

Adapted Novel

From Two Roads by Joseph Bruchac

Adapted By Brett Cerrato, Alicia Saunders, & Shawnee Wakeman
Chapter illustrations by Fitz Sanchez



This Adapted Literature resource is available through the Project IMPACT: Inclusion Made Practical for ALL Children and Teachers CFDA #84.326M

The text and graphics are adapted from the original source. These resources are provided for teachers to help students with severe disabilities participate in the general curriculum. Please limit the use and distribution of these materials accordingly.

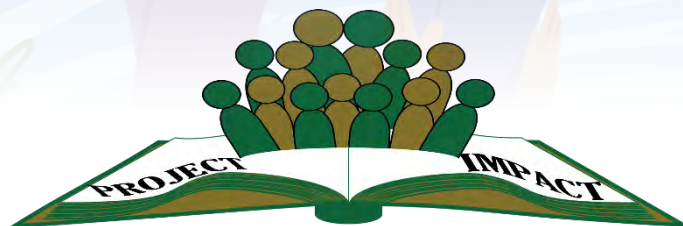


Table of Contents

| Chapter | Title | Page |
|---------|------------------------|------|
| 1a | Keeping Up | 1 |
| 1b | A Scary Stranger | 5 |
| 2a | Earn Everything We Get | 9 |
| 2b | Sharing a Meal | 13 |
| 3 | Tracking | 18 |
| 4a | We Are Honest 'Bos | 24 |
| 4b | The News | 29 |
| 5 | Indian School | 37 |
| 6 | Hopping Off | 44 |
| 7 | A Fine Mulligan | 50 |
| 8 | Gunshots | 60 |

Table of Contents Con't

| Chapter | Title | Page |
|---------|---------------------|------|
| 9 | Upside Down | 66 |
| 10 | Horses | 73 |
| 11 | An Indian Handshake | 78 |
| 12 | Challagi | 85 |
| 13 | The Tour | 95 |
| 14 | Possum | 98 |
| 15 | Infirmary | 103 |
| 16 | Good Advice | 107 |
| 17 | The Dorm | 115 |
| 18 | New Duds | 122 |
| 19 | Mess | 129 |

Table of Contents Con't

| Chapter | Title | Page |
|---------|------------------------------|------|
| 20 | In Step | 133 |
| 21 | Expecting Indians | 139 |
| 22 | Another Day at Work | 147 |
| 23 | To Help Indians | 155 |
| 24 | Stomp Dance | 160 |
| 25 | First Letter | 166 |
| 26 | A Bad Dream | 170 |
| 27 | Time to Go | 177 |
| 28 | One Hand on the Rail | 183 |
| 29 | Wounds | 189 |
| 30a | Tanks on Pennsylvania Avenue | 194 |

Table of Contents Con't

| Chapter | Title | Page |
|---------|------------------------------|------|
| 30b | Tanks on Pennsylvania Avenue | 200 |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Chapter 1a

Keeping Up



The year is 1932. Most days we spend walking. I try to keep up with my



dad, but it is hard to keep up with Pop - my dad - even though I can run faster than



14

any other 12-year-old I know. "Keep up, Cal," he says. In 1918, which was 14 years



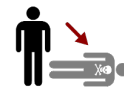
ago, he fought in World War 1 and was injured. Now, Pop walks with a limp and has



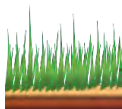
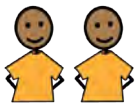
a hard time hearing.



As we walk, Pop will tell me stories about the war. Sometimes the



memories make him sad. Today, Pop is talking about men being killed in the war.

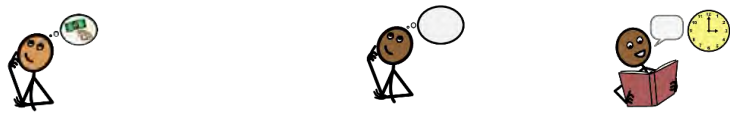
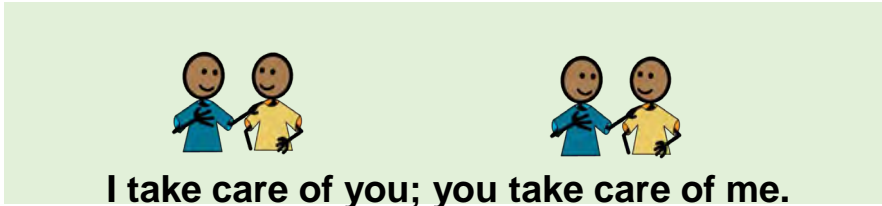


"Men got mowed over like grass. No. Not like grass."



Mown grass does not bleed.” Then, he stops talking and the story is done. He does

that sometimes.



I wish I could be done thinking about the story, but in my head it looks



like I am watching a movie. I call it a vision. I can see what my father saw when he



was on that field in the war. It is like I am there. I can hear the cannons and guns. I



am scared as I begin to run with the other soldiers toward the enemy.



“Cal? Cal?” I can hear my Pop calling my name and the vision ends.



"I'm here Pop, present!" My dad laughs. I take care of you; you take care of me. All



Pops and I have is each other. We do not have any other family.



Our family used to own a farm, but we lost our money in the Great



Depression. The bank took our farm. Since then, Pop and I have been living out in



nature. Spending so much time in the sun makes our skin get very dark. The school I



went to also closed. My teacher knew I loved to read about brave heroes, and she



gave me 3 books. "I know you will treasure these." And I do! We do not have money



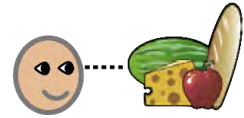
for books or a



home where I can keep books, so I carry the 3 books with me in my pack.



Even though I don't go to school anymore, I keep on learning. Pop teaches about



how to be brave and survive in nature. He taught me how to look for food along our



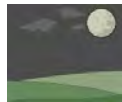
path.



I take care of you; you take care of me.



Today there is no food on our path. I am so hungry. I start thinking about



where we will camp for the night. Another vision starts. This time I am dreaming



about catching rabbits to eat.

Chapter 1b

A Scary Stranger



The vision in my head is interrupted by a man's voice. He does not look



or sound friendly. He has white skin and red hair and is sitting on top of a horse



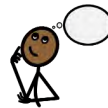
carrying a gun. Pop says to him, "Morning Captain," and he salutes the man. Then



Pop unties the bandana from his neck and wipes his forehead. Where the bandana



was, Pop's skin is lighter. The man on the horse relaxes.



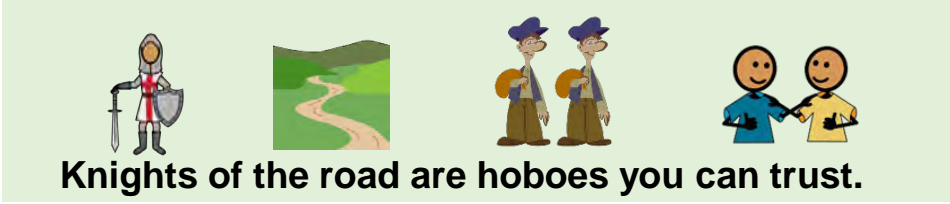
When we travel in the South, if someone thinks we are Black, they might



not treat us fairly. It is hard for me to understand why people would treat someone



unfairly because of the way they look.



After looking at my dad's clothes, the man with the red hair asked if my



dad had served in the war. They have something in common. They both fought in



France. The man sounds more friendly now. I don't want to see their war in my head



again though. So, I listen for the redbird calling *wheet-wheet-wheet wheeyou*

wheeyou wheeyou.





I hear Pop say to the man, "We are knights of the road going to Rustberg." "Knights



of the road" means we are hoboes. A hobo is a homeless person who travels by



walking or riding on trains to look for jobs to earn money.



The man gives us directions then says, "up a half-mile on the right is my



house. Tell Mrs. Rose, my wife, that Red sent you. She will feed y'all a good meal!"



My Pop says, "Being knights of the road, we would like to work for the food. Is there



wood we could chop?



Knights of the road are hoboes you can trust.



I tell Red, "We are not beggars and we do not steal. We live by rules." I



do not like to talk much, but I love to talk about the rules of being a hobo. Red



laughs and says that there is some wood for us to chop. He put his gun away, and



then rode off on his horse.



Knights of the road are hoboes you can trust.

Chapter 2a

Earn Everything We Get



There is little wood to chop, so Pop and I finish quickly.



Mrs. Rose, Red's wife, pretends that we worked very hard. We are dirty from all of



the walking. We wash up at the water pump behind the house. I run my comb



through my long, straight, black hair.



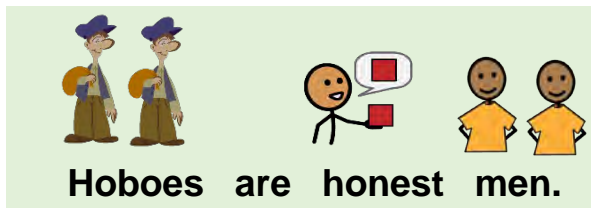
"Thank you kindly, ma'am." I say as Mrs. Rose sets down a tin plate.



It is filled with squirrel stew and a big piece of cornbread. *Try to be a*



gentleman at all times. That is the second rule of the hobo code we live by.



After lunch, we wash our clothes at the water pump. Then, we thank



Mrs. Rose for her kindness and begin to walk again. We walk miles and miles until



we stop when we get to a farmstead. We have walked from lunch time until dinner



time. Pop sees 3 little pictures at the bottom of the fence. They are hobo signs. Most



people would not even see them!



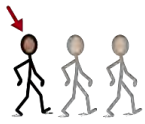
The first hobo sign is old and means the farmer is friendly. But the



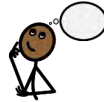
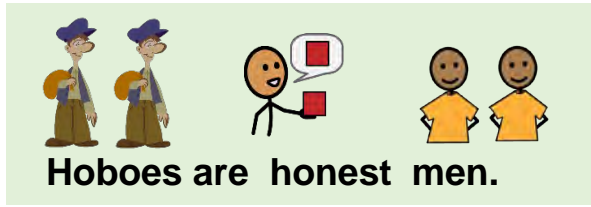
second and third signs mean the farmer is not friendly and has a gun! "I guess we



cannot stay here." I say to Pop. "No, Cal. Let's try to fix this."



Stay behind, but follow me," Pop says.



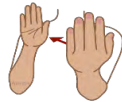
As we walk towards the house, I think about the hobo code. An honest



'bo would not steal. A thief must have visited this farm. An honest hobo would work



for anything he gets.



As we start to get close, the door cracks open and a woman points a gun



at us. I am scared, but Pop remains calm. "Stay back!" shouts a woman's voice from



behind the door. My dad then asks, "Edith?"



"How do you know my name?" Edith calls back. She sounds more



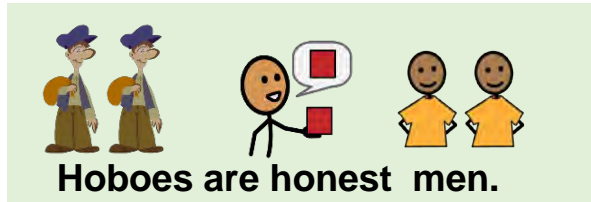
curious and not scared. "It's me, Railroad Will! Child of the open road. The same



man who served in the war with your husband, Sam!" my dad says. Edith recognizes



Pop and comes running out of the house.



Chapter 2b

Sharing a Meal



“Will Black!” she called. Miz Euler gave Pop a big hug. They were friends



from a long time ago. She was not scared anymore. Then Pop nodded at me and



said, “Meet my son, Cal. A real great traveler, just like me.” A traveler is another



name for a hobo.



I salute and say, “Yes, sir.” They both laugh before she invites us to



come inside to eat dinner with her. She has a pot of chicken stew cooking in the



kitchen. We sit at the table with a pitcher of coffee while she tells Pop all about the



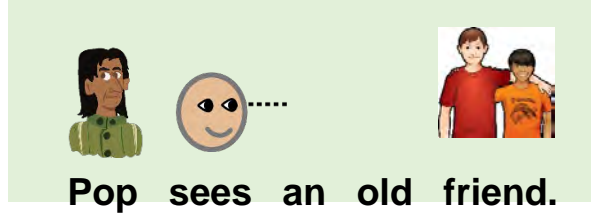
farm and how she is making enough money to keep it.



People feel good talking to Pop, and he is a very good listener. I learned that



from him too.



It is time for Pop and me to wash up for dinner out back. Pop takes me



over to a gravestone. It has the name SAMUEL K. EULER. I saw those initials SKE



in my head when Pop was telling me one of his war stories. When Pop got hurt in



the war, Sam carried Pop over his shoulder to safety.



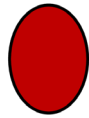
We paid our respects then walked to the water pump and



washed up for dinner. Pop stuck his head under the cool water first, then I took my

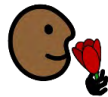
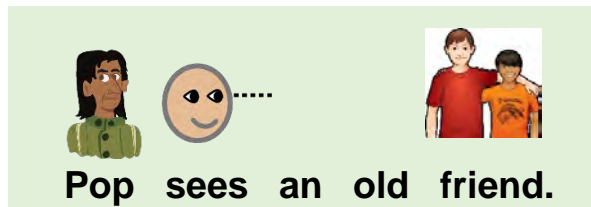


turn. Each of us slicked our thick black hair back out of our eyes. We scrub our

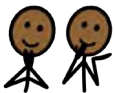


faces until our skin turns red. Then we go back inside and sit at the table Miz Euler

has set.



The chicken stew smells very good. Pop and I are civilized travelers. We



use our manners and wait to say grace before we eat. Pop leads grace by



thanking the bird that is in the stew and the vegetables too. "And we are thankful



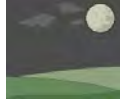
to be with generous people." Pop pauses,



then we all say, "Amen."



As I am eating my third bowl of stew, I feel a cat tail wrap around my leg.



It reminds me of a bull snake we found one night camping. Pop taught me that it



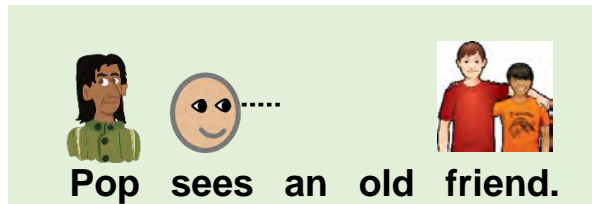
would scare away rattlesnakes. Miz Euler shushed away the cat before bringing out



yummy pie. Pop tells jokes, Miz Euler laughs, and I eat quietly. "It feels good to



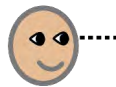
laugh," she says. "Sam really loved you, Will." Miz Euler says.



