile or laugh at his joke. She took the fat and the charcoal and put them away.

Jewitt turned his back to her, and to everyone in the house, and took a mirror from his locked chest. He held it up to his face. In the dim light of the house he saw a black mask and nothing more, with wild hair spiking up and immensely white eyes staring back at him. He moved his jaw and the jaw in the black mask moved at the same time. He rolled his eyes and saw the eyes in the mask roll as well.

Who was the man in the mirror, he wondered.

They left before dawn. Jewitt sat on the starboard side of Kalicum's canoe, halfway back, beside a commoner who made no acknowledgement whatsoever when he took his place with the other ten paddlers in the canoe. One man near the stern was chattering about the luxurious morning meal his wife had prepared. Kalicum turned and glared at the man, and told him to be quiet. Jewitt said nothing. He had brought food and water, and kept these in a basket near his feet. Naida and the baby were still sleeping. He imagined them safe and happy in the big house, protected from anything that might hurt them.

Kalicum directed his man at the rudder in the stern of the canoe to keep the boat to the right of Mokwila's as they moved out of the harbour towards the Sound. Jewitt could see the king standing in the bow of the lead canoe, his arms held out to his sides as though about to embrace something invisible floating above the water. The morning air was cold, but the sky was clear and promised sunshine and warmth within the hour. Jewitt, adjusting to the rhythm of the other men, dug his paddle cleanly into the water, pulled it back, lifted, and dug in again. He had never paddled in open ocean before. Each stroke was important, just as each action of each member of the crew was important to the success of the hunt. Mokwila had not killed a single whale this year.

As soon as the canoes were out of the harbour, they turned south and then southwest as they headed down the Sound towards the ocean. The swells entering the Sound were short and mild; once the canoes entered the ocean proper the swells deepened. There were no whitecaps decorating the wave tops but the relentless, inevitable motion of the water pushed the canoes up and then down, up and then down. Jewitt could not help but notice that the forty foot canoe, which had seemed so large on the beach, had now shrunk to a fraction of its size on the ocean. He could not imagine being on the ocean in such a small boat in bad weather, in a storm, in a huge wind and tumultuous waves. He adjusted his seating, using the strength of his legs to absorb some of the canoe's motion as it moved and down in the water. He could not break rhythm with the other paddlers or the man behind him would tap him on the shoulder. The crew must paddle as one man, Kalicum had instructed, or risk the failure of the hunt.

Ahead, Mokwila's canoe had moved ahead of them. Jewitt could still see the king, who was now standing in the bow, hands shielding his eyes, as he scanned the horizon. The sky had paled to a modest blue. In a burst of coloured fire, the sun rose at the horizon line and spread brilliant light across the surface of the ocean. The shoreline, now bright green, slowly receded into the distance as they headed

straight west, away from land, toward the rest of the world. Mountain peaks, still snow covered, rose up above the trees. As they turned towards the north, Jewitt, looking right, saw the unbroken line of white stretching far and away, and then receding and disappearing, down into the blue sky again.

The motion of the boat disturbed and unsettled him. The waves now struck the canoe on the larboard side, producing a heavy roll as they headed north. There was nothing to be done but paddle in rhythm with the other men. He could feel the westerly wind cooling his shoulders and upper back. That felt good. But the hat on his head was itchy and scratchy; the heavy strap fastened under his chin was too tight. He wanted to stop paddling, remove the hat and toss it into the ocean. His face itched too. The paint and grease felt as though they had hardened into something rank and oppressive on his face. He wanted to wipe it all off, and splash water on his face and neck, his head and hair, and clean himself.

The canoes continued to move north at full speed, as though rushing to their destination. Jewitt had no idea whether Mokwila had planned a specific route to find a whale, knowing that in late April they would likely show up a certain distance from shore. Jewitt knew they migrated from north to south in the spring. The Boston had encountered humpbacks off the west coast of the Americas after rounding the Horn. One of them had breached just after dawn, within view of the ship's crew on deck at the time. Jewitt had been sound asleep in his bunk. Smith, a garrulous man from New York with buckled teeth and a big bald spot on the top of his head, had described the creature as a "big wheezing gasping monster of a whale doing the goddamndest jig you ever saw."

By mid-morning the wind had died. The waves gradually softened and then disappeared, replaced by a strangely meek and flat ocean that was still in motion, still pushing and shoving at the canoes, but no longer disturbing their progress through the water. The sun remained brilliant in the sky. The air, unusually warm for the time of the year, felt clean and welcoming. Jewitt's canoe drew closer to the king's, and now on the far side of the king's canoe, he could see the third canoe, commanded by Quatlazape. The flat water had brought the three canoes closer together, and they moved as a single entity, up the coast, in search of a whale.

The king sat down suddenly. He reached forward and opened the special box he had brought with him. The box was ancient, passed down from father to son through many generations, and held charms and spirit objects that would help in the hunt. Mokwila removed a necklace of teeth, human teeth,

taken from the skulls of the finest hunters in his family, and carefully tied it around his neck. The teeth felt solid and smooth against the skin of his chest. Mokwila closed his eyes and prayed again to the noble lady, asking her to be kind, to love him, and to honour him with her presence on this day. At the back of Mokwila's mind the disturbing fact of his failure to kill a whale this season refused to go away, refused to leave him alone, refused to do anything but rear up like some ferocious beast and challenge him. His grandfather had killed more than twenty whales in his time, his father more than thirty. Mokwila's count of just fifteen mocked him every spring.

He directed the canoes to move closer to shore. He knew exactly where the kelp beds lay and he knew the whales sometimes lingered there too. The canoes moved in a slow arc to the east, and then Mokwila motioned for everyone to stop paddling.

Beside Jewitt, the commoner reached down to his water bag and raised it to his lips. There was no sound from the boats except the slight gurgle of water moving down the man's throat. The king stood on the gunwale of his boat, just back from the prow, scanning the water in a semi circular arc in front and to the right. Jewitt stared at the water but saw nothing but the sparkling plain of blue as he looked to the east. The kelp beds, still a couple of hundred yards ahead, looked like a brown stain on the water.

The king motioned to his men to resume paddling. The canoes began to move ahead again. Jewitt had completed no more than four or five strokes when the surface of the water suddenly exploded off to the right, a humpback breaching, coming out of the water in one enormous gray thundering mass that sent water and wave and foam out across the surface of the ocean, almost capsizing the three canoes. The king cried out in delight as the forty-foot whale sank down again, sending a second wave towards the canoe. Jewitt was so amazed, so surprised, he had barely had time to see the whale, the huge knobby head, the huge disproportionate side fins, the massive gray scarred body that matched the canoes for length.

The water swirled for a moment after the whale dove down again. The swirl softened and died. The whale was gone and no trace remained. The king motioned his men to paddle, full speed, and the three canoes leapt forward.

The whale re-emerged on the far side of the king's canoe. Mokwila shouted again at his crew to hurry forward, to go faster, to keep pace with the whale. Then he reached down into the bow of the canoe

and hoisted the harpoon that Jewitt had fashioned for him. The sleek metal tip would pierce the whale's skin and remain buried in the blubber directly below. The king directed his men to manoeuvre the canoe to the other side of the whale, so that he could throw the harpoon to the right, not the left. They slowed for a moment, dropping back behind the whale, then surged ahead, to the left of the whale. This left Kalicum's canoe in the position to the right of the whale. Kalicum picked up his harpoon, knowing he must wait for the king to launch the first blow, or the hunt would be ruined.