After we eat, Pop asks if she has been having trouble with a thief.



She tells us, “Two weeks ago a chicken was stolen, then a knife after that. Two days



ago, someone took my pot.” “Ah,” Pop said as he looked at me. I knew we were



going to do something to help Miz Euler.

Chapter 3

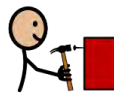
Tracking



“Thank you for the stew, Miz Euler. We are going to take a walk.” Pop



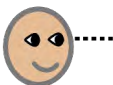
tells her. We walk over to the chicken coop. On the way, Pop cuts a 6-foot-long stick.



The chicken coop is big and sturdy. “Sam built this,” Pop says. There are 22



chickens in the coop and 12 more in the yard with the rooster.



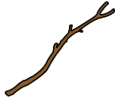
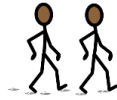
We look at the ground, and Pop points to a shoeprint next to his.



It is bigger and deeper with a small cut in the heel making it easy to recognize.



“Good tracking eye, Cal.” Pop tells me. He’s an expert tracker.



A tracker is a person who follows a path using clues. He uses the stick to



see how far apart each step is. We move through the woods by following shoeprints



and broken branches. Pop’s grandpop taught him how to track, but I never met him



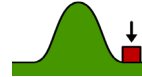
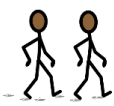
or any of my grandparents. The only family I know and have left is my Pop. My mom



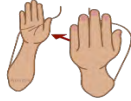
was an orphan, so we never met her family either.



Cal and Pop are lucky to have each other.



We follow the thief's trail. We cross a field and go down a hill near the



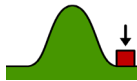
train tracks. We are getting close to the thief. We start to sneak



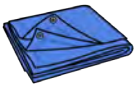
toe-to-heel, the quiet way of walking my Pop taught me long ago. My heart is



pounding.



At the bottom of a hill is the chicken thief's messy camp. There is a



canvas sheet as a tent. And a cold, dead fire with Miz Euler's pot sitting on top.



There are chicken feathers and feet all around the ground. The man is asleep, and



we can see his boot with the cut across the heel. Pop sees a pile of newspapers,



grabs the top one and puts it in his pocket.



Cal and Pop are lucky to have each other.



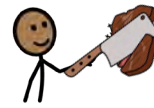
Pop kicks the man's boot, not too hard to hurt him, but enough to wake



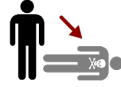
him up. The man jumps up and his tent falls over his head making him look like a



ghost.



I might have laughed, except he was holding and swinging Miz



Euler's butcher knife. "YER DEAD MEN, EVERYONE OF YEH!" Pop trips the man



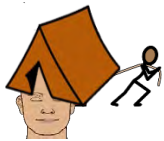
and quickly grabs the knife from the thief's hand.



Like always, Pop has remained calm. I hope I can be like him. Then he



nods towards the pot. I grab the pot and Pop puts the knife inside.



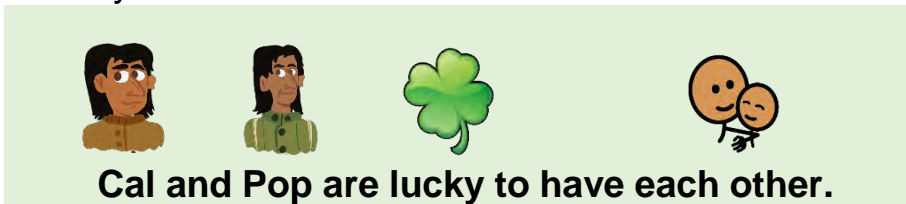
Then he pulls the tent off the man's head.



The man tells us his name is Jack, "Just Jack." Just Jack is all alone. He



does not have anyone.



Cal and Pop are lucky to have each other.



Pop tells Just Jack to empty out his pockets and coin purse. Pop



catches him trying to hide some of his money. In all, Just Jack has 1 dime, 11



quarters, 4 fifty cent pieces, and 2 new silver dollars. It was 6 dollars and 85 cents all

together.



Just Jack tries to lie and tell Pop he was a veteran. He is a thief and



a liar! Just Jack is scared when Pop takes the knife back out of the pot and removes



2 silver dollars from the coin pile. "This will pay for the chickens you stole. When I



come back here tomorrow, you better be long gone." We turn and walk back to the



farm. I feel sad for Just Jack. He has no one.

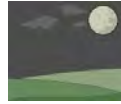


Cal and Pop are lucky to have each other.

Chapter 4a

We Are Honest

'Bos



When we got back to Miz Euler's last night, Pop gave her the two silver



dollars, the pot, and the knife. She was so happy. She fed us dinner, let us sleep in



the barn for the night, then fed us enough breakfast for a grizzly bear. We say



goodbye and head towards the train, checking to make sure Just Jack had cleaned



up his campsite.



He is gone but his camp is covered with his trash! He left a gross and



very smelly present for us, too. The sign of a coward. But we are knights of the road.



Our code says always respect nature and never leave



garbage where you are jungling. We clean up his mess.



Cal and Pop are knights of the road and follow the hobo's code.



When we get to the railroad tracks, there are already hoboes waiting in



the tall grass. Us 'boes have to hide before we jump on a train. We do not want the



railroad bull, a very strong man, to catch us. When the train gets to our part of the



track, it will be going slow. It is very dangerous to jump onto trains, but us hoboes



help each other onto the train's boxcars safely.



Cal and Pop are knights of the road and follow the hobo's code.



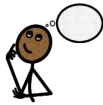
Not all hoboes are like Pop and me. Some are just teenagers who ran



away. Others used to be rich before the Great Depression. My Pop was a hobo



before he met my mom. He learned all the best ways to survive in nature.



I get to thinking about my mom. She died of an illness two years ago.



She was sweet, funny, beautiful, and taller than my dad. She had long dark hair and



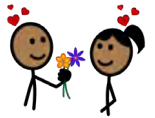
pretty brown eyes. Her parents came to America from Armenia but died when they



got here. Then, she was an orphan and was adopted by a family in Nebraska. My



mom was a nurse; she met Pop



when he was on a train that crashed, and she treated his injuries. They fell in love



the moment they met. They bought the farm and had me. We were a happy family.



Then came the bad luck. My mom died, then the school closed, then the



bank took our farm. We did not have any money to pay the mortgage. Pop gave all



our money to the doctors to try and save my mom. I miss my mom.



Pop and I left Kansas and became hoboes, like he had done before. We



travel by jumping on trains and work any chores or jobs we can to



earn money, food, or lodging. I am a fast learner!



Cal and Pop are knights of the road and follow the hobo's code.



Suddenly, we hear, "ALLL ABOOOOARD!" Pop taps me to go first. I am



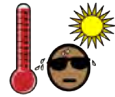
such a fast runner! Before mom died, I ran on the school's track team. Pop has a



limp but can still run faster than most people.

Chapter 4b

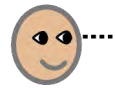
The News



After it gets too hot to stay sitting on top of the train, we swing into a



boxcar. Pop recognizes other hoboes from riding the rails before. They have funny



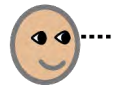
names— Boney and Professor. The Professor now looks at both of us. “Railroad Will,



I did not recognize you in the dark shadows. He shakes both our hands. “Pleased to



meet you, sir,” I say. The man chuckles and says, “I am pleased to meet you as well.



Any son of your father is worthy of respect.” Then he looks me in the eyes. “A smart



looking boy. Does he enjoy reading?” The Professor was a teacher at a



college before the war.



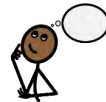
“Yes, Cal has a few books in his pack,” Pop says proudly. Then the



professor asks, “Then why is he living on the rails? Why is he not in school?” Pop



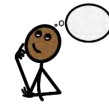
usually just shakes his head and laughs when he hears this question, but this time



he gave a different answer. “I have been thinking about Cal starting school again.” I



was very surprised. How could I go to school? My old school is closed. I do not live



near another one either. We live somewhere new everyday. I only think about these



questions because Pop is now quiet.



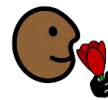
Cal gets some big news.



It has been a long day. I sit down against the wall, lean against Pop, and



count backwards. 20... 19... 18... The shaking and rattling of the train helps me fall



asleep. I dream of my mom cooking breakfast. I can smell the food from my dream in



the boxcar. Pop and the Professor are sitting and cooking over a camp stove. If you



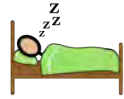
share or contribute to a meal, you get to eat too. Pop must have shared our potatoes



from Miz Euler. I bet the Professor shared the bacon and stove. Another rule for



knights of the road. *Help your fellow hoboes whenever and wherever needed. You*



may need their help one day. After I clean up the dinner plates, I fall asleep again.



I woke up with the sun the next morning. Pop is reading the newspaper



that he took from Just Jack's camp. Pop is talking to himself, "Washington." Pop



sees me awake and asks me if I remember the soldier's name. Then he tells me



another story from the war. I have heard it before, but I listen again. The soldier was



very brave and a hero. Pop showed me an older newspaper article he had. It was



about the same soldier. But he does not look strong and brave anymore. Now the



soldier looks tired and hungry.



Pop tells me about how the soldier testified before Congress. He told



Congress, "The soldiers that fought in the Great War need your help. We are losing



our homes and cannot feed our families. Pop shows me Just Jack's newspaper.



"That soldier is just like us. We lost our farm. Now soldiers like me are going to



Washington. They are peacefully protesting. We earned our compensation



certificate, and now we need to be paid for the battles we fought." Pop is getting



excited as he talks.



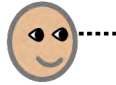
Cal gets some big news.



Just like yesterday, I start to see a vision in my head. This time I see Pop



in Washington D.C., our nation's capital. They are marching towards the White



House. Towards the President. But I only see Pop and thousands of other soldiers. I



do not see myself anywhere.



I hear Pop's voice again and the vision in my head is over. "I need to help



my brothers from the war, Cal." I do not like the way he said I. "How can we help



them, Pop?" I ask him. Pop stops smiling. He is very serious now.



"Cal," Pop does not sound excited anymore. "I have been thinking.



This is going to be me and the vets. Like in the war. That is not a safe place for you.



You are only 12. Just a kid. It is time for you to go back to school.”



Cal gets some big news.



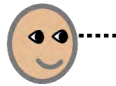
I am still very confused! “How? How?” Then Pop laughs.



Sometimes we use sign language when we cannot hear or make any noise. Pop



uses sign language now. He holds out his left hand and gently scratches the back of



it with the fingers on his right hand. I look at Pop because I have not seen this sign

before.



“It means Indian.” Then he holds out his hands, side by side, open palm



up. I know this sign means school. I am still very confused.

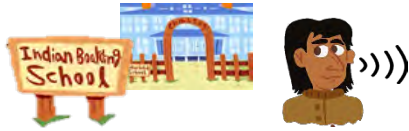


Then Pop says quietly, “Indian School.”



Cal gets some big news.

Chapter 5 Indian School



“Indian School?” I repeat back but as a question. “Is that where they



teach you to be an Indian?” It was an accident, but I had made a joke. Pop started



to laugh harder than I had seen him laugh in a



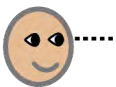
long time. “My old teachers at Challagi would not think that was as funny as I do. No,



Cal. *Au contraire*, they teach you the opposite.”



I was still very confused. A little mad maybe, but I did not say anything. I



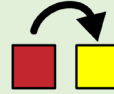
just looked at Pop and raised my eyebrows. “With the way I raised you, this must be



hard to understand.” Pop was not making sense.



If you want to hear talk. Pop taught me that, and Grandpop taught Pop. So, I listen.



Cal's life is about to change.



I feel like my feet are stuck in mud with the water rising around me. I am



scared that my life is about to change. Pop begins to explain to me about Indian

School.



“Cal, do you remember learning about the wars fought between the



Indians and the United States? The United States was mostly made up of people



from Europe, then.” I started to remember when I learned about



these wars in school. I was taught that Indians were savages and dangerous.

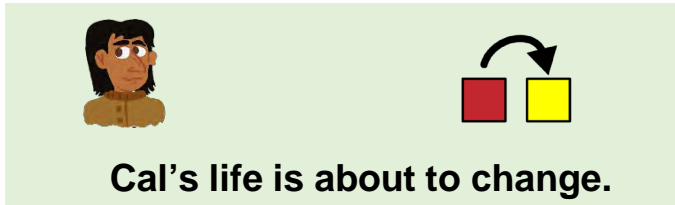


Pop tells me this is not true. Before the settlers from Europe sailed across the ocean,



the United States was filled with Indian Tribes. Each tribe had its own culture, or way

of life.



Cal's life is about to change.



The tribes were similar because they were all Indians, but all had



very different cultures. Here are some other things Pop and Mom taught me.



Womanoags helped the first settlers in Massachusetts (the northeast).



The Tuscaroras and Oneidas saved George Washington's Army during



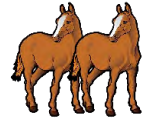
the Revolution.



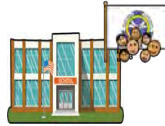
The 5 tribes of the south are called the Cherokees, Choctaws,



Chickasaws, Creeks and Seminoles.



Those tribes had learned how to farm, raise livestock like cows, horses,



pigs, and chickens, started their own schools, and even dressed like White people,



the European settlers. The United States broke every promise they made with



Indians. When the Indians' land was stolen, they were forced to walk the



Trail of Tears.



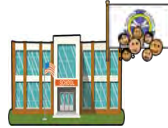
I have never met a real Indian. But I grew up feeling differently about



Indians than the other kids in my class. I just remembered that Pop is still talking. He



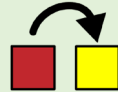
is telling me about how the United States stopped trying to fight and kill Indians. It



was too expensive. Instead, they made schools for Indian kids. There they would



stop learning their own culture and learn how to “be White” instead.



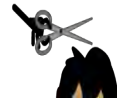
Cal's life is about to change.



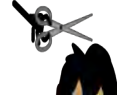
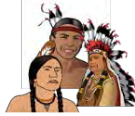
Pop continues to talk about how a government Indian School was rough.



Indian School is a boarding school where the kids go and live. Kids



would not get to see their families for a long time. They would cut everyone's hair



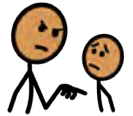
very, very short. For many Indians, this was their first haircut.



The school would throw away their Indian clothes. They had to wear a



military uniform. They had to march in line and wake up at 5 am. It was hard and



made him sad. If any student spoke their Indian language, they would be punished

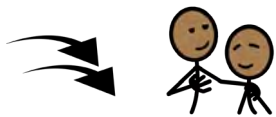
harshly.



Then Pop says, "hers' ce." but it sounds like hers-key. "That means



'howdy' or 'hi' in Creek." I repeat, "Hers-key." Then Pop says, "Mu-to."



I repeat again, "Mu-to."



That means, "Thank you in Creek." Why was Pop using an Indian



language? Then I ask Pop, "Jim Thorpe was an Indian, was he a Creek?"



My Pop looks at me with kind eyes. "No, Cal. I am Creek." That means

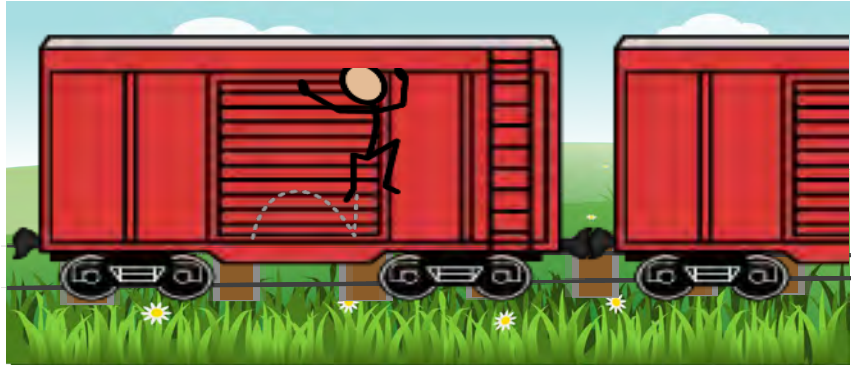


I am half Indian!



Cal's life is about to change.

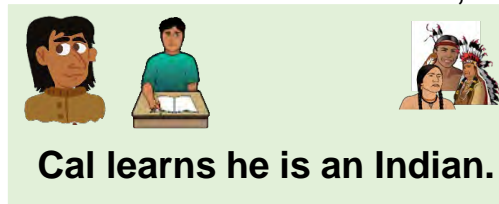
Chapter 6 Hopping Off



I thought to myself, "Pop is an Indian? I am an Indian? I was feeling



bamboozled. I was confused and curious and nervous, all at the same time.



I have seen Indians in the movies. They have beads and feathers in their



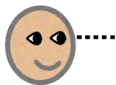
hair. They whoop or yell while they ride on horses. They live in tipis and hunt.



They don't live in houses or become a hobo. When I look at Pops, he does not look



like the Indians from the movies.



Not a bead or feather in sight. I looked closer at his face. His hair is long and black.



He looks like the man on the buffalo nickel.



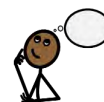
People always say I look just like him. The same brown skin, hooked



nose, and long black hair. I ask Pop, "Are you joking?" Pop does



not smile. He just shakes his head 'no.' It is all true.



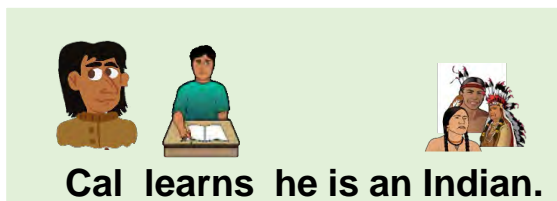
I have a headache. It only gets worse as I start to think about the other



thing Pop said. He said I'm going to school. But I love living as a hobo and spending



my day with Pop.



Cal learns he is an Indian.



Pop nods at the open door on the train. We pass a sign that says



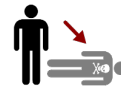
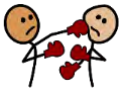
FAIRVILLE, ARKANSAS. They do not like hoboes in Fairville.



Just like at Miz Euler's farm, there is a hobo symbol on this sign, also. Two



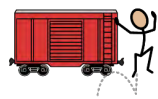
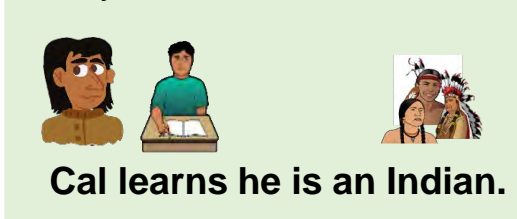
connecting circles, like handcuffs. A White hobo would go to jail and might get



beaten up. But if they catch a Black hobo, they might kill him. Pop and I will have to



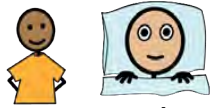
be very careful if we want to stay safe in Fairville.



The other hoboes in our boxcar line up to jump out. The Professor jumps



first. I was getting ready to jump when I see a man's boot. I run



over and shake the man awake.






He looks at Pop, who says "Arkansas." The man runs to the door, and



jumps. I watch him run into the forest. He is a Black man. It would be very dangerous



if he got caught at the train station.

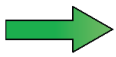
Cal learns he is an Indian.



Now it is our turn to get off the train. I jump and then Pop is next. We run



into the forest before the guards see us. In the forest, we see a hobo clue for the



path. It points to a hidden path.



As we walk on the secret path, I remember what Pop told me on the



train. I think, "Is Pop a good tracker because he is an Indian or because he is a



hobo?"



After walking for 10 minutes, we arrive at a little hobo town. I see little



wooden houses. I also see the hobo that I woke up on the train.



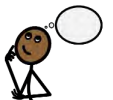
We walk up to him, and he shakes Pop's hand. His name is Esom Dart,



and he was a Corporal in the Great War. Corporal Dart has war medals on his shirt



that he earned from France.



He told us that he has not found a job because of his brown skin. I think



about Pop's brown skin. Just like this man, Pop is treated



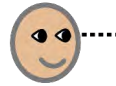
differently than a White man, but not as bad as a Black man! Pop asks Corporal Dart



where the hobo jungle, Hard Times Township, is, and he points in the right direction.



When we arrive, Pop sees an old friend named Cap. "Welcome



Railroad Will! It has been such a long time since I have seen you." He is the mayor of

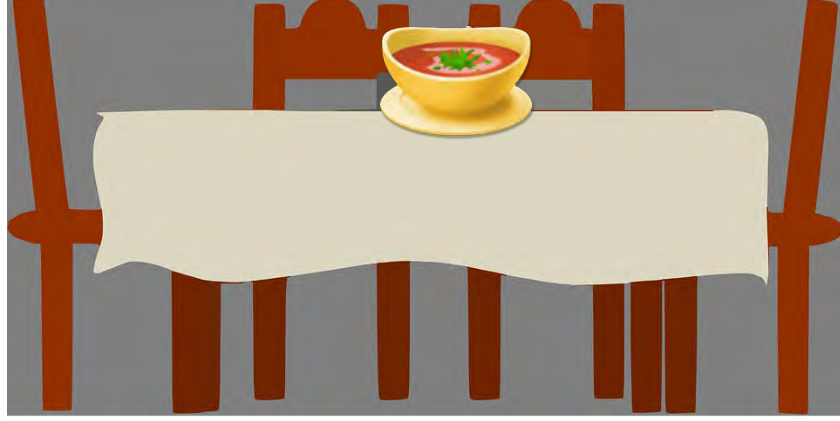


Hard Times Township. Cap invites us to stay.

Cal learns he is an Indian.

Chapter 7

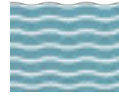
A Fine Mulligan



I can tell by where the sun is that it is about 6 o'clock P.M. I have been



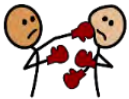
carrying and pouring buckets of water from the river to fill Cap's giant cooking pot.



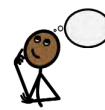
Cap adds a handful of salt, and we wait while the water gets hot. Cap built a fire



using very dry wood. Wet wood makes thick smoke. If the police see smoke, they



might beat up or arrest everyone!

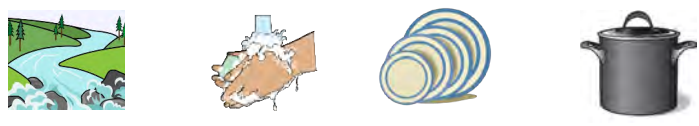


Everyone adds to the mulligan stew and feasts. I think it is the best stew I



have ever tasted! Pop and I take the cups and pot to the river to

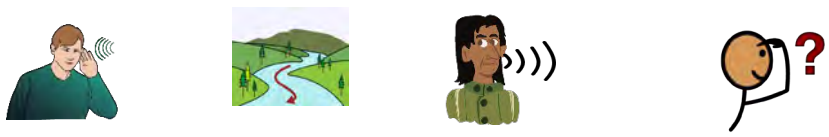
wash them. The forest is dark, but Pop can still move fast through the trees. When



we reach the river, we wash the dishes and the pot.



When we finish, Pop and I sit on the bank. We sit in silence, only



listening to the stream. Then Pop asked, "Where was I?" He is not actually asking



me. So, I do not talk, I just wait. Then he begins, so I listen to everything he has to



say.

Cal learns about his new identity.



He tells me his great-great-grandparents, and grandparents, and his own



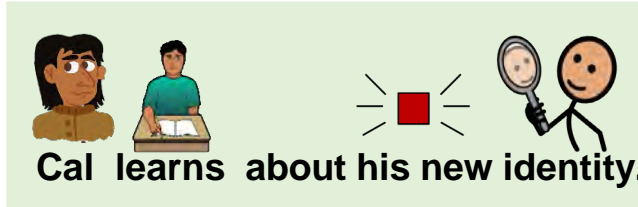
mom and dad were all full-blooded Creek Indian. So is Pop. So am I.



We are from one of the five civilized tribes. Tribes that farmed and raised cattle. Our



family name is Blackbird, not Black. I am Cal Blackbird. I like that name.



White settlers wanted the farms that the Creek Indians owned. The White



settlers had power, so they stole the land and moved the Creek Indians to territories



in the west. Just then, I start a vision. I can see the Creek Indians being forced out of



their cabins by men in army uniforms with rifles. The men, women, and kids that are



being attacked all have



brown faces, like me and Pop.



I shake my head and the vision ends. I ask Pop, "Why didn't you tell me



this before?" He tells me that he and my mom decided to protect me. And lie. "It is



not easy being an Indian. If people know you are an Indian, they will treat you worse



than a White man. In the land of the free and the home of the brave, if you are a



Brave, you are less free." I remember from school that a Brave is another name for



an Indian.



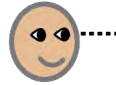
Cal learns about his new identity.



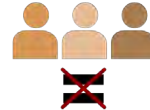
In school and in the movies, we were all taught only bad things



about Indians. Pop's lessons were different though. He taught me that Indians were



treated differently than White people. I have seen how Black people are treated



worse just because of the color of their skin. This is called racism, but Pop always



taught me that we are all equal. Everyone has red blood on the inside. I never decide



if I like someone because of the way they look. Some of the animals with the prettiest



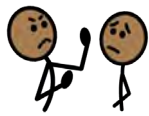
colors are also filled with dangerous poison!



He tells me about the army and when he met mom. She knew right away



that he was an Indian. She had visions like me. She was an



immigrant, so she was bullied too. They decided to pretend to be a White couple



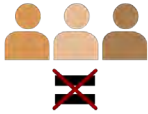
instead of an Indian and an immigrant. It would be easier to get money from the bank



for a house.



Now I know why Pop was so upset when the hobo called him "Injun Joe."



That name was racist and hurt Pop's feelings. I am Cal Blackbird, a Creek Indian. I



had so many questions, but before Pop could tell me more, we heard, *whooooluls*.



An owl. "My grandfather taught me that the call of an owl was a bad omen. It meant



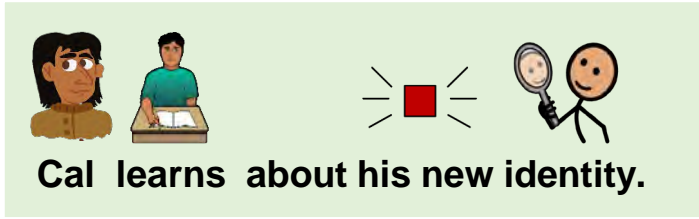
something bad was about to happen. At Indian School, they taught me an owl was



just an owl,"



Pop says.



He tells me a story he learned at Challagi, the Indian boarding school. A



new vision starts. I can see Charlie Cornsilk, a boy's boots, and a cracked lantern.



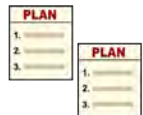
"Why am I telling you this now, Cal?" Pop asks another question, but I just listen. "I



chose to be a hobo. Not you, Cal. You should be in school. You should have a







chance to learn with other kids your age."



I like being a hobo with Pop. I am very good at it! "I have two plans. A



plan for you and a plan for me." Pop kept talking. "Remember the

   
veteran that walked to Washington D.C.? He stood up for us veterans. Now more



    
veterans are protesting. Thousands of veterans are going to D.C. to tell President

   
Hoover that we fought for freedom. That we deserve our money. I could buy us

 
another farm, Cal.”

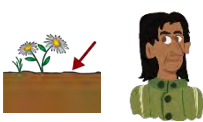
   
I was not sure what to say. “But I like being a hobo. I want to be with you,


Pop!”

  
“I know, Cal. You are a great kid. But this is not where you should be. I

   
chose to be a hobo when I left school. But when me and your mom had the farm?

 
That life was the best.”



In the dirt, Pop draws a circle with a line through the middle. Then he



explained his plan. He would go to Washington, D.C. with the army veterans. I am



too young to be a hobo alone. Pop said he wants me to have “three hots and a cot.”



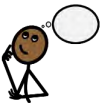
That means breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and a safe bed to sleep in.