The king's face, hidden behind the black paint, betrayed no excitement, or blood lust, or frenzy, or much of anything at all. Jewitt watched as Mokwila carefully balanced the long harpoon in his hand, and then with one sudden powerful stroke, threw the harpoon down and into the back of the whale. The long shaft fell away, leaving the harpoon, with line attached, embedded in the whale. The king cried out in triumph and praised the strength and the beauty of the noble lady. Wasting no time at all, Kalicum, shooting from the wrong side of his canoe, embedded his harpoon directly behind the king's.

The canoers, paddling furiously, kept pace with the whale. Then she began to dive. The line attached to each harpoon head played out from a massive coil in the centre of each canoe. Each canoe had floats attached, slow the movement of the whale in the water. As the line played out, the man in front of Jewitt tied additional floats to the last quarter of the line.

The whale came up again, and Mokwila was ready with his second harpoon. He waited and then speared the whale to the left of the first strike. He wanted harpoons on one side of the whale, so that she would be pulled heavily to one side as she tried to make her escape. This would force her back towards shore, rather than out to the open ocean. If the whale swam straight west before weakening and dying, Mokwila would face a very long journey when it was time to tow the whale back to the village.

The whale dove again, but this time dropping only forty or fifty feet into the water.

Jewitt was exhausted with the paddling but he knew he couldn't stop. The king shouted at them to paddle and win the love of the noble lady.

When the whale surfaced for the third time, Mokwila was ready with the killing lance. When the whale turned to larboard, the canoe came directly across her head. Mokwila threw the lance directly into the whale's left eye, blinding it instantly. The whale bellowed mightily and then tried to dive. She went

down, and twisted, as though trying to pry out the harpoons with the motion of her body, and almost immediately again rose.

She continued to swim, but the crest of her strength had passed.

The third canoe picked up the three harpoon shafts that had fallen into the water.

Mokwila motioned for the two attack canoes to slow to half speed, so as not to race ahead of the whale while still attached to her.

The direction of the whale had arced slightly but not enough to point her towards shore. As they kept pace with the wounded whale, the canoes were moving south now, following the coastline of the Island and away from the village. There was no way to change or influence the course of the whale.

They paddled through the noontime zenith of the sun and on into the afternoon. The wind did not pick up and the ocean surface remained smooth. As the sun fell down into the west, the whale fell deeper into fatigue. The lance had fallen out of the eye socket.

Jewitt paddled. There was nothing else to do. At half speed, the crew could take turns, one at a time, to stop paddling and sip water from their water bags and chew a piece of fish from their meal kits.

The sun continued to fall down into the horizon. Finally it disappeared beneath the ocean. Dusk fell. The sky began to darken. They were now well down the coast. Looking east, Jewitt saw only the same green shoreline he had seen all day. How far had they paddled? He had no idea.

The whale gave a final snort of exhaustion and defeat, and then died.

The king immediately signalled the third canoe to approach.

To prevent the whale from sinking, its mouth must be sewed shut. A man in Quatlazape's canoe dove into the water with a mussel-shell knife and length of rope. He cut small slits in the lower jaw and upper lip, and then threaded the rope through the slits in order to keep the whale's mouth tied shut. Minutes later, the man pulled himself back into the canoe.

The two attack canoes now faced the tedious task of towing the dead, forty-foot whale back to the village. The king signalled the third canoe to return to the village with the recovered harpoons and alert everyone that a whale had been successfully hunted and killed.

The harpoon lines were tied carefully to the stern of each canoe. As the men paddled, the line tightened and when the full weight of the whale forced itself on the boats, they were stopped for a

moment in the water. The king urged them on with shouts of "The noble lady demands our strongest efforts" and "the noble lady has loved us and now we must honour her love".

They continued to stroke against the water and finally the body of the dead whale began to move forward in the water. Jewitt could not believe how much strength it took to inch the canoe forward. He had been paddling now for the better part of 12 hours, he guessed, and only God knew how long it would take to tow the whale back to the village.

Once in motion, the body of the whale continued to move as long as both canoes applied the full strength of twenty men to move it. Even Mokwila and Kalicum took up paddles in the bow of each boat to help move the boats forward.

The sky slowly darkened, through deepening shades of blue, into blue black, and then finally into the inevitable bowl of empty black above them. The stars came out slowly, as though reluctant to share the sky. Jewitt could no longer see the shoreline as anything more than a faint suggestion off to his right. He paddled and paddled, now so exhausted that he could think of nothing but the motion of the paddle.

Just before dawn, the weather changed. The sky clouded over and the wind picked up from the south. The seas built to four or five feet, carrying whale and canoes forward. Now they paddled with even greater force to keep the towing lines taut and to keep the canoes in front of the whale's body.

The rain began when they were still a mile south of the entrance to the Sound. A flotilla of canoes were waiting for them with fresh water and food. Jewitt ate hungrily as the canoe bobbed up and down in the surging waves. Water poured down the brim of his hat, water soaked his skin, and when the wind blew he shivered in the cold and the wet of it all.

Two of the flotilla boats attached lines to the whale and now with four boats towing the men made faster progress up the Sound in the pouring rain and then west into the village harbour.

Jewitt could see nothing but rain. He was cold and wet and exhausted.

Finally they were in the harbour. Hundreds of village stood on the beach, in the pouring rain, to welcome them with cheers and shouts.

A dozen men came out into the water to help the exhausted whalers step out of their canoes and get ashore without collapsing head first into the shallows.

Mokwila remained in the bow of his boat. Eight men lifted the canoe out of the water using stout fir poles and carried it up the beach and set it down carefully on the pebbles. The king was still singing as the canoe came down to rest on the ground again. Jewitt could see Mokwila's arms flung out in that familiar gesture of embrace.

As he walked up the beach, Jewitt turned and looked back at the harbour for a moment.

In the space cleared between the mass of canoes, the body of the dead whale lay grounded in five or six feet of water. The rising tide would soon carry it further up the beach. The empty socket of the left eye was pointing down, towards the ground, as though searching for its missing part. The body of the whale made the men and the canoes beside seem tiny and toylike. Jewitt found it difficult believe they had killed the whale and towed it back ten or twelve miles to the village.

The villagers seemed alive with unusual energy and purpose. Jewitt somehow stumbled up the hill to the big house and stepped inside. He ignored the men setting up drying racks and the youngest brother of the king handing out the finest knives to cut blubber from the whale. He ignored the smiles from some of his fellow crew members acknowledging his presence as he walked to the far corner of the house. The king was eating a meal from a tray and talking to Clasiaca. He offered food to Jewitt, but Jewitt shook his head.

He was tired to speak, too tired to think. He nodded at Naida and when she asked if he wanted food, said he would eat later. She was cradling the baby in her arms, singing softly to Mary Louise as the tiny child slept.

Jewitt saw all of this, and again felt the energy and purpose of the villagers, but this energy and purpose meant nothing to him. He went to the bed, still damp from the rain, and lay down on the mat and pulled a blanket over himself. He felt as though every muscle in his body ached. Naida came over and rubbed his back for a moment, but he had already closed his eyes and begun the short spiral into sleep. He remembered the sensation of her hand pressing through the blanket onto his shoulders and spine and the sound of rain on the roof planks, and after that nothing, nothing at all.

He woke a few hours later, as dusk was beginning to fall. The rain had stopped. The house was mostly empty. A few slaves were adjusting the new drying racks and tending the fires, but all the commoners and chiefs had left. Jewitt threw the blanket off him and got up. How long he slept?

He went outside.

A huge crowd was assembled on the beach. Overhead, huge flocks of seagulls, attracted by the sight and smell of the whale, wheeled and cawed and filled the air with their noise. Jewitt saw Wikaninis, one of the neighbouring chiefs, talking to Jewitt. They were looking at long gray strips of flesh hanging from a rack. The strips were festooned with feathers and painted red at the top.