I cannot argue with Pop. I am Cal Blackbird. My Pop is a Creek Indian



and my Mom was a European immigrant. I am going to Indian boarding school. Pop



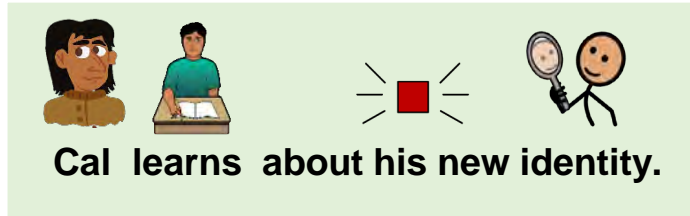
is going to protest in Washington, D.C. My life will change. For the first time, I think



about how much I trust Pop.



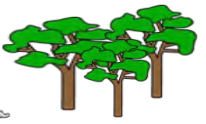
Then we hear gunshots.



Chapter 8 Gunshots



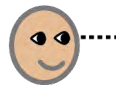
The gunshots are loud, so they are close. We left the pot and cups by the



tree and ran toward the hobo to town. Pop taught me how to run through the forest



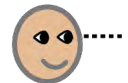
at night. Never sprint, only jog, and do not look down.



As we got closer, we could see a big and bright fire. It was so much



bigger than a fire to cook a stew. We did not want to be seen by whoever shot the



gun, so we crouched down behind some trees and bushes. They might see light from



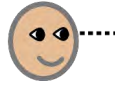
the fire reflect off our faces. We move our hair over our faces so we can hide better.



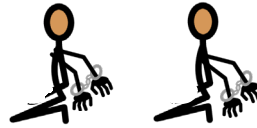
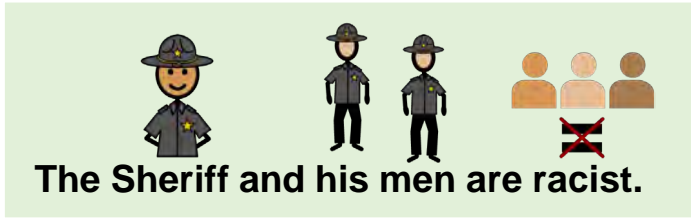
In front of us is the hobo town. Someone's shelter is on fire. There are



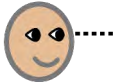
angry men with torches. One has an angry hound dog. Another man is holding the



gun and is wearing a sheriff's badge. They are looking for someone.



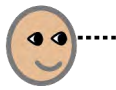
All the hoboes are kneeling with their hands behind their backs. Cap is



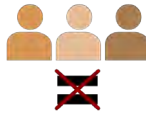
there too. He is looking at the Sheriff. The Sheriff yells, "I know he is hiding here.



Where is he?" Then he shoots the gun into the sky.



The Sheriff is looking for Corporal Esom Dart. He is looking for him



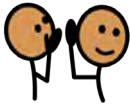
because he is a Black hobo. The Sheriff is a racist and did not want any Black men



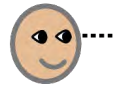
coming to his town.



I hear some leaves rustle. Corporal Dart must be hiding under the leaves.



Then Pop whispers, "Stay there," and he walks out of the forest.



As Pop walks out of the forest, the Sheriff looks at him and points his



gun. The other men do too. "I am the man you saw," Pop tells them. The Sheriff is



confused. He thought he had seen a Black man. Pop had the same hat, same



uniform, was the same height, and the same weight as



Corporal Dart. "I am not a Black man, sir. I am a Creek Indian." Then Pop takes off



his hat so the Sheriff can see his long black hair.



The hound dog sniffs Pop's hand and licks it. Pop always makes animals



feel calm. Animals feel calm with me too. "What's your name then?" The Sheriff



sounds less mad when he asks.



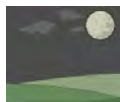
"William Black, sir. My army papers are in my pocket with my name," Pop



tells him. The man is acting nicer now because Pop is Indian and not Black. That is



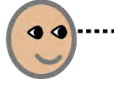
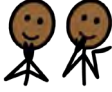
not a fair way to treat people. "I am bringing my son to Challagi, the Indian School.



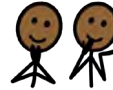
We are only here for a night."



The Sheriff is very relaxed now. "I catch kids that run away from Challagi.



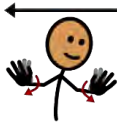
They all are very polite, just trying to see their families." Then Pop calls for me to



come out of hiding. I introduce myself using my best manners.



The other hoboies do not look scared anymore. The Sheriff laughs, then



tells the other angry men they are done, and it is time to leave. "Remember, if you



see any Black hoboies, you come and tell me!"

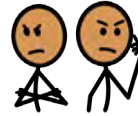




When the gang had left, Cap yelled, "Buckets!" Everyone ran and



grabbed buckets of water to throw onto the fire. I went to find Corporal Esom Dart,



but he was gone. "Corporal Dart learned how to avoid enemies in France. He is long



gone," Pop says. I have another vision and can see Corporal Dart running safely



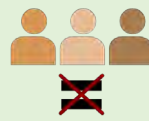
through the woods.



Then I see the Victory Medal that was pinned to Corporal Esom's shirt

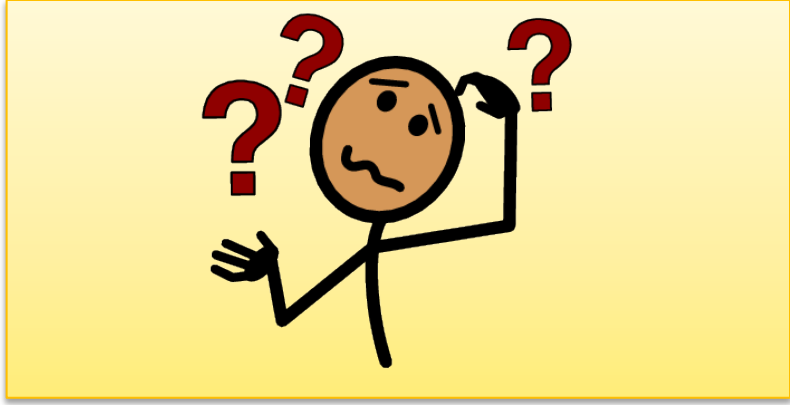


when I met him. "He left that for you, Cal," Pop tells me. "You saved his life."



The Sheriff and his men are racist.

Chapter 9 Upside Down



The next morning, we caught the train heading to Challagi. I usually like



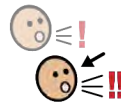
lying on the top of a fast-moving train. But today I had too many questions for Pop to



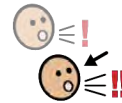
enjoy the sun and the wind.



Cal is an Indian. He has many questions.



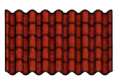
I could not ask him though. It was too loud on top of the train. He taught



me sign language when I was young. We use them when it is loud, or we have to be



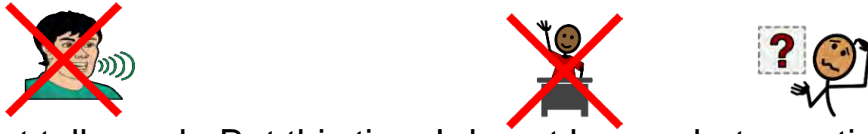
very quiet. I sign to him that I have a question. He nods and points. We sneak off the



roof and into an empty boxcar. Most train



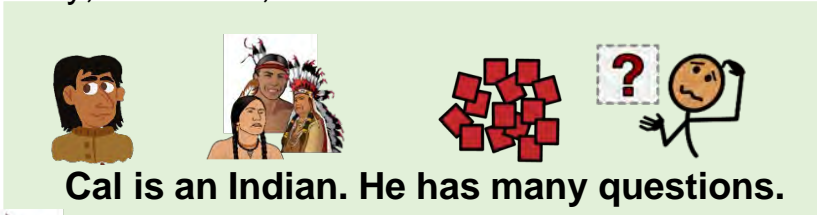
workers do not mind us because we are respectful.



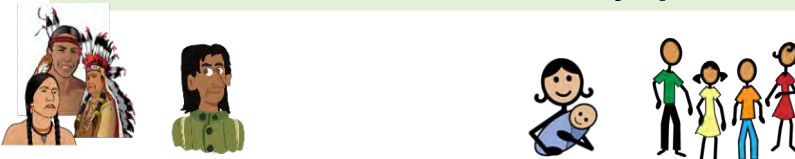
I do not talk much. But this time I do not know what question to ask first. I



have so many! Finally, I blurt out, "So I am Indian?"



Cal is an Indian. He has many questions.



"Half-Indian," Pop answers. "Your mom's family was from Europe." I start



to think about all the things Pop has taught me. He has taught me about nature,



animals, a special sign language, and more. Were all those lessons he learned



because he was an Indian? Instead, I ask, "Challagi?"



I never have to say much for Pop to give me a long answer.



“Challagi Federal Agricultural Indian Boarding School. Challagi means Cherokee in



Choctaw. The White men who named the school did



not know the Choctaw language. They did not know the word ‘Challagi’ was a mean



insult.



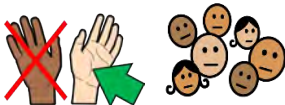
Pop told me all about the school– how old it is, the types of classes they



teach, and why he ran away when he was a boy. Challagi is very strict because they



want the Indians to lose their culture. The teachers at Challagi want all the students



to be like White people.



Most students at the school don't want to be there. Pop told me that



the clothes were uncomfortable, the boots would fall apart, they had to do hard work,



and the food tasted bad. Some students tried to run away because they were



homesick. Pop ran away three times. The first time, he was caught. The second



time, his family was all gone, so he realized his friends at school were his family, and



he went back. The third time, he joined the army with the men that became like



another family. Pop explains, "The school is better now. There are teachers who



want us to learn useful things like farming. You need to be in school, Cal. For an



Indian, school is better than Washington, D.C.



Indian. It is still confusing. It is a whole new identity. "How am I going to



fit in?" I ask him. He tells me that we are all people. We bleed the same blood and



breathe the same air. All the students are from different Indian tribes. Each tribe has



their own culture. Some kids can speak their tribe's language, but many cannot



speak any Indian language. At Challagi, you are only allowed to speak English when



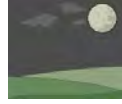
the teachers can hear you.



Then he told me that the friends he made at school were some of the



closest family he ever had. He misses those friends. They were all Creek boys too.



Whenever they could sneak away at night, they would teach each other the Creek



language and stomp dances. "Cal, I've never known a faster learner than you. You



listen and remember things the first time."



Cal is an Indian. He has many questions.



"I am only half-Indian. Will I look different than everyone else?" I asked



Pop next. He laughed and answered, "No, Cal. Many of the kids at Challagi are full-



blooded Indian. But some are only part Indian, like you. Some kids even have blonde



hair! You look like a full-blooded Creek



Indian so you will be fine.” Just like that, I am now a Creek Indian. My world is upside

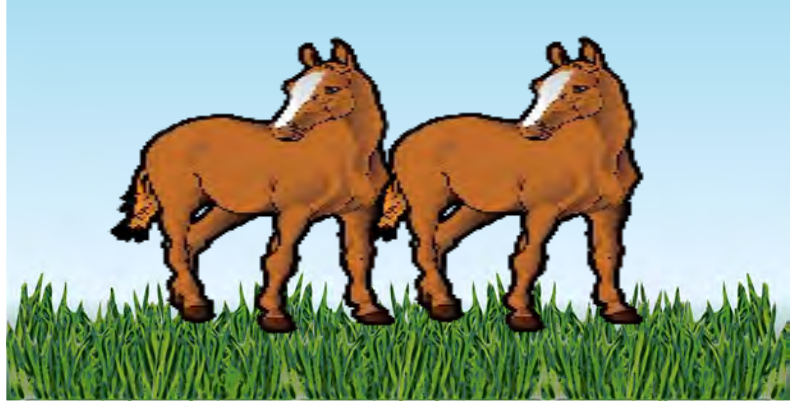
down.



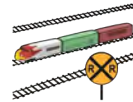
Cal is an Indian. He has many questions.

Chapter 10

Horses



The train slows down as we glide into the railyard. Usually, we would



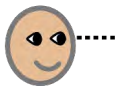
have jumped off by now, but Pop tells me to wait. In the railyard are some pretty



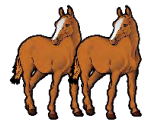
horses and cowboys. When the train stops, the door to the boxcar slides open.



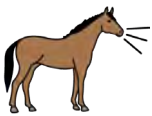
On the other side is a man with a mustache that curls like a ribbon on the



end. He looked at us and asked, "Indians?" I was not sure what to say, but Pop said,



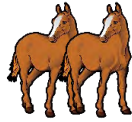
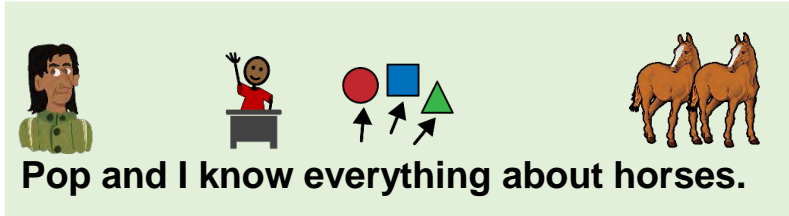
"You could say that." The man made a deal with us to help unload the horses. Some



were skittish, so the cowboys were happy



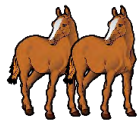
to have someone else risk getting hurt.



If we help them with the horses, they will give us a meal. I am excited to



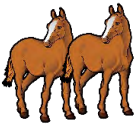
have enough food to fill me up tonight.



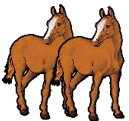
We had three horses on our farm. I miss them so much. Pop knows



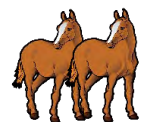
everything there is about horses. And he taught most of it to me. "The army retires



their horses at Challagi," Pop tells me. For the first time in days, I feel excited to be



with horses at my new school.



The first six horses were easy, but the last two were the horses



the cowboys were scared of. The two cowboys start to joke that it would be easier to



shoot the horses. I do not like their jokes at all! "Pop and me can get them," I say.



This was the first time the cowboys had heard me speak. "Go right ahead," they said



as they moved away from the gate.

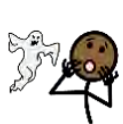
Pop and I know everything about horses.



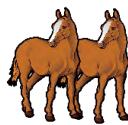
"Good luck, guys. Black Jack there broke a man's arm yesterday," said



the cowboy as they closed the gate behind us. Pop turns to the horses. They are just



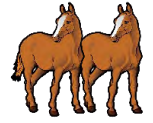
scared. He begins to sing to them, "Ho-ho-yeh, hey-ey-yo." The horses stop kicking



and bucking. We walk closer to them. We



both are calm and thinking happy thoughts. A horse can tell if you are scared.



Pop keeps singing a little louder, "Ho-ho-yeh, hey-ey-yo." The horses are



getting calm. We stop about 20 feet away. Pop keeps singing, "Ho-ho-yeh, hey-ey-



yo." The horses walk over to us, bend their heads, and gently press their nose to



each of our chests. The cowboys say, "Wow! You made that look easy!"

Pop and I know everything about horses.



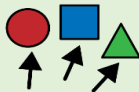
We finished getting the horses ready and lead them into their stalls.



When we walk out, everyone is cheering. Pop salutes with two fingers to his cap.



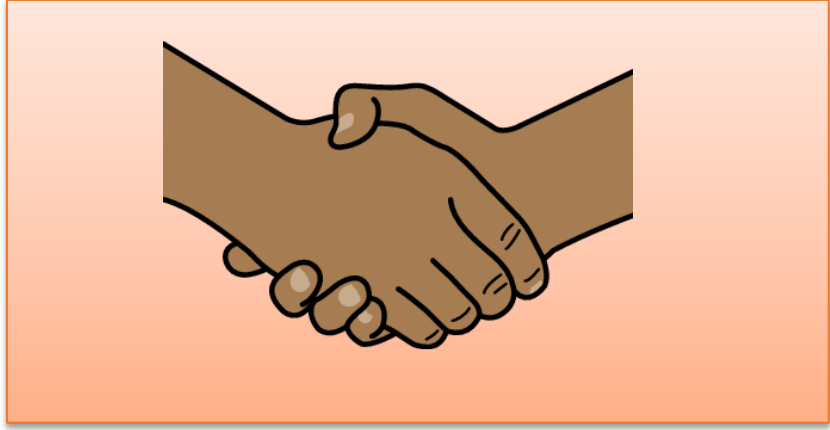
Then he asks, "Mealtime?"



Pop and I know everything about horses.

Chapter 11

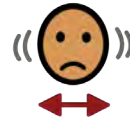
An Indian Handshake



Dinner was a pot roast with onions, potatoes, and carrots smothered with



a yummy thick gravy. As we finished eating, the cowboys asked if we wanted to sit in



a train car with them that has real seats. Pop and I say, "No thank you. The horses



will be calmer if we ride with them."



We only have a little time left together. As we sit alone in the horses' train



$$1+1=2$$

$$2 \times 2=4$$



car, Pop tells me about school. I am a fast learner, so math, reading, history, and



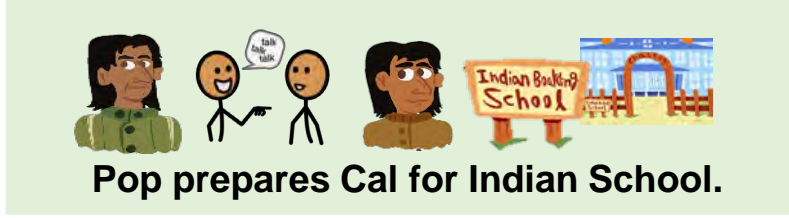
science will be easy. I might even know more than my teachers! They also teach



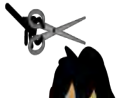
about farming at Challagi. Pop says I might



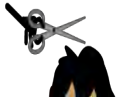
be able to learn something we can use when we get our farm back.



When I first arrive, Pop says they will ‘boil me.’ That means they will



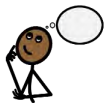
make sure I do not bring any dangerous germs to the school. “They will also cut off



all your hair, Cal,” Pop says. This is the worst part I have heard! I have never cut my



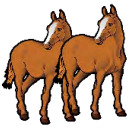
hair. Pop always taught me, “*A man can stand almost anything as long as it is not*



forever.” I think to myself, “I will be back with Pop soon. I can do this for him.”



A vision about the future begins. I can see Pop and I on the farm



with our horses and chickens. "Cal? Now these three rules are very important." I start



to listen to Pop again.



He tells me that on my first day at the school, I will have to march with



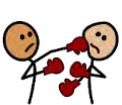
everyone else. They will even play a morning bugle to wake me up before the sun.



Next, he tells me that if I am polite at meals, I will



not get any food. I have to just grab as much food as I can. And last, the boys my



age will try to fight me.



As Pop told me, he held up his fists. "They will try to punch you and



hit you hard. But they will fight fair. No weapons, like knives. If you fall down, they



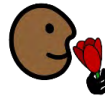
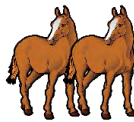
won't kick you. They won't fight like the White man." I do not like fights. I do not like



to hit people.



After Pop has told me all he can about Challagi, he sits back and relaxes.



I do too. Just Pop, me, eight horses, and all their smells and noises. I usually find the



smell relaxing. But today, I feel sick. I have a headache and my belly feels like a

knot.



Pop prepares Cal for Indian School.



Just a few days ago, I was a White hobo traveling with my dad. Now,



I am an Indian on his way to school. I will be all by myself. Will I be lonely? I try to



relax so I can fall asleep. I count and listen to the train. *Clickety-clack, clickety-clack,*

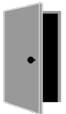
clickety-clack.



I must have fallen asleep. When I opened my eyes, the moon was gone,



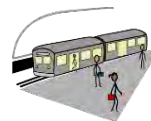
and the sun was starting to rise. I look around but Pop is gone. Then the boxcar door



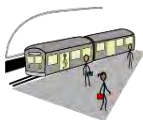
slides open. Pop is standing there and says, "We are here, Cal. Only a four mile walk



to the school."



A man named E. Winslow greets us on the train platform. Usually, a man



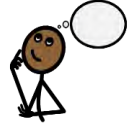
greeting us on a train platform meant we would be arrested. Today



though, the man knew we were helping with the horses. We led them off the train to



their stalls. The man thanked us, shook our hands, and gave us a total of a whole



dollar and fifty cents! When he shook my hand, he squeezed so hard, I thought my



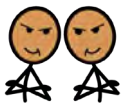
hand would explode.



“Did you notice how he grabbed and squeezed your hand, Cal?” Pop



asked me. I nodded and listened. “That is a White man’s handshake. They are



always competing and have to show power. Indians know that sharing is more



important than power. Show me how I taught you to shake hands.” We grab each



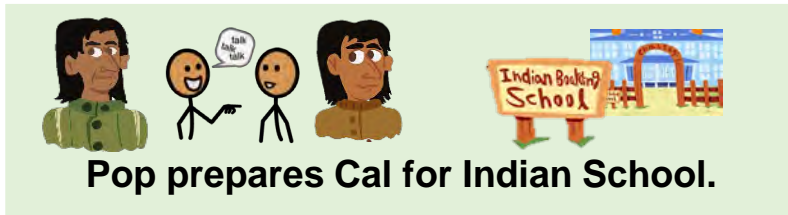
other’s hands to shake. We both have a grip,



but no one is squeezing. The handshake is gentle. "That is an Indian handshake,"



Pop says.



Chapter 12 Challagi



A farmer offered us a ride to the front gate but it is time for us to get out



now. On the ground is a sign that says Indian Boarding School. I look up at the sign



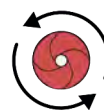
over the gate. It says, "CHALLAGI," in all capital letters. It is a big school with a lot of



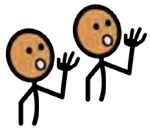
open land.



Cal and Pop arrive at Challagi.



I look up at a cross on the sign. It is spinning. As I watch, I hear men



chanting. I look around and people are protesting with signs. I am having



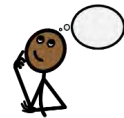
a vision! I am worried. I start to hear tanks rolling down the road. I start to get



scared.



“Cal?” I hear Pop call me back from my vision. I am standing outside of



Challagi. I want to go with Pop. We are supposed to be together... I think. But I have



to stay here. I have to do this for Pop. It makes me angry and anxious at the same

time.



I take care of you, and you take care of me.



Pop and Cal arrive at Challagi.



As we walk through the campus, I hear a marching cadence in my head, “*hup, two,*



three, four.” Pop points out different buildings on campus– the Print Shop, the Tailor



Shop, the Academic Hall, the Stock Barn. The campus is empty. Pop says they are



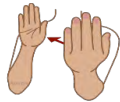
getting ready for the parade. Hmm, I wonder what that is? “*Hup, twoo, thre, four.*



HUP, TWO, THREE, FOUR.” The sound isn’t in my head! I see a company of



soldiers marching. There is an officer watching them with an eagle eye to make sure



they are in step. As they get closer, I can see they are about my age, all marching in



step.



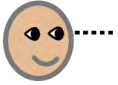
They are all in military attire, with short hair and caps, but their



skin is all the same— brown Indian skin. Some are lighter, some are darker.



“DOUBLE TIME, MARCH!” an officer shouts. They start marching faster.



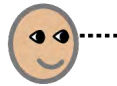
No one looks at us. Company after company passes me. Finally, some younger boys



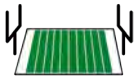
pass. Their company has trouble marching in step.



Pop and Cal arrive at Challagi.



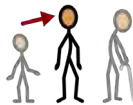
We follow the soldiers and see that they are marching on to a big field. It



looks like a football field. There are bleachers. A marching band is playing music. I



see drums, horns, and big tubas. The bleachers are filled with girls of all ages in



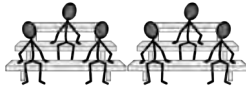
uniforms. There are adults in the middle.



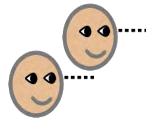
They are teachers dressed in fancy clothes. Pop tells me we are in luck. We have



arrived in time for the weekly dress parade.



We sit down on the bleachers at the end. Although the marching students



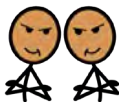
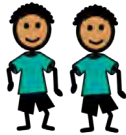
have not noticed us, the adults have. They stare at us as we put down our packs.



Pop tells me to look. Some of the older marching boys are doing intricate



maneuvers. The others are standing at attention to the right of the parade ground.



Pop tells me, "The boys are competing for privileges like extra desserts or release of



duties. Some squads may even advance in rank. When I was here, we even got



medals." What Pop is saying is



making me even more nervous. What if I mess up? What if I let my company down?



A large White man in a tan suit steps on a platform with a microphone.



Pop says, "That is Superintendent Morrell. He was a teacher when I was here. The



only class I ever gave a hoot about. He got promoted, and it is a good thing. He is



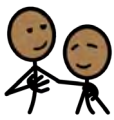
the main reason why I'm sure you'll be let in, even if it is halfway through the school



year." I ask, "Why?" but Pop does not give an answer.



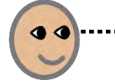
Superintendent Morrell raises a hand, and everyone gets quiet. He



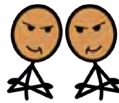
says, "I want to thank our student companies for their excellent performance this



Sunday morning. Let's give them a round of applause." Everyone claps, then gets



silent again. "I wish to welcome you all here today to see this fine display of



discipline and wholesome competition, principles that Challagi attempts to ingrain in



our boys and girls as we mold them to meet a world so different from that in which



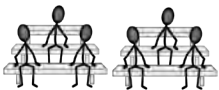
their savage forebearers lived." Pop gasps at this statement, "Hmmpf!" He is



offended. A boy in front of us smiles and winks. Superintendent Morrell continues,



"Today's honor goes to the 11th grade boys of Blue Company." Some girls stand up



from the bleachers and pass out ribbons to the



winners. Then everyone is dismissed.



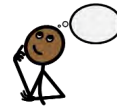
Pop says that the boys with the dark brown skin are full-blood, but he



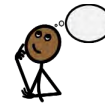
points to the ones with light hair and pale faces and calls them, "stahitkey." This



means "White man" in Creek. "They have just enough Indian in them to come to the



school." I feel confused because two days ago, I thought I was "stahitkey." Will the



boys call me that? But my skin is brown enough, I think.



Pop and Cal arrive at Challagi.



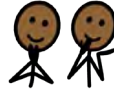
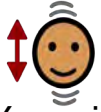
Superintendent Morrell approaches Pop. He recognizes him, "William



Blackbird, is that you?" Pop responds, "You could say that."



Superintendent Morrell says, "This must be your boy. He looks just like you." I



respond, "Yes, sir!" and he says, "Good manners. Excellent!"



Superintendent Morrell tells me that Pop was an excellent student and



2

excellent at agricultural skills, but he was most known for running away. "Two times



3



in four years!" Pop responds, "Three if you count when I enlisted." Morrell says, "I do



not. Serving in the army for your country is a call of duty. I heard you were quite a



good soldier, William." Pop responds, "You could say that."



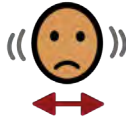
Pop and he discuss why we are arriving in the middle of the school year.



Pop tells him about losing our farm and the school closing down. He



tells him he is leaving me here so he can go to Washington, D.C. to collect his bonus



money. Morrell tells Pop there should be no trouble with getting me in with me being



Creek.



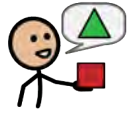
Superintendent Morrell takes Pop and me to his office to fill out the



paperwork. Pop must have sensed my nervousness because he puts an arm around



me and says, "Cal, this must be a lot for you to take in all at once. Are you going to



be okay?" I know that I have to be brave for Pop, so I say, "I'm ready." It is a lie.



Pop and Cal arrive at Challagi.

Chapter 13

The Tour



As we walk to the Superintendent's office, Morrell gives us a tour of the



campus. I can see the boys and girls are separated and their dorms are on opposite



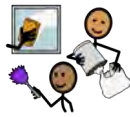
sides. He shows us the power plant, the laundry, the harness shop, the print shop,



the dining hall, and the livestock barns. Superintendent Morrell is very proud of the



livestock barn. He describes the cows, horses, and chickens.



I can see the boys their daily chores— milking the cows, feeding the



chickens, doing the laundry. As the boys pass the Superintendent, they politely greet



him, but no one acknowledges me or Pop. It is like we are invisible. I am okay with



this. I'd rather not be here anyway.



Cal and Pop get a tour of campus.