In the shallow water where the whale lay, a dozen men were stripping blubber from the whale in long narrow strips. They worked quickly and methodically; even as Jewitt watched they managed to reduce the left side of the whale to a shiny carcass of bone and skeleton. There was a horrible smell on the beach, a stench of something sour and rotten. One of the whale's enormous side flippers had been removed and dragged up the beach. Some of the children were jumping up and down on it. There was filth in the water, bits and pieces of flesh, skin and blubber, all of it a wretched, disgusting mess the likes of which Jewitt had never seen before.

Naida told Jewitt that the success of the whale hunt reflected well on him.

"I know what people say about you," she said. "You're strong and brave. You didn't falter once. The noble lady admired you."

Jewitt was tired of the phrase "noble lady". He thought there was nothing noble about the whale or the way it was killed. A whale meant exhaustion, thirst and hunger. The worst exhaustion he had ever felt. He was silent for a moment and then he spoke. "I only did what Kalicum told me to do."

"We have extra food now. And the king smiles at me. Clasiaca smiles, because the king smiles."

Jewitt had no particular concern for the king's smiles. He knew the king's mood could change in a flash. He had seen that happen often enough. But he wanted Naida to be happy and safe and not feel alone.

He sat facing her and kissed her tenderly.

"I think you're brave, too," she said.

"I'm nothing," he said, and realized he was surprised by the words coming out of his mouth.

"What do you mean, Chuwin?"

"I do what I'm told. I'm nothing."

"You're my husband. A father. You're not nothing. That's crazy."

His ideas were not crazy. He could still smell the disgusting stench of the whale. It was just bones and offal now, rotting in the water. Come fall they would leave for Tashees again and when they returned the following spring the beach would be clean. He was tired of the smell and filth of this life. But how could he explain that to Naida?

"I just do what I'm told," he said again. "That's my purpose here. To do what I'm told."

Naida shook her head, as though dismissing his words. She tried to kiss him again, but he pulled away.

"Somewhere else I could do something. I could do *something*. Don't you understand that?"

She shook her head.

He wanted to shout at her, to let it all out at last, in English, his own language, using every word and phrase at his command to explain exactly how it felt. Speaking in her language was like trying to shape cold iron with a blunt mallet that had no precision and no force. In English he could tell her exactly how he felt and why, make her understand the depth of his frustration. Could he force the words into her ears and make her understand? No, he could not. He sometimes mumbled sentences and sayings from the Bible just to ensure he could still pronounce the words. He hadn't spoken English in six months or more. He felt as though his mouth had changed shape because of the native tongue he was speaking.

Could he explain to Naida that he no longer trusted or loved God? He felt that God had gone away, like Qua-utz, and left him alone for too long. Yes, God had gone away and left him the words in a book. What good were those words now?

"I still want to leave, Naida."

She turned away when he said that. She turned away and then got up and fetched the baby and went to sit nearer the fire.

Jewitt watched as she held a small spoonful of water to the baby's lips. He watched as the baby took a sip and dribbled the rest down her chin. He wanted to go to Naida and sit beside her but he could not.

After four weeks of eating little but whale blubber and berries, Jewitt was so thoroughly sick of the taste of whale that he got permission from the king to trade daggers for salmon during the next visit from Wikaninis and his chiefs. Wikaninis did not understand why Jewitt preferred salmon to blubber.

"Will you trade or will you not trade, my lord?"

Wikaninis, who was never quick to answer a question, but preferred to think slowly while stroking the straggly collection of whiskers on his chin, looked away and out over the water, as though pondering the very meaning of his existence. Jewitt, impatient now, repeated his question.

"I will trade, Chuwin," the king said at last.

"Four salmon for one knife," Jewitt said.

The king shook his head, scratched at his whiskers again, and pondered the colour of the ocean in the distance. "Three salmon."

Jewitt agreed and handed over three knives. Wikaninis motioned to one of his men, who then went to the largest canoe, removed the fish, and brought them to Jewitt.

Naida cooked the fish for his birthday in May. Jewitt was now twenty two years old.

10 Rescued

On the afternoon of June 4, 1805, Jewitt was in the forest cutting firewood with two young slaves he had nicknamed Donald and Samuel. The men did not speak English, of course, but with coaching from Jewitt learned how to pronounce their new names. He taught them English songs too. Donald, sadly, was quite tone deaf and unable to learn a melody, but Samuel proved to be an excellent student. Jewitt taught him two lines from Comin' Through The Rye and a complete chorus from Old Lang Syne.

*For auld lang syne, my jo,
for auld lang syne,
we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
for auld lang syne.*

Jewitt had just felled an excellent fir tree when he heard Satsa's voice calling from off in the distance. He yelled in return, to help Satsa locate him, and moments later the boy appeared in front of him, completely out of breath.

"Chuwin!" The boy was gasping and wheezing and trying to talk at the same time.

"Take your time. What is it?"

"A gun."

"What do you mean, a gun?"

"A gun. A ship's gun. A big gun."

There was no native word for cannon beyond "big gun." Surely that's what Satsa heard?

"Are you sure?"

"Chuwin, I'm sure."

"From what direction?"

"North, I think."

That didn't make sense. They were on the tip of an island nestled next to a very large island. The water to the north was mostly narrow inlets and channels, with difficult anchorages and tricky currents and tidal flows. The gun should have sounded from the east, somewhere in the Sound, or from the west, from the open ocean.

There was no reason to drop the axe and run to the shoreline, although Jewitt was tempted to do this. He would wait for the gun to sound again. If Satsa said the sound was coming closer, then he would go and investigate.

He thanked Satsa and the boy ran off again.

Donald and Samuel, off in the distance, had stopped chopping for a moment to look at Jewitt talking to the boy. Jewitt now waved at them to continue work. The king still counted the number of pieces they brought back to the big house every day.

But now with every chop Jewitt heard in his head the sound of a gun firing. Chop, chop and chop. The sound of a cannon could only mean an American or English ship. The traders had been scared away by the massacre on the Boston but now two years had passed. Were they coming back at last? Jewitt had written a dozen letters the previous year. Perhaps one of them had made its way to a captain?

These questions swirled in Jewitt's mind as he continued to chop. The axe rose and fell. He swung harder on the axe, finishing the upper notch in four strokes. He pushed the trunk and the tree fell with a crash down onto the floor of the forest. In the silence after the fall, he could hear Donald and Samuel sawing in the distance. They looked up and he motioned for them to stop work and come to him. They dropped their axes. In the silence that followed he imagined another cannon shot, one loud enough to shake the forest and bring all the trees down in one tremendous, irresistible wave of destruction.

Mokwila told Jewitt that evening that he was free to go if a ship came to rescue him. "I will not stop you if the King George men come for you," he said.

"Thank you, my lord."

"Your wife will be very sad."

"Yes."

"And your daughter. She will be very sad."

Jewitt said nothing to this. He had thought so long and so fervently about freedom that now, with the prospect of escape from the natives so very close at hand, his thoughts were confused. How could he say goodbye to Naida and Mary Louise, knowing that he might never see them again? How could he

possibly do that? Yet he couldn't take his wife and child with him. They were native, he was white. How could he do that?

It seemed an impossible dilemma that Mokwila was only too aware of. Jewitt thought he heard a kindness in the king's voice that he had never heard before.

"You do want to go, Chuwin?"

"Yes, my lord."

"I will allow it. I will raise your child as my child. Marry her to the good son of a chief. Or grandson." He laughed. "I have forgotten how old I am."