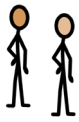
Pop tells me Sundays were his favorite day. "After morning church



service, we had drill, then chores, and then we were left alone. Some of us would



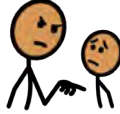
sneak off and go hunting."



We come to a huge white building with wide steps. We start to climb



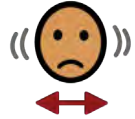
them. I notice a small, screened-in room to the side. I notice someone is locked in



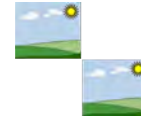
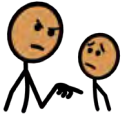
there and wonder if it is for punishment. Superintendent Morrell says, "One of our



recalcitrants. He has another day in there too." Pop asks, "Are you not using the



guard house anymore for punishment?" Superintendent Morrell tells him, "No.



Discipline is still needed, but not in such uncivilized ways. Those days are behind us

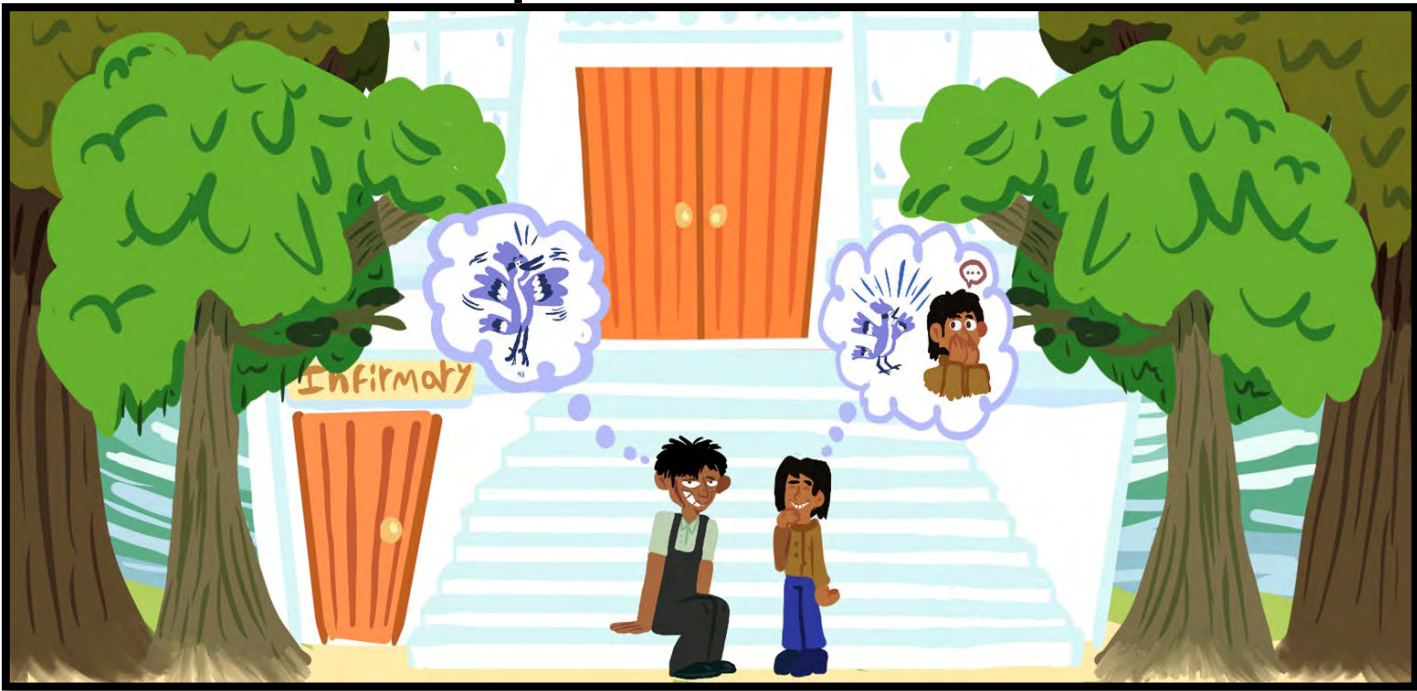


at Challagi."



Cal and Pop get a tour of campus.

Chapter 14 Possum



Inside building 1, standing next to Superintendent Morrell, is the Indian



boy I saw in the parade. The kid with the scar on his face. He looks like he is 12, like



me. He is skinnier and taller than I am. He was wearing an army uniform earlier, but



now he has on overalls and black boots.



Morrell introduces Charles and says I will be in his class. Then



Morrell orders Charles to get me ready for the next day. "Start at the infirmary,"



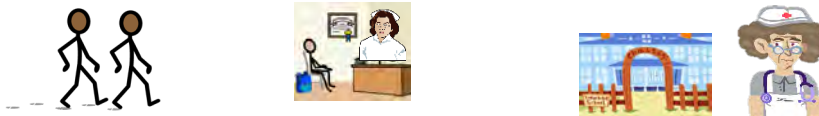
Morrell told Charles. "Yes Sir. At your command, sir!" the boy said back.



"I will say goodbye," Pop says, "before I go." *Before I go.* Those 3 words



hit me like arrows shot into my chest.



Charles and I start walking to the infirmary where the school nurse is



waiting. As we walk, Charles says a word that I do not understand. He thinks that I



know the Creek language. "I thought your Pop would have taught you some Indian



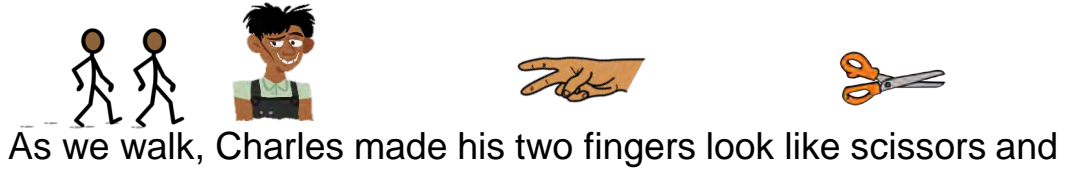
words," Charles said.

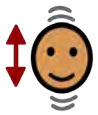


I was feeling nervous again. I just learned that I was a Creek Indian.



Then, the boy told me a lot of students only speak English. I felt a little bit better.





I nod, yes. Possum looks at me and thinks.



“Nope, that don’t sound right. Jay Bird’s more like it. Seeing as how



Jays are always squawking. Just like you.” Possum likes to make jokes. This is a



joke too because I only talk a little bit. That is the opposite of a Jay Bird. I finally



start to smile.



Possum is Cal’s first friend at Indian school.



Then Possum told me that his Grandpa taught him the best way to get a



man to talk was to say nothing. That was the same lesson I learned from Pop, and



he learned from his dad.



We walk up the stairs to the infirmary. Possum smiles and says,



"There are 111 students here. You will be number 112. But first you have to get



mowed and pin cushioned." I was feeling nervous again. "Alright Jay Bird, the nurse



is in there waiting to give you a haircut and vaccines." Possum says as I pull the door



handle. "Try to PUSH it open," Possum says, "Don't be nervous, I will wait out here



for you."



Possum was holding my bag of everything I owned. Possum speaks



kindly to me and promises me that my pack with everything I own will be safe. I now



know that I have a friend, and a person I can trust.



Possum is Cal's first friend at Indian school.

Chapter 15 Infirmary



In the infirmary, the



nurse is waiting for me. Mrs.



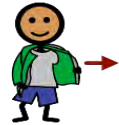
Wilton is already upset with me.



She is very thin,



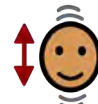
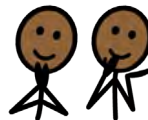
has gray in her brown hair, and never looks happy. Like a doctor, she is wearing a



stethoscope and a long white coat. She points to a chair and says, "Coat off. Over



there. Sit!"

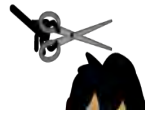


I am a knight of the road. I use my manners, "Yes, ma'am." She is happy



that I speak English. I sit down in the chair. The nurse ties a sheet





around my neck. She uses big shears to cut all my hair off. "Sit up



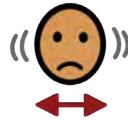
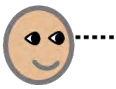
straight!" She commands.



My beautiful black hair falls from my head onto my lap and the floor. The



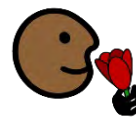
same hair my mother used to comb. Now it is all gone. Then Mrs. Wilton grabs my



head and looks for bugs called lice. "No little beasties. But we do not take chances



as Challagi."



Then she pulls out a can of kerosene. It smelled like gasoline! She



dips a metal comb into the kerosene and drags it across every part of my head.



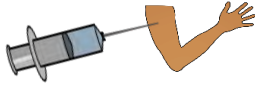
Tears start to come out of my eyes. I try to wipe the tears



away but the nurse yells, "I did not tell you to move! Now, roll up your sleeve."



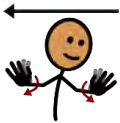
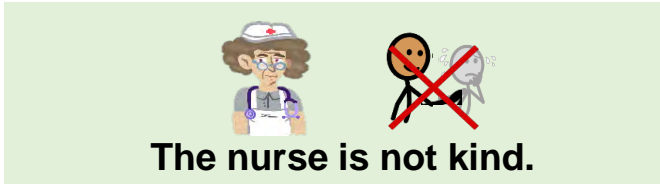
She touches my arm where I got my smallpox vaccine. Then the nurse



begins to stick long needles into my arm. One vaccine at a time until my arm feels



like I was hit by a baseball bat.



"Done. Now, stand up!" Mrs. Wilting orders. First, she checks my mouth



and teeth. Then she uses the stethoscope to listen to my lungs. She is happy that I



sound healthy. She sits down then pulls out an empty piece of paper. "Name?" she



asks,



“Cal Black,” I start to say but stop, “Calvin Blackbird.” She continues to



ask questions and write on the paper. She writes my birthdate and that I am a Creek



Indian. She writes Pop’s name down too. She remembered my dad and did not like

him.



I tell her that Pop is a farmer and that my mom had died. “Done.” She



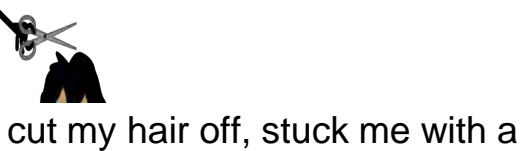
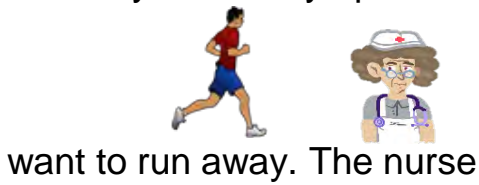
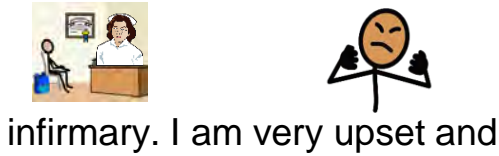
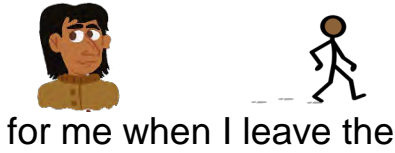
says and points to the door. I pick up my jacket and walk outside. SLAM! The door



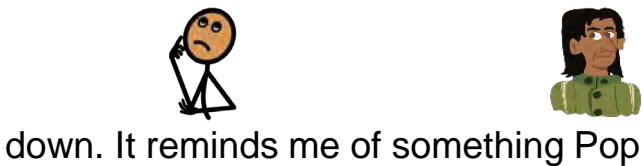
makes a loud noise closing hard behind me.

Chapter 16

Good Advice



bunch of



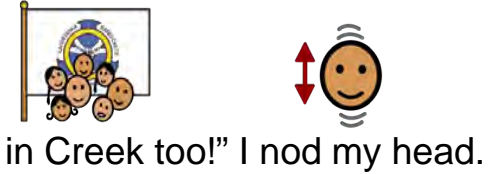
would do.



After a bit, I open my eyes and say, "Mu-to" to Possum. This means



"thank you" in Creek. Possum is shocked! He says, "So you can talk, ehi? Yes? And



in Creek too!" I nod my head.



Possum asks, "Are you always this quiet Jay Bird?" I think silently about



how my world has been turned upside down in the past few days and joke, "No, I



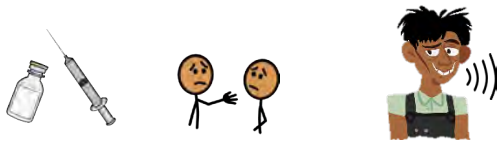
usually talk more." Possum exclaims, "Five whole words!" I smile and reply, "I can do



better than that!" Six words! I wince when Possum pats me on the shoulder. He



forgot my arm was still sore



from all the vaccines. "Sorry!" said Possum.



We sit down together, and Possum gives me my travel pack. He asks, "Is



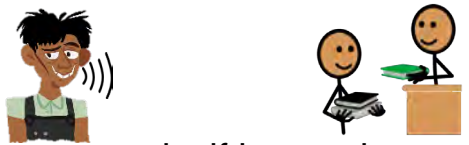
that all you got?" I take everything out of my pack and put them on the ground.



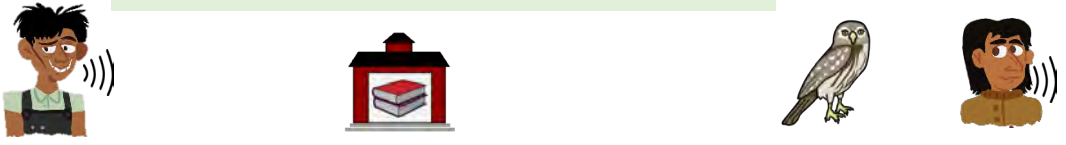
Possum looks at the three books— *Bullfinch*, a dictionary, and *The Call of the Wild*.



He points to *The Call of the Wild*, and asks, "Is this a good one?" I say, "Real good,"



and Possum asks if he can borrow it.



Possum tells me, "The library here ain't worth an owl's hoot." I tell



Possum he can have it and that I have read it three times! I can't believe I can part



with one of my treasures so easily. Possum is grateful to have



a new adventure story to read because there are few books in the library. The old



superintendent took many books out. Possum says, “*Mu-to*” in Creek, which means



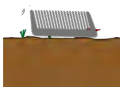
“thank you.”