Jewitt believed that Mokwila would raise his daughter well, care for her and protect her. Would Naida marry again? He had no idea. Native women with any kind of physical deformity rarely found husbands. Naida was young and beautiful but perhaps her marriage to Jewitt had tainted her somehow? The thought that his wife would remain unmarried and alone for the rest of her life pained him very much.

Naida said little that evening. She prepared a meal for Jewitt and fed the baby, who clapped her tiny hands in delight every time Naida tickled her cheek.

Watching this, Jewitt wanted to go to Naida and the baby, and hold them both tenderly in his arms, but he could not. Naida turned and smiled at him, but the smile, perfect as it was, did not reassure him that she was happy. He never knew what she was truly feeling. The smile now seemed to say that she and the baby would continue to live here in the big house whether he left or not, and that their lives were somehow independent of his. Had he felt all along? Perhaps he had. She had never said "I love you", although he had said it many times to her. But if he loved her, how could he so easily make the decision to leave?

Now they nestled together at night, back to front, the baby asleep beside them. With one arm around Naida, his hand touching her belly or cupping her breast, he struggled into sleep.

A week later, the cannons, much closer this time, boomed again. Jewitt was working in the blacksmith shack, sharpening yet another set of daggers for the king, when he heard the guns go off. He did not react at first, but kept working. Satsa came running, as he had the previous time, to announce that a ship had been sighted in the Sound.

"Come, father!" he shouted. "Come and see the ship!"

The ship's cannons sounded again, and then two of the king's cannons sounded in reply. The noise, incredibly loud, shattered the silence of the summer morning. Jewitt felt irritated by it, but excited too. He put his tools down carefully on the workbench, and then changed his mind and placed them in the tool chest and locked it carefully with the key.

Satsa grabbed his hand and tried to pull him towards the harbour.

"Come!"

The king appeared suddenly. "Chuwin," he said very gravely, "they have come for you."

"Oh?" Jewitt found it surprisingly easy to affect a lack of interest. He released Satsa's hand, and the boy ran off in the direction of the harbour.

"They have come for you, I think," the king said.

"I heard the guns."

"And you heard our guns."

"Yes."

"Do you want to leave, Chuwin?"

Jewitt didn't answer. He noticed that he had left one of his files on the workbench. He picked it up, opened the tool chest again, and placed it carefully inside. He sat down on the chest, and looked up at the king. "I have many things to keep me here. My family. My work for you. Life is good."

"Are you sure, Chuwin?"

Jewitt didn't answer.

"I think you want to leave us, Chuwin."

"I'm not sure I can go back."

"We will let the council decide. Come with me."

The king led the way back to the big house, where the council of chiefs had already assembled. Jewitt couldn't understand how they had come together so quickly, unless the king had organized this after the first sounding of the cannons a week earlier.

Inside the house, the chiefs and some of the commoners sat in concentric circles in the middle of the house. Jewitt could see Naida off in the corner, tending the baby. She did not look at him when he entered the house.

"Chiefs," Mokwila said, "We are gathered to discuss the fate of Chuwin and decide whether to trade with the ship that arrived in our harbour today. Should we hold onto Chuwin, who had been a good man and good slave to me for these past years, or should we let him go? Should I approach the ship and with our finest pelts and furs trade with the King George men? Should we ignore them? Should we chase them away?"

There was silence when the king stopped speaking. The chiefs were looking at each other carefully, as though trying to read thoughts. Some of the commoners behind them began to chatter among themselves. The king shouted at them to be quiet and observe the rules of the council.

The chief asked Quatlazape to start.

"King Mokwila, fellow chiefs," he began. "Chuwin, the white slave, came to us two years ago after the terrible slaughter on the boston-ship when blood ran in rivers and the heads of the dead were displayed for all of you to see. Chuwin survived by the mercy of the king and proved to be a good man, a good worker, even a good warrior. He made daggers and knives and weapons for us. He made harpoons for the king and bracelets and earrings for our women. He worked hard and well. He is a good man. He is a good man, Chuwin."

Quatlazape stopped, and then nodded, as though agreeing with himself. He looked up at the ceiling of the house, at the rectangle of sky where the fire smoke trickled into blue and then disappeared. "We must let Chuwin go, if that's what he decides. We must let Chuwin go."

There was silence again, and then more whispering from the commoners. The king silenced them again, irritated by the disruption of the council protocol.

Jewitt sat on the floor, and scratched his left ankle. The council would talk for a long time, an hour or two or even three. Jewitt could get up and stretch his legs, or go outside to relieve himself, or help himself to some cold salmon that Naida had prepared. He could all or any of these things as long as he returned to his place in the circle, where his future was now being decided.

Mokwila was unusually attentive this morning. He listened as each chief spoke and he showed no impatience when Kalicum, working himself into a state of rage and disgust, listed each of Jewitt's faults as he saw them and blamed him for a number of accidents and events of ill fortune that befallen their community since his arrival two years before. Jewitt was white and would always be white and therefore

could not be trusted. It was best to kill him immediately, and present his bloodied corpse to the King Georgeman on the ship, as a warning that Mokwila and his people were fierce and determined warriors.

When Kalicum finished speaking, a couple of the chiefs nodded in agreement, but most did not react. The commoners, excited by the prospect of killing Jewitt, again chattered amongst themselves and again were told by the king to behave themselves and be silent while the council members talked.

Jewitt didn't hate Kalicum. He disliked the man. He was not all surprised that Kalicum wanted him dead.

Other chiefs presented their thoughts to the group. One man suggested Jewitt be taken ten or twenty or miles into the forest, so the King George men couldn't find him if they came ashore. Mokwila could then claim he knew nothing about Jewitt, had never been taken slave, and that another nation had massacred the Boston's captain and crew. Another chief suggested they mount a surprise attack on the ship in the harbour, preferably in the middle of the night, and kill every white man on board, and then kill Jewitt and throw his body into the ocean for the fish to eat. A third man suggested they kill all the ship's crew except one man, and bring him ashore to be a companion slave for Jewitt, because everyone knew that slaves were happier and better behaved when they had company.

When all twelve chiefs had spoken, the king asked one of the commoners to speak to the group. An grizzled old man, bent with age, stood up and hurled abuse at Jewitt.

"He is a witless man who talks like a stupid dog. He is the colour of a white seal, but he puts on paint and wears our clothes and pretends to be one of us. He has a tiny white cock. He is a coward. He cannot hunt or kill. He has fucked one of our women with his tiny white cock and produced a bastard child. He is ugly and deformed and has no luck and no spirit. He brings us bad luck. He should be killed. He should be killed!"

Jewitt took no offense at the abuse. He looked at the man who had just denounced him so vigorously and saw only madness and ignorance. Most of the commoners were the same. Jewitt had avoided them for two years and continued to avoid them. He was surprised they hadn't taken him from his bed, marched him into the forest, and killed and beheaded him.

The old man sat down. He looked at Jewitt and sneered.

"Thank you, chiefs," the king said. "Thank you, Chiwuc." The old man smiled at the king, scratching his chin as he did so. The man had put on some kind of improvised head-dress, a strip of cedar bark formed into a ring. He raised his hands to adjust it carefully on his head. Then he sat again, arms crossed, looking immensely pleased with himself.

"Now," the king said, "I will ask each of you whether I should go on board and trade with the King George men. Is this a good idea? Is this a bad idea?"

Only Quatlazape felt the king should go on board to trade with the white men. Everyone else said that as soon as he went onboard the ship Mokwila would be taken prisoner and then killed, in retaliation for the massacre on the Boston.

Jewitt had now been sitting for more than hour, he reckoned. His ass was sore and his shins were aching. He asked the king if he could go for outside for a moment.

"Chuwin, you may not. I will now ask you: should I go onto the ship of the King George men and trade with their captain? Should I do this?"