He looks at the rest of my possessions from my pack. He picks up the



comb my mom gave me and says, “Won’t need this now, will you?” He tosses it back



to the ground and says, “That... is all? Did you leave everything else back home?” I



tell Possum that this is all I own and there is no “back home.” Possum guesses that



the bank took it. He is right. All of my possessions from my pack are on the ground:



the jackknife,



the French war medal, the shiny quarter Miz Euler gave me, and a few more coins.



Possum tells me that I will have a trunk at the end of my bunk to keep my



possessions, but the medal is a treasure that others might want to steal and that I



need to keep it safe. Then Possum leads me to a tree. We climb the tree together



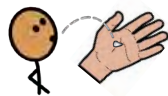
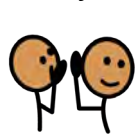
and he shows me a secret hiding place he calls, "Possum's personal hidey-hole."



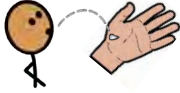
"Jay Bird, you are the first person I have showed this to," Possum says.



"Why?" I ask. "Because you appear to be a man who can be trusted to keep a



secret," Possum replies. He spits on his hand and sticks it out



to shake mine, "Friends?" I do the same and we shake on it.



Cal trusts Possum a little more.



Possum shows me some of his possessions. He has a bow made of fine



wood. Then he unwraps a gun! I take hold of it and open it to make sure it is



unloaded. Possum tells me that his grandpa, Big Rabbit, told him you can tell a lot



about a man by how he handles a gun. I reply, "He sounds a lot like my dad. Treat



every gun as if it is loaded." I hand the gun back. My stomach rumbles. I haven't



eaten all day. Possum shares some jerky he and "the gang" made and had stored in



his hidey-hole. I say "mu-to" and eat the jerky.



The gang. This is the second time Possum has mentioned them. I am



happy to have a friend like Possum, but other boys? Will they like me? It makes me



worried.



Then Possum pulls out a box of his precious possessions. He describes



the first as a Cherokee rose. Possum explains how the stone is named after the



Cherokee Indians who were forced to leave their land by the White men. They had to



walk very far and the road cut up their feet. These special stones come from the



Arkansas River where they walked.



The story makes me have a vision. I am with an old man with bloody feet.



He asks me to leave him, and I refuse. Possum takes the stone back



and it makes me snap out of my vision. I know the box is a great place to store the



war medal as well.



Cal trusts Possum a little more.

Chapter 17

The Dorm



I feel so much better



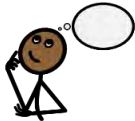
knowing that I have a friend here



that I can trust— Possum. That is



comforting to me



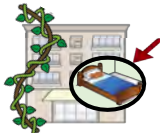
because I think there must be over a thousand people here! I've never been around



so many people. Possum and I walk to our dorm. "Psst," he calls, getting my



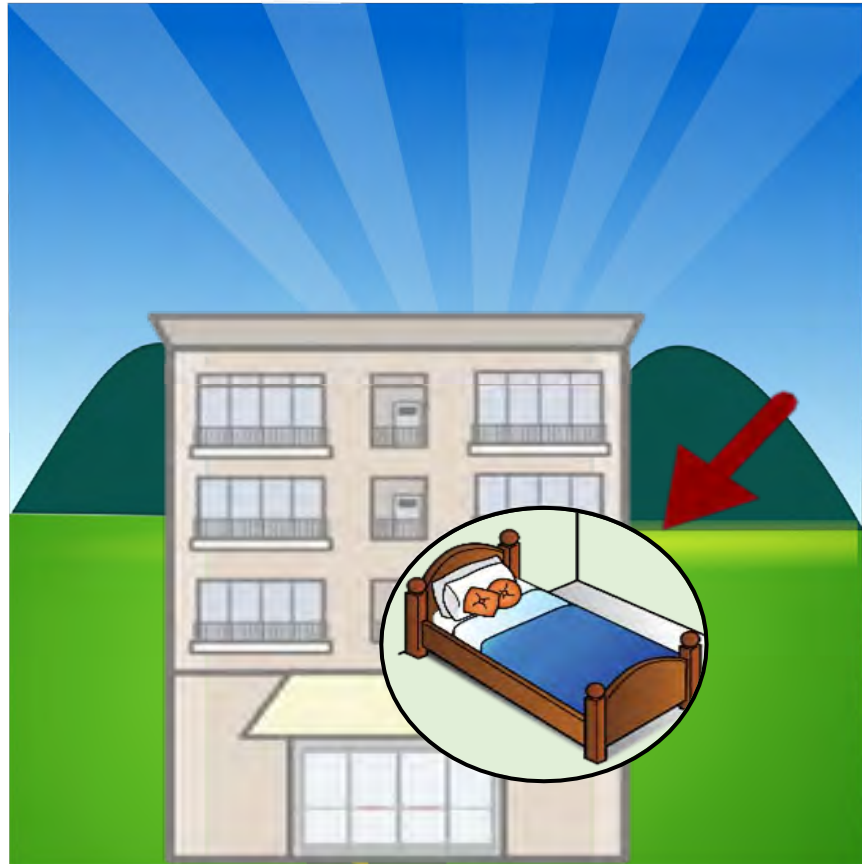
attention with no one around. "I need to show you this. He points to this huge vine



wrapped around the back of our dorm, growing all the way up one side. "The Virginia



Creeper. Our own private

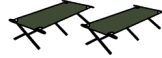




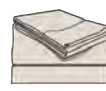
stairway. Nice innit?"



Possum starts to climb the vine and I follow. We enter a dorm room with



15 beds on one wall and 15 on the other. 30 cots in all! That's a lot of beds crammed



into one small space. All but one bed are made up with sheets and blankets tucked



so tight a dropped penny would bounce. They each have a trunk at the end of the



bed.



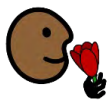
Possum waves me in and says, "Welcome to our home sweet home. The



bed in the middle is yours." He points to the unmade bed. Possum tells me the



middle of the room is the worst place to be because of the



smell. "Smell gets the worst there in the night— 'specially when they serve beans for



dinner, which is every other night." Beans make the boys pass gas. Possum's bed is



near a window.



At my bed, I see "CC" carved into the rafter. I have a vision of Charlie



Corn silk again. The room is packed with even more beds than now. I shudder. I want



to be anywhere with Pop. Anywhere but here. You missing that home you lost Jay



Bird?" I shake my head no. Possum looks surprised.



I say, "I'm missing the road." Possum questions me, "The road?" He



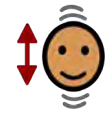
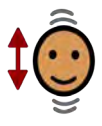
looks very confused. I pause and say, "Knights of the road. That's what



me and Pop were.” A light comes on in Possum’s eyes. “Hoboes!?! You were a



hobo?” I nod. “How long?” “One year,” I say. “Jumping freight trains?” he asks,



surprised. I nod again. “Sleeping under the stars?” I nod again. “Oh man, I bet you



got some stories.” I say, “We do.” He asks me to tell him some but not now. “They



may run our lives in the day here, but not after dark.” I have no idea what he means.



Suddenly, I hear something. I think of running. Possum grabs my arm



and tells me to hold on. Superintendent Morrell walks in with Pop. Pop looks sad



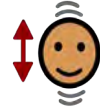
when he sees my dorm. Morrell looks at my shaved head



and says, "You already appear much more civilized. Next, we will get rid of those



rag you are wearing. Get you into proper clothes."



He asks Possum if he has been showing me around. "Yes sir!" Possum



replies, standing at attention. Morrell turns to Pop and tells him that with the new



house, they no longer have to crowd so many into a dorm. He also shows Pop the



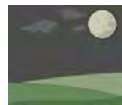
trunks for the boys to put their belongings.



Morrell looks at me and says, "I assume you are impressed with our



campus. Especially with the addition of the washrooms. Boys don't have to use an



outhouse in the middle of the night like your father did." Possum is behind Morrell



making funny faces and holding his nose in



disgust at the mention of these indoor toilets. It makes Pop and me grin.



Morrell turns and says that Pop needs to get going in order to catch his



train. "You can say your goodbyes before Mr. Aird escorts you over to obtain your



uniform." I only hear a voice repeating in my head, "Pop is leaving me. Pop is leaving

me."



Superintendent Morrell finally stops talking. He takes my father's hand



and looks into his face. "You have done well by yourself and our nation with your



service. Leaving your boy in our care is a wise decision. We shall make a gentleman



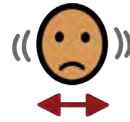
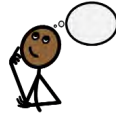
farmer out of him, a credit to his race." Pop nods in agreement. Morrell says goodbye



and leaves. Possum walks



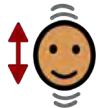
away to give Pop and I privacy. I feel awkward beside Pop for the first time. Pop



asks, "You going to be okay, Cal?" In my head I think, "NO! I'm not!" But I know I



can't tell him that. He is happy with his plan to go to Washington and get the bonus



money so we can get us a farm again. I know what I have to say to him. "Yes." I



reach into my pocket, pull out mom's comb, and hand it to him. "I'll take good care of



this, son." He puts the comb in his pocket. Pop gives me one last hug.



Pop is leaving Cal.

Chapter 18

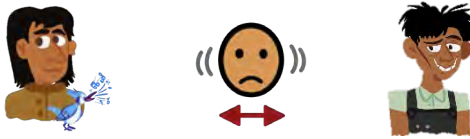
New Duds



Possum and I watch



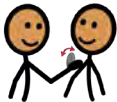
Pop walk away. "You okay,



Jay Bird?" I reply, "No." Possum



sees how sad I am,



pats me on the back, and says, "Let's get you some new duds." He means clothes.



As Possum and I walk through the school grounds, I notice how neat and



orderly the grounds are. Other students greet Possum but do not say anything to me.

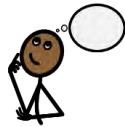


I am relieved. Usually people want to meet "the new kid"





but not this time.



I have thoughts of doubt. Is Possum really my friend? How will I get along



without Pop to guide me? How can I do this without Pop by my side?



During the walk, I see a building that is very different from the other



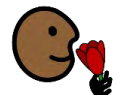
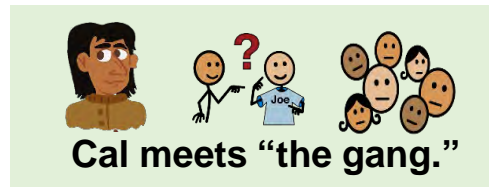
buildings. It looks like an old shack. Possum tells me that no one goes near that



building anymore. The old guard house was once used to lock up students who



broke the rules, but it is no longer used.



Suddenly, I have a vision. I am in the old guard house. It smells



awful and has a barred window. Possum says, "Jay Bird, where you at?" I shake my



head and come back to the present. Possum asks, "Does that happen often?"



"What?" I ask. Possum says, "Seeing. I had an aunt who was a *heles-hayu*, a



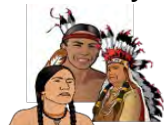
medicine person. She used to do that. She would have the same look on her face



when she was seeing. *Hece*. Maybe something in the past, maybe even something



in the future." "Oh," I say. I am relieved to know that there are other people like me,



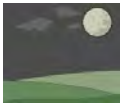
and that there is an Indian name for it. Possum asks if I want to talk about it. I have



never told anyone, not even Pop. I'm not going to start now.



Possum tells me a secret. The scar on his face is from a teacher from



the school slapping him with a ring. He has always told a lie that it came from a night



he fell in the barn. I promise Possum that I will never tell anyone. "My word as a



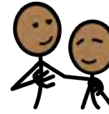
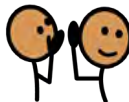
knight of the road."



Possum and I reach the tailor shop. He introduces me to Skinny, which is



quite the joke as a nickname because Skinny is a very big boy. Skinny looks around



to make sure no adults are present and whispers, "Mu-to, brother." I reply, "mu-to."



3

Possum tells me that Skinny is Creek like us and that he brought them three new



songs and sometimes leads them in stomp dances. I wonder what a stomp dance is,



but I don't ask. Skinny gives me new clothes— work clothes and uniforms. I have to



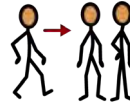
undress and throw my old rags away right then and there. I am sad to part with them.



They are worn so soft; they are like a second skin.



Skinny does a handshake with me. This is only for Creek Indian boys to



know. The handshake means that I have been accepted into the group. We leave



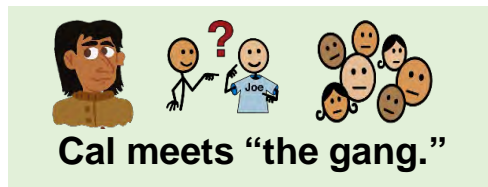
and head to the shoe and harness shop. Possum stops me to teach me the Creek



handshake. He didn't see Skinny do it with me. I surprise him by remembering. "Wow



Jay Bird, you really learn that fast?" "You could say that," I reply.



When we leave, we encounter "the gang." Bear Meat, the leader,



demands that I empty my pockets. I pull out some coins, but Bear Meat says, "Put



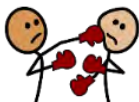
that away. Other pocket." I pull out my jackknife. Bear Meat asks me to hand it over,



but I tell him, "No." He asks me, "How come?" I say something Pop taught me, "Give



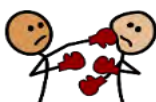
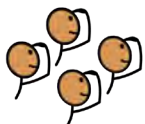
a man a knife, you cut off any chance of him being a friend." Bear Meat tells me that



he is going to fight me over the knife. I am nervous. Bear Meat is much bigger than



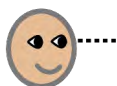
me. The gang draws a circle around Bear Meat and me. Other students start



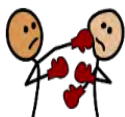
gathering to watch the fight. A boy yells, "GO!" Bear Meat comes at me fast and



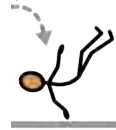
knocks me down. I don't fall out of the ring, so I stand back up again. I start circling



him. Pop taught me, "Watch what a man does and



keeps doing.” He tries to get me three times, but I duck. On the fourth time, I tackle



him but he doesn't go down. Tackling him is like tackling a tree stump. He falls right



on top of me. WHOOMP. He knocks the breath out of me.



Suddenly, the head disciplinarian shows up and demands to know what



happened. I refuse to tell on Bear Meat. That would surely make the other boys not



like me! Bear Meat tells me to keep the knife and invites me to sit with them at



mealtimes. I am now one of the gang.