The chiefs were all looking at him. Even Chiwuc was looking at him. Turning to his right, Jewitt could see Naida off in the corner, talking to Clasiaca. Where was the baby?

"Stand and talk to the council," the king instructed.

Jewitt did as he was told. He got to his feet and brushed some dirt from his cloak. He realized his hair was incredibly itchy. He touched it briefly with the fingers of his right hand, then pulled them away.

"The king has asked him if he should go on board the ship and trade with the King George man and their captain." Jewitt paused for effect, as he seen the king do many times. "Should the king trade with the English ship?"

"I believe he should. The king has no reason to fear this captain, because this captain has done no harm to him to his people. This captain has never traded here, and has committed no crimes and done no bad deeds."

"The advice you all have given the king, excepting Quatlazape, does not surprise me, for many evil things have been done to you by the King George men. They have killed and cheated and stolen from you. They've taken your furs and abused your women. They have cheated you!"

"But this captain can be trusted, I'm sure. That is my opinion. That is what I think."

Jewitt bowed for some reason, and then sat down again.

There was silence, while the chiefs pondered his words. Jewitt, of course, had no idea of the captain's intentions towards Mokwila. He had come to rescue Jewitt in response to one of his letters, of that he was certain, but beyond that he knew nothing. He hadn't even seen the ship. Satsa said it had tried to anchor in the harbour, and then left again, riding the weak flood tide up the shoreline a quarter of a mile, and anchored north of the village.

The king was thinking. Everyone was silent. Jewitt thought he could hear one of the women, not Naida, talking to a child, and another woman, again not Naida, singing to her baby. Jewitt turned and looked, and saw his wife tending the fire. Mary Louise lay in the cradle beside her.

The king stood up again.

"Chuwin, you will write me a letter and the letter will tell the captain how well I have treated you and that I have decided to let you go."

The commoners began talking again. The king spoke harshly to them and they became quiet.

"You will write this letter now, so that I can take it with me to the captain and trade with him. After I trade, I will release you to him. You will be free."

Several of the chiefs began to nod.

"Chiefs, do you agree with my decision?"

The chiefs said yes, they agreed.

"Kalicum, do you agree?"

Kalicum smiled and looked at his brother. "Brother, I do agree. It is time for Chuwin to free himself from us, and for us to free ourselves from him."

"And you agree Jewitt should write a letter for me so that I will be safe on the ship and trade with the captain?"

The chiefs nodded again. They said yes, they agreed.

The king thanked them for the council. They got up and left the house.

Jewitt got up and went to the blacksmith shack where he kept the paper, pen and ink. He told the king to wait, that he would return in just a few minutes and write the letter.

He returned as promised, and sat down and wrote the following letter:

Sir: The bearer of this letter is the Indian King by the name of Mokwila. He was the instigator of the capture of the Ship Boston in North America, John Salter Captain, and of the murder of twenty-five men of her crew, the only survivor being now on shore. Wherefore I hope you will take care to confine him according to his merits, putting in your dead lights, and keeping so good a watch over him, that he cannot escape from you. By so doing, I will be able to obtain my release in a matter of a few hours.

JOHN JEWITT, Armourer of the Boston

Jewitt gave the letter to the king, who immediately held it to his face as though to read it carefully, word for word. He could not, of course, and so gave it back to Jewitt and asked him to explain what he had written.

Jewitt put his finger to the first line of the letter. "Here it says that I have lived here as your slave for the past two years, and that you have treated me extremely well and with great kindness. You have clothed and fed me, and given me a wife and child." He moved his finger further down the page. "And here it says that the captain should trade generously with you, sea otter pelts in exchange for molasses, cloth and metal. Guns and powder if you want them. Daggers and knives if he has them on board."

The king nodded for a moment, then said. "Chuwin, are you lying when you say these things?"

Jewitt, surprised by the king's question, did not know what to say for a moment. "My lord, why do you ask me this question. Have I ever lied to you?"

The king admitted that Jewitt had not.

"Then why do you suspect me of a lie now, when you know I have never lied to you before?"

Jewitt knew he had no expression on his face and that the paint covered everything. He could have uttered the wildest, most inconceivable lie and gotten away with it. This gave him no particular pleasure, or sense of power, except that he had never done it so well before, and he did not think this a good thing. He did not think God was watching. And deep inside his heart he knew he didn't care if God was watching or not.

The king put his face closer to Jewitt's. He still held the letter in his left hand.

"I believe you, Chuwin. You are a good man and I believe you."

The king led Chuwin down to the beach that faced the harbour. It was high tide and dozens of canoes were pulled up on shore. The chiefs followed, and behind them, a hundred or more commoners. The king ordered several of his men to launch one of the smaller canoes, and told Kalicum to fetch half a dozen otter furs to trade with the captain.

"I will go and trade," the king said. "I will bring back molasses and cloth, and more powder for our guns ..."

But the commoners would not let him finish. They began to cry and shout, and beg Mowwila to stay on shore where he would be safe. Clasiaca came up to him and said that she would rather lay down her life than see him imprisoned and killed by the King George men. "My lord," she said, "Send your brother, or send Quatlazape. Send anyone you want, but don't go. Please don't go."

Jewitt had never heard Clasiaca speak this way to the king. But he dismissed her with a laugh, and a wave of his hand, as though she were as inconsequential as the lowest of commoners. "You don't think I can outsmart a white man? Who is the king and who is the commoner?" He laughed again. "I am the king who comes from a long line of kings. I am the king who keeps a white man as slave. Now fetch the canoe."

But the commoners would not keep quiet. Some had brought weapons with them, and began to wave them in the air, as preparing to attack. Mowwila looked at them and laughed. He got into the canoe with two of his men. Kalicum placed the otter furs in the centre of the canoe and gave the boat a final push out into the harbour. In less than a minute the canoe was in the Sound, heading northwest, and then it veered to the north and disappeared.

Jewitt had no idea what would happen to the king. Clasiaca was on her knees now, crying and chanting words that he could not understand. Two of the king's other wives, younger women that Jewitt rarely spoke to, also fell to their knees and began to cry and chant. The chiefs stood in a group, off to Jewitt's left, just beyond earshot, and he could see that Kalicum was doing most of the talking. The commoners were still up in arms, still shouting and yelling for action, for a swift and deadly attack on the English ship to kill the captain and crew, as they had done before, in order to rescue the king.

Jewitt had never seen such fervent devotion to Mowwila on the part of his people. How many times had the king confided that he feared for his life because his people were plotting against him? Many

times. Jewitt had seen no evidence of a plot, beyond the occasional grumbling of one or two chiefs when food ran low or the seating at a feast was criticized as inappropriate or disrespectful. The king took the counsel of his chiefs and showed them respect and generosity, as far as Jewitt could determine. Why have a king at all, unless you were prepared to obey him? Was that not the natural order of things, that a king should lead and his people should follow?

He walked down the beach, away from the noisy commoners. He knew their words and outrage would lead to nothing because the chiefs were not prepared to attack the ship. They knew that Mokwila would return.

Jewitt sat on a log at the far end of the beach. The afternoon shadows had begun to lengthen. Summer solstice was behind them and now each day was a minute or two shorter than the day before. Jewitt couldn't help but think that summer was much too brief and that soon it would be fall and that meant the trip to Tashees again, and the beginning of cold and wet and darkness again. If he were rescued, none of those things would happen. But what would happen? The ship might take him home, or to America, to New York or Boston. He sighed. He tried to imagine Naida and the baby with him. But how could that happen? How could that possibly happen? How could he live again in cities when a part of him remained here? He pushed his foot into the wet beach, felt the sand and pebbles against the sole of his foot. His feet were hard and callused now. He couldn't remember the last time he had worn boots or shoes.

A sudden cry went up from the crowd of commoners still waiting on the beach where the king had spoken to them. An arm was raised towards the Sound, and when Jewitt looked he saw the king's canoe approaching, but without the king standing in the bow, as he usually did.

Three Americans were in the canoe. They were dressed in blue. When the canoe touched ground, Kalicum grabbed the bow and held the boat steady in the water while the three men stepped out of the canoe and into the shallow water. Jewitt looked at their faces and their fair hair, at the clothing they wore and the boots on their feet. One man was very tall and had remarkably bad teeth and pockmarked skin. He approached Jewitt and looked him up and down. The commoners were still yelling in the background. Jewitt wished they would be silent but knew there was nothing he could say that would silence them.

"Are you Mr. John Jewitt?" the tall man said. He was staring very intently at Jewitt's face.

Jewitt had not heard his name pronounced correctly for more than two years. Was he John Jewitt? Of course he was. But he was Chuwin too, wasn't he? The man's mouth continued to move and make sounds, and all the sounds formed into words that he understood. But Jewitt hadn't heard the sound of English for what seemed like a very long time. The English words seemed soft and bland to his ears. There were no clucks or clacks, nothing from the throat at all. Easy sounds, he thought.

Jewitt looked at the man carefully and said, "Yes, I am John Jewitt."

The man reached out and shook Jewitt's hand. Jewitt's arm was very brown. The man's handshake was firm and decisive.

"The Captain has requested that you accompany us back to the ship."

"Yes, sir," Jewitt said. The tall man had taken his eyes away from Jewitt's face and was now scanning the crowd of people assembled on the beach. "I will come with you. Is Mokwila safe?"

"Yes," the man said. "The savage chief is safe."

"He is a king, not a chief," Jewitt said.

"He is a lying, murderous savage," the man said, and spat on the ground. "We know what he did on the Boston. We know exactly what he did."

Quatlazape and Kalicum came over and demanded to know what was happening. Jewitt explained that he was going to the English ship to be traded for the king. The tall man stared again as Jewitt spoke the native language and gestured with his hands as he spoke. Quatlazape, as always, nodded with great solemnity as Jewitt spoke, and Kalicum snorted with the impatience of a man who thinks that words are nothing but a smokescreen used by cowards who are reluctant to act.

"We should attack and kill the King George men," Kalicum said.

"Why do you always want to act instead of thinking?" Quatlazape said. "We will not attack the ship. This man says the king is safe. I believe him. They want Chuwin, and I believe that Chuwin wants to go. Chuwin, do you want to go?"

Jewitt only now realized he in a fact had a choice, and the choice was very simple: he could stay with his wife and child and live with the natives or he could leave and go back to the civilized world. He

had thought and dreamed about being rescued so often, so many times, that he failed to realize he had a choice to not be rescued. But why would he choose that? He was not a native, he was a white man.

Jewitt had not spoken. Quatlazape waited patiently, as he always did. The old man stood and waited. Kalicum snorted again. The commoners were still yelling behind them. Quatlazape finally turned and motioned for them to be quiet.

"We must attack and kill them," someone cried out.

"There will be no killing today," Quatlazape shouted. "Be quiet!" Jewitt had never heard the man speak so loudly and forcefully. The commoners remained quiet.

"Chuwin, I ask you again. Do you want to go?"

Jewitt looked Quatlazape in the eyes as he answered, "Yes, I want to go."

"Go, then," Kalicum said. "Go and never return."

Jewitt got into the canoe with the tall man. Kalicum pushed the canoe away from the beach. The men in the canoe raised their paddles and paddled in reverse. The boat began to move away, towards the sound. Jewitt watched Quatlazape and Kalicum, the commoners on the beach, the village houses, the entire fragment of land at the end of Nootka Island, he watched all of these things begin to retreat and grow small.

With a sudden motion of the paddles, the men spun the canoe around and began to paddle vigorously out of the harbour, northeast and into the Sound. Then they angled to the north, up the coastline, and only a moment later Jewitt saw the Lydia, the American ship that had come to rescue him. She lay in the shadows of late afternoon, close to shore, not far from where the Boston had anchored on the horrible day of the massacre.

When the canoe came alongside the ship, Jewitt stood up, amazed by her size. What an enormous thing a ship was! He felt tiny and insignificant by comparison. Two sailors dropped a rope ladder over the side and Jewitt climbed up quickly and then clambered over the siderail and stood on deck, facing an older man, stout and bearded.

"Jewitt," he said. "John Jewitt?"

"Yes," Jewitt said.

"Good god man, look at you!" Jewitt, of course, was still in full face paint and wearing a yellow cedar cloak. Were his hands filthy? He wipe his right hand across his belly in a futile attempt to clean it, and then extended it to the captain. The captain took it without hesitation and shook it enthusiastically. "We'll have to get you cleaned up without delay. But dammit, it is good to see you. It is very good to see you, sir!"

Several sailors were standing to the captain's right, and they were staring too.

"May I see the king?" Jewitt said.

"Who?" the captain said.

"The king. Mokwila."

"Yes, you may. Of course you may."

The captain led Jewitt below and to the captain's cabin in the stern of the ship, where Mokwila was being prisoner, guarded by four Americans with pistols strapped to their hips. Mokwila was sitting at the captain's table, with a glass of rum in front of him, his hands bound in chains. The two commoners who had escorted him to the ship were sitting in the corner, hand and feet bound by thick ropes.

"Wocash, Chuwin, wocash," the king said.

"We must speak English here," Jewitt said. "So the captain can understand."

The king smiled. "Yes, you're right. It's good to see you, Chuwin."

"I'm glad you're well."

The king laughed. "I'm well. Very well. So are you. So are you! You are finally going home."

Jewitt told the captain that the king did not require arm irons and that the men in the corner did not need to be tied up, but the captain shook his head and said that he knew best about the safety of his ship, and the last thing he wanted a repeat of the Boston massacre.

The captain asked Jewitt for a description of the massacre, and Jewitt told him, quickly and succinctly, what he had observed, from the first roar of native voices on deck while he was below cleaning muskets, to the accidental burning of the ship a few days later. The captain asked about Thompson and Jewitt described how he was killed in the raid on another village.

"These people are nothing but ungodly savages, as I had been led to believe," the captain. "They are violent and cruel. Should I not kill Mokwila?"

"You might think he deserves to die, but you would be wrong," Jewitt said. He felt suddenly protective of the king. "He killed only to avenge what he thought was an insult and injury. I don't mean to excuse what he did, but you must understand why he did it."

"But those men are dead. And the ship destroyed."

"I know."

"And yet you think he deserves to live?"

"I do."

"Are you sure?"

"He saved my life many times, captain. Many times."

"It's your decision, Jewitt. If you want him dead, we will kill him. If you think his life should be spare, we will spare it."

"Thank you, captain. But I would ask that you send men to fetch my toolchest and sea-chest and some of the articles from the Boston that I've kept preserved. We can tell the natives that Mokwila will be released as soon as these items are returned."

The captain agreed. The two natives bound in ropes were freed, and instructed to return by canoe to the village and announce that the king would be freed in the morning upon the return of what belonged to the Americans. The irons were removed from Mokwila's hands and legs. Jewitt stayed with him in the cabin, and reassured him that he would be released in the morning.

"Will the captain kill me?" the king asked.

"No, the captain will not kill you."

"I don't believe you. The captain wants to kill me. It's only right, to avenge the captain I killed. One killing must be avenged by another killing."

"No," Jewitt said.

"Yes!" The king was shouting now.

"Be calm," Jewitt said.

"You don't understand. You don't kill, you don't avenge. You are not a leader! This is only right for the captain to want to kill me and for me to want to kill him too!"

"No."

"Chuwin have you learned nothing about the world and how men must fight and kill? We have honour and pride. A warrior's honour and pride. A killing must be avenged by a killing. That is how the world is."

"The captain will not kill you, I will not kill you. No one on this ship will kill you."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"This makes no sense to me, Chuwin!"

"We will not kill you or harm you. The villagers must surrender the things that belong to me and to the Boston. That's all. They must surrender these things. Then you will go free."

"I will not be killed?"

"Correct. You will not be killed."

The king sat down again, as though requiring time now to consider what Jewitt had just said and come to terms with the fact his life would be spared. Jewitt could see that it made no sense to him. He expected to kill and now his life had been spared.

"Are you sure I will not be killed?"

"Yes," Jewitt said. "You will not be killed."

During the night, the king woke Jewitt up several times, asking him to repeat the statement that he would not be killed, and reminding Jewitt of the many times he had saved Jewitt's life, had defended him against chiefs who wanted him killed, against commoners who wanted him tortured, against the constant criticism that he was a bad slave who would one day turn against the king and try to kill him.

In the morning, the captain sent three men off in the longboat to collect Jewitt's possessions and the Boston's papers, anchor and cannon. The boat returned in two hours, accompanied by two native canoes, one of them containing Quatlazape, who had convinced Kalicum to remain on shore. Quatlazape brought a present of sixty skins, which he presented to Mokwila, who then presented them to the captain, acknowledging his gratitude for the captain sparing his life. When the captain told Mokwila he was free to go, to return to his village and his people, the king removed his cloak of furs and presented it to the captain. The captain in turn gave the king a fine coat and hat.

"We can trade in peace," the captain said.

"Yes," Mokwila said. "We can trade in peace and be at peace with each other."

Jewitt wanted to believe that Mokwila spoke the truth when he said this. But he could never forget the massacre on the Boston, and the heads of the captain and crew that had held in his hands while he pronounced their names. How could he possibly forget that? And the village raid. He had killed a man by driving a sword through his stomach. Mokwila would kill when he needed to kill, that was the truth. He would be cruel and vicious when required. He could kill his enemies one day, and laugh the next. Jewitt did not hate or fear Mokwila, but he did not want to be in his world any longer.

The king handed the coat and hat to Quatlazape and came over to where Jewitt was standing. He put his hand out and shook Jewitt's hand.

"Will you come and see me again, Chuwin?" the king asked.

"Yes, I will," Jewitt said, although he doubted this was true.

"If you come in a big ship, bring guns and blankets and powder. We will have furs, many furs. I will save all the best furs for you."

"Yes, my lord."

"Satsa will miss you very much. He loves you."

"Yes, my lord."

"Naida and your daughter will miss you very much. But they will be with me now. I will raise your daughter, Chuwin, to be a fine woman."

"Yes, my lord." Jewitt could not bear to think about his wife and daughter. He was leaving them forever. How could he do that? He wanted them, but did not want them, could not want them, would not be allowed to want them. All of that was impossible to work out in any way that made sense to him.

The king was now shaking both hands. Was he crying? Jewitt couldn't tell. The face paint hid everything you felt, after all. You could barely crack a smile with the face paint on. Still, it was possible that the king was crying.

"Goodbye, Chuwin, goodbye."

He stepped quickly away from Jewitt and went over the side of the ship and down the rope ladder to Quatlazape's canoe. His men followed and took their positions in the middle and stern of the canoe. Mokwila, as always, stood in the bow.

As the canoe pulled away, Jewitt could hear the king chanting or singing, bits and pieces of words that he couldn't quite understand, but the clicking and clacking carried out across the water.

In a second, the canoe rounded a headland and disappeared.

The captain came over and touched Jewitt's cedar cloak.

"We have clothes for you, Jewitt."

"Yes."

"You'll want to burn these as soon as possible, I should think."

"Yes."

They were silent for a moment. Finally the captain spoke. "Did he say you have a wife and child here?"

"Yes, he did."

"And that is true?"

Jewitt nodded. He ran his hands through his greasy hair, sweeping it away from his forehead. He wanted desperately to be clean again.

The Lydia weighed anchor and set sail. She sailed south and then west, out the entrance of the Sound to the Pacific Ocean and then north, to trade with natives along the coast of the island, and then further north still, to the Queen Charlotte Islands. She came south, but did not stop at Noota. At the mouth of the Columbia River, she found new lumber to replace a fractured mast, broken during a gale four days earlier. From the mouth of the Columbia the Lydia headed north, towards Nooka.

Jewitt found Hill a much more convivial captain than Salter. Hill pressed for details about every aspect of his experience as Mokwila's slave, and Jewitt spent many evenings in the captain's cabin describing his experiences and reading from his journal. His duties as blacksmith were light, since the ship was already equipped with an experienced man named McDuggan, originally from Glasgow, who had sailed with Hill three times on the Lydia and four times previously on other ships commanded by the captain.

Jewitt fell back into the rhythm of watches. He knew enough about sail handling to make a passable sailor and his personality made him an easy and popular fit with the twenty-seven men who

made up the Lydia's crew. He wore proper sailor's clothes, shoes and boots and belts. He ate his rations of salt meat and biscuit, relishing the salt but despising the toughness of the beef, and drank his allotment of beer and rum with greater enthusiasm. He had not been drunk in two and a half years. The experience made him woozy and shaky on his feet. He felt the light-headed pleasure of irresponsibility that came with drinking. When was the last time he had felt that?

He would not condemn the natives, or Mokwila, when someone spoke against them as filthy or mad or vicious or violent. He had his own thoughts and conclusions, which he shared only with the captain.

"Will you return to Nooka?" he asked the captain.

"I may. If Mokwila has promised the best furs we would be foolish to disappoint him. We have room for more, many more, Jewitt." After leaving Nootka, the ship would proceed west, across the Pacific, to sell its valuable cargo in the Chinese markets. "Surely you want to see your wife and child?"

"Yes," Jewitt said.

On November 13, the Lydia sailed into the harbour of the deserted village at Nootka. She anchored in eight fathoms on a cool morning. A dismal, low-hanging fog covered the mountains to the east and the north. The water was flat and gray in every direction. The trees, drab and exhausted now that late fall had arrived, seemed to Jewitt as blank and infinite as ever.

The upright posts of the village houses stood like sentinels over the harbour. Jewitt scanned the beach and the meadow beyond but saw no one. The ship sounded her cannons three times as a signal for Mokwila. Eight hours later, three canoes arrived from the north. Jewitt could see the king sitting in the bow of the lead canoe and Kinneclimmets steering from the stern. This canoe dropped the king on the beach and then approached the Lydia.

Kinneclimmets climbed aboard and greeted Jewitt cautiously. He watched the captain and his crew suspiciously, keeping to the near side of the deck, closest to the canoe, as though ready to escape over the side at any moment.

"Chuwin," he said. "The king waits for you on the shore. He has furs. Chuwin, will you go?"

Jewitt looked at the captain and then back to Kinneclimmets. "I will go," he said.

Jewitt asked Kinneclimmets to remain on board with the captain.

"Should I trust you, Chuwin?"

"You have no reason not to."

Kinneclimmets immediately waved an arm at Jewitt, as though dismissing him, and slumped down onto the desk, where he sat, fiddling with an elaborate necklace fastened around his neck. Jewitt walked past him, and over the side, down the rope ladder to the canoe waiting below.

The king was waiting on shore. "Chuwin," he said with great enthusiasm, "I greet you again!" The king took Jewitt's hand and pumped it vigorously. "I have brought furs, the best furs, as I promised I would." He pointed at the two canoes loaded with furs that were pulled up on the beach.

"Thank you, Mokwila. We will trade."

"Where is Kinneclimmets?"

"On the Lydia. He'll remain there until my return."

"Chuwin, you don't trust me?"

Jewitt did not answer.

"Chuwin, if you had brought Kinneclimmets with you here, I would not have harmed you. I never harmed you did I?"

"No," Jewitt admitted. "You never harmed me."

"I treated you well. Not as well as a man would treat his son." Mokwila laughed, as though the thought of Jewitt being his son was immensely funny. "No, not as well as man would treat his son, but then you were not my son, were you?"

"I was your slave."

"But I treated you well."

"Yes," Jewitt said. "You treated me well."

"Naida misses you, Chuwin."

Jewitt did not want to hear these words from Mokwila.

"I tell her she will forget about you. In another year, she will start to forget. In five years, she won't think about you at all. She wants to go back to her family. Her father has asked once for her to return, and

will ask again. But Clasiaca has grown quite fond of her and the baby. You know ... your daughter will not remember you because she has nothing to remember. No, she has nothing to remember."

"Can we go?" Jewitt said.

"You may see her if you wish."

"I don't know."

"She wants to see you."

"Can we go?"

Jewitt went to the canoe and got in. The king sat in the bow. The three canoes arrived at the Lydia a few minutes later.

Mokwila greeted the captain by shaking his hand and bowing towards him. The captain responded politely and invited the king to trade with him. Terms were quickly concluded, and the king's men brought the contents of the two canoes onto the ship. Hill's men packed the furs carefully in the hold. Jewitt could see that the furs were very fine indeed, and this meant excellent prices in China.

The captain then asked the king if he would toast the successful transaction with a small glass of rum. The king agreed, and all three of them went to the king's cabin where they shared a glass of rum.

"To your health," the captain said, holding his glass in front of the king.

"To my health," the king repeated.

They drank. The king drained his glass and then ran his tongue along the inside edge of the glass, removing every trace of the rum.

"Do you like this drink, Mokwila?" Jewitt asked.

"Yes," Mokwila said. "I think the spirits approve of this drink."

"Do you want another?"

Mokwila smiled. "The spirits will allow only one. They know what is best for me."

Jewitt had a second drink, enjoying the warmth that spread from his lips and mouth down his throat and into his gut.

"We must go," the king said. "We'll spend the night in the village and return home in the morning. Chuwin will you meet me on the beach in the morning?"

Jewitt agreed. There was no rush to leave. The Lydia would wait for the afternoon ebb tide before leaving the harbour.

The king and his men left the ship. The captain asked Jewitt if he wanted more rum. Jewitt said no, he was tired and wanted to sleep.

In his mind, he knew his time with Mokwila and the Nootka was finally drawing to a close. Knowing this, he found it difficult to sleep. His body was tired, relaxed by the rum, comfortable and safe in the ship. He had clean clothes, a proper blanket to cover him, safety and security. But he could not stop thinking about Naida, his wife, and Mary Louise, his baby daughter. But even as he thought about them he told himself to put them out of his mind, as they must put him out of their minds.

In the morning, one of the king's men came out in the canoe to fetch Jewitt. The captain asked if he was sure he would be safe, along on the beach with the natives, and Jewitt said yes, he would be quite safe.

Approaching the beach, Jewitt saw the king standing by one of the corner poles of the big house. He stepped out of the canoe, into the frigid water of the harbour, and walked up the beach, and then up the slope to the house.

"This is a good house," the king said, after greeting Jewitt. "This is a very good house. Do you know how long it's been here?"

Jewitt expected the king to say something like "hundreds of years." Instead, the king said, "Only twenty years. The Spanish made us move north but we came back. We always come back, Chuwin!"

"Yes," Jewitt said. When he looked around, he saw only the emptiness of the deserted village. The sky was still gray, and the morning, like the one before it, was cold. Jewitt wore a heavy coat but his feet were wet now, and the cold was working its way up his legs. He remembered times in Mokwila's house when he'd wondered if he would ever get warm again, even with the fires burning all day and most of the night.

"Do you trust me now?" the king said.

"Yes," Jewitt said. "I trust you now."

"But you are leaving. So your trust is wasted."

"We're talking. That's something."

"Please wait, Chuwin."

Jewitt wasn't sure what the king meant. Wait now? For how long? The ship would be leaving a few hours.

The king disappeared. Jewitt remained by the corner pole of the house. Kinneclimmets and the other men were down on the beach, talking amongst themselves. Far off in the harbour, Jewitt could see men working on the fore-deck of the Lydia, making preparations for the voyage to China.

Jewitt turned back, expecting the king to be there again. Instead, he saw Naida. She was standing now directly in front of him. How had she come here and appeared so quietly and suddenly in front of him? He was dumbfounded.

"Naida" was the only word he could say.

She wore a heavy blanket over her cloak but her feet were bare. She looked cold. Her hair, done in two plaits as always, framed her lovely face.

"You look cold," he said.

"I'm fine," she said.

"How are you?" he asked.

She said nothing. She looked down, as though he had asked an embarrassing question.

"How are you, Naida?" he asked again.

"The baby is fine. Healthy and strong. Clasiaca says she will be tall like you."

"Will you stay with Clasiaca?"

"I don't know. My family wants me to return."

"What do you want?"

"I don't know."

"I can't take you, Naida."

"I know."

"Do you want to come with me?"

"Yes, but I want to be here. I want to be with you but I want to be here. I feel I am two people now."

Jewitt understood this. He touched her cheek, and then leaned over and kissed her very lightly on the lips.

"It tickles when you do that," she said.

"It's only a kiss."

"Yes."

"I love you."

"Yes."

Jewitt felt that Naida was pulling away from him, even though she had not moved at all. He touched her cheek again, but she turned her head and his fingers brushed her ears instead. Her hair was clean; he could feel the tight weave of the plait. He touched her ear again.

"Please, don't do that that, Chuwin."

They were both silent, standing there beside the corner post of the house.

A gun sounded on the Lydia. Naida, startled, took a step back. Jewitt wanted to take her in his arms for one final embrace but did not know how she would respond to this. She took another step back. They were now four or five feet apart.

"My signal," Jewitt said. "We leave with the ebb tide."

Naida was stepping away, as though frightened.

"It's only a cannon, Naida. You know what a cannon is."

"Please go," she said.

The force of the tide pulled the Lydia out of the harbour, past the rocky point that guarded the eastern side of the entrance, out into the Sound and then south and west towards the Pacific. The motion of the ship was so slow that Jewitt felt they were not moving at all, that even as he looked back at the village his view of it would never change, that nothing grew smaller, that nothing would disappear with time and distance. But of course all of these things did happen. One moment the beach was still there, and the corner poles were still visible, and then in a moment, rounding the rocky point, they vanished forever. Out in the Sound, a northeasterly wind favoured them from behind as they raised sails and began to make good progress at four to five knots. The motion of the boat, strong and reassuring and confident, settled

into a familiar rhythm as they made their way against the rising swells of the open sea. From the rear deck, Jewitt could see the green shoreline and the white capped mountains beyond and behind the forests. As the Lydia made her way due west, the island inevitably grew smaller and smaller behind them. The shoreline of drab green shrank and disappeared. The white-capped mountains hovered above the horizon and then sank beneath a wave. Jewitt thought he saw them re-appear for a second but then realized he'd mistaken the whitecaps that formed the upper edge of each wave for the white mountain peaks. The waves dropped down, and the boat surged forward, and then he looked again and the island was gone.

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