Chapter 19

Mess



Mess. Mess is the



military word for a meal, in case



you don't know. Like a lot of things



here at Challagi-



the marching, the uniforms, the strict discipline- the army is supposed to be the



model for much of what goes on here. Here, though, in the mess hall, it seems as if a



good part of that discipline has just flown out the window.



Cal eats at the mess hall.





Possum explains the rules of mess hall to me as we enter. He steers me



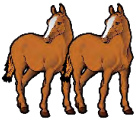
to the table where the gang sits. Bear Meat tells me to get ready to eat. Little Coon



says, "Food's terrible here and there's not enough of it, so y'all be ready." The smell



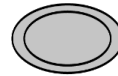
of meat and potatoes makes my stomach growl. I haven't eaten a real meal since



loading the horses. All I had was Possum's beef jerky since I arrived.



I look at the enormous room. Big enough to fit all 800 students. The boys



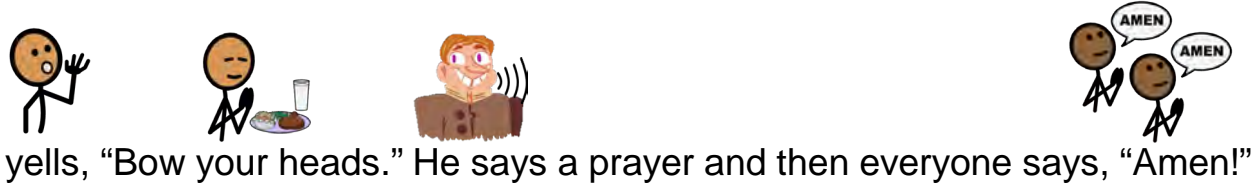
and girls are separated. I noticed the table has dull metal plates, forks, spoons, and



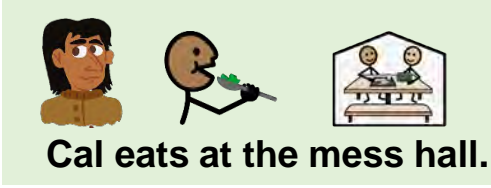
empty mugs. As I look around, I see the teachers have tablecloths, real glassware,



and shiny silverware. Superintendent Morrell



yells, "Bow your heads." He says a prayer and then everyone says, "Amen!"



Cal eats at the mess hall.



The waitress brings a big jug of buttermilk to our table. The gang passes



their cups to Bear Meat and he serves the buttermilk. It doesn't look like other tables



are this organized. I remember the rules Pop taught me about mealtime. I'm ready



with my fork and knife when the waitress plops down very tough meat and half-

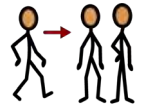


cooked potatoes. Possum looks at my plate full of food. He asks me, "Jay Bird, you



sure you never ate here before?" I'm too busy trying to chew the tough meat to

answer.



I look around at “the gang.” I’ve only known them for a day but being accepted like



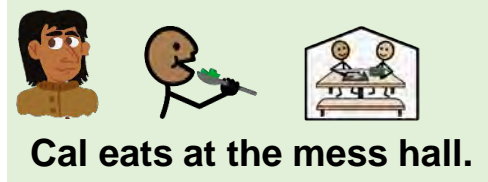
this makes me feel less abandoned and lonely than I did when Pop left. It feels good



to stuff my gut. It is the fullest I have been since the meal on the train. I may not want



to be at Challagi, but my stomach sure doesn’t mind.



Chapter 20

In Step



I wake up confused



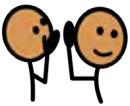
to an ear-splitting sound.



People are moving all around.



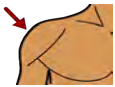
It's still dark outside. "Pop?" I



whisper. Someone grabs me



by the



shoulders and shakes me. "Wake up, boy! Didn't you hear the bugle?" I realize it is



C.B., House Four's boy's advisor. He is Cherokee and graduated from Challagi



seven years ago. His room is one floor down.



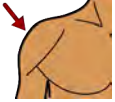
I have been at Challagi for one week now. C.B asks, "Blackbird, am I



going to have to douse you again to get up? The first morning I refused to wake up. I



was having a dream about riding a train to California with Pop. C.B. threw me over



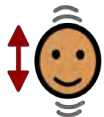
his shoulder, carried me to the horse trough, dropped me in, and worked the handle



of the pump so vigorously that I near drowned in the torrent of cold water. "No sir!" I



say. I sit up and throw off my covers. C.B. laughs and says, "You slept in your



uniform?" "Yes sir," I say. I put on my boots. I don't need to use the latrine. Thank



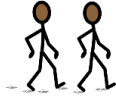
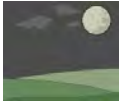
goodness. My first chore was the clean the latrine. I tied a kerchief over my nose. It



was the worst smell ever.



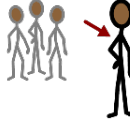
Cal learns more about living at Challagi.



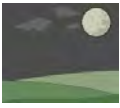
At night, I follow the lead of Possum and Deacon and the others. I climb



down the Virginia Creeper along with the others. The old outhouse has been



reserved for our gang. None of us go alone. There is something creepy about being



outside at night on the campus.



I realized that the first night here. I woke up needing to use the bathroom.



I decided to use the outhouse by myself. No one else was stirring. I snuck between



the bunks and climbed down the Virginia Creeper. A chill went up my spine.



Suddenly, Little Coon dropped down beside me. "Don't want to come down here



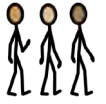
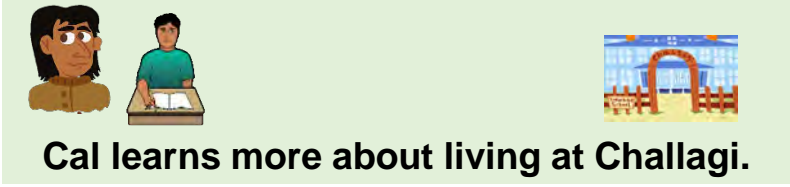
alone," he said. Little Coon told me that a bunch of students have died on this



campus, and the



campus is haunted. Another chill runs up my spine.



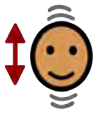
The bugle signals it is time for drill, when we do our marching. I line up



proper. Back stiff, eyes straight. I don't twitch a muscle. I learned my lesson. The first



day I was out of step and Ray Chapman, the company sergeant, stomped on my foot



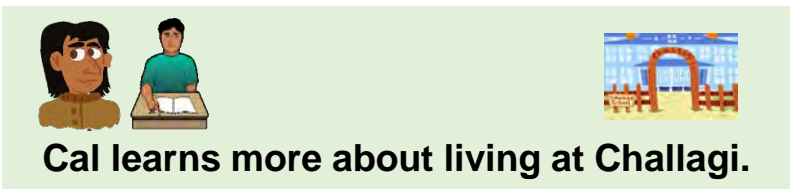
hard. "ATTENTION!" he yelled. I was a second late. "BIRD," he yells at me. "Yes,



sir!" I say. I learned that my first day here. I didn't say, "yes, sir" at just the right



volume, and I had to do 100 pushups.





As we are marching, I think about something Possum said. "How could



you kill something but still have them be alive?" Now I understand what that means.



The marching is designed to make you be *obedient*. To make you like the White



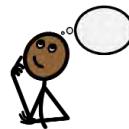
man. Drown whatever's free inside of you so they can boss you around. I still



struggle with feeling "Indian," but I also don't like being treated this way. I understand



why so many run away.



"ABOUT FACE!" Oh no, I am lost in thought. I hope I make the right



steps. I am turning with everyone else. "COMPANYYYYY HALT!"



Sergeant Chapman walks up to me. I'm expecting an insult or a punishment, but



instead he gives me a compliment. "Bird. Best job yet,



cadet. Not a wrong step.” I am relieved. Then we hear another bugle sound.



Sergeant has played a joke on us, marching a half mile away from the dorm. We



have to hustle back. I know that Sergeant is the fastest runner, captain of the track



team. He yells, “Come on, slowpokes! Get the lead out. Catch up!” So I take off,



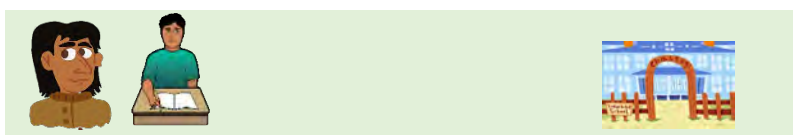
running as fast as I can. I’m fast, but he is faster. He arrives at the dorm just ahead



of me. Everyone else is behind. He asks me to consider the track team. Despite only



wanting to get back to Pop, I say, “Yes sir,!” He tells me, “After drill, it is just Ray.”



Cal learns more about living at Challagi.

Chapter 21

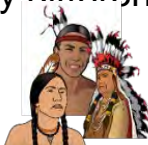
Expecting Indians



When I first arrived, I was expecting real Indians, like with beads and



feathers. Way different than the kids I had gone to school with. What I realized is that



full-bloods, Indian-looking boys and girls with black hair and brown skin, make up

4



only about four of every ten students. The



next big group are mixed bloods, kids with one Indian parent. They get real upset



when the full-bloods say they are not real Indians. Then, there are the White kids



with blonde hair and blue eyes. They supposedly have some Indian ancestry or



claim to. They are on tribal roles of one Indian nation or another. Us Creeks call them



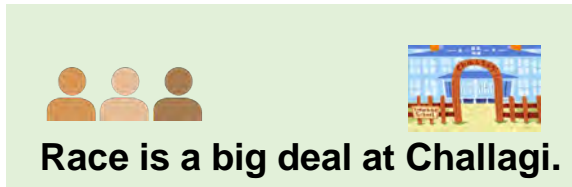
stahitkey, White boy. I grew up just thinking of myself as a person. Being White



means you have the luxury to do that. I didn't have to worry about who I was. I knew



my identity, even if I was a hobo.



Tommy Wilson is *stahitkey*. He gets told he does not belong because



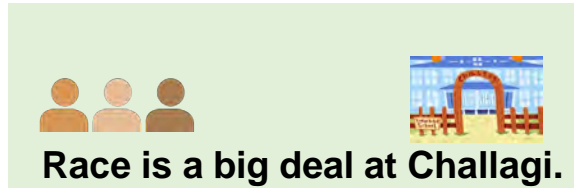
his skin is light. He grew up on historic Creek land. His pop was full-blood Creek and



went to school at Challagi. His pop married a Norwegian lady with light skin, blonde



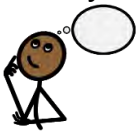
hair, and blue eyes.



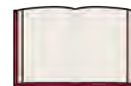
Tommy sits next to me in Mrs. Tygue's class. He greeted me in the



hallway on my first day of school and said he was Muskogee Creek like me. *Like me.*



I thought. *Yeah right.* Tommy said, "Teacher here's old, but she's a good egg." He



asked if I had my English book, and I shook my head no. He opened his to a poem



that I recognized, Kipling's "The Ballad of East and West."



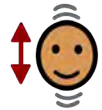
Mrs. Tygue read part of the poem and then asked the class a question.



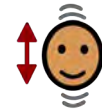
No one raised their hands. This was very different from the school where I used to



go. Everyone would be raising their hands high to participate. She calls on Tommy to



stand and answer. He looks at me for help. I signal to him the answer is “yes” by



lifting one finger from my desk then dropping it. He answers, “Yes.” She responds,



“Good. Now why?” Tommy has no idea. I raise my hand. “New student?” she says



while pointing to me. I stand to answer. I recite the next lines of the poem from



memory. The students look shocked. Mrs. Tygue said, “Well done!” The bugle



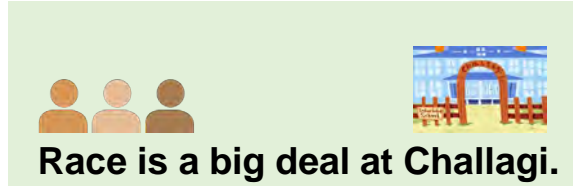
sounds and it is the end of class. Tommy says, “*Mu-to,*”



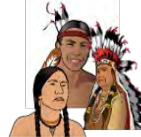
thanking me as he leaves, but quickly disappears as I join up with Possum and Bear



Meat.



Bear Meat jokes with me, "You like that White boy?" It is a big deal here



to be labeled as White. Much like being seen as an Indian in a White world. Always



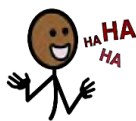
an outsider. I feel very lucky to not be seen that way. But it still didn't mean that I felt



good about seeing people treated bad just for being born who they were. "He's okay,



I say. Grasshopper, another boy in "the gang," says "Stahitkey. White boys no



belong here." Bear Meat laughs and says, "At least it's better than being stalutstey."



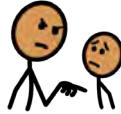
That means Black. I don't like those jokes. They make me feel uncomfortable. Little



Coon, who is one of the most thoughtful and sensitive members of the gang, likes to



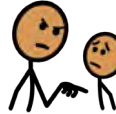
change the subject when things get too serious. He cracks a joke about Turkey



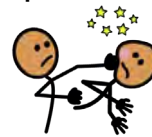
Buzzards and the head disciplinarian— HD.



While there are some good teachers here, like Mrs. Tvgue, there are



some mean teachers also. HD is one. I saw him punish Grasshopper, and I realized



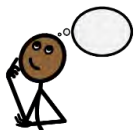
that Possum's scar on his face came from HD hitting him with his big, shiny ring. The



math teacher, Mr. Pond, is also very mean and insults students, calling them "idiots"



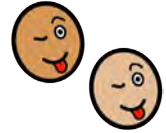
and "dummies."



I often think about running away, but I made a promise to Pop. A lot



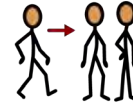
of students have run away. Others though, like Skinny, have never tried to run away.



He was the only Indian boy in his town and the students used to make fun of him—



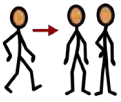
calling him “Sitting Bull” and asking him where his tipi was. He feels like he belongs



at Challagi, and he gets to play on the football team. Being accepted as an Indian.



That’s what a lot of students feel good about. And other students wish they could be



accepted—the *stahitkey* and the *stalustey*—the White kids and the Black kids.



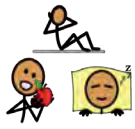
Students like Bear Meat are very judgmental against them. While they might make



fun of them and not invite them into groups, like “the gang,” they are treated fairly by



the staff and get to do all the same



activities. I do not like people being treated differently because of their race. As far as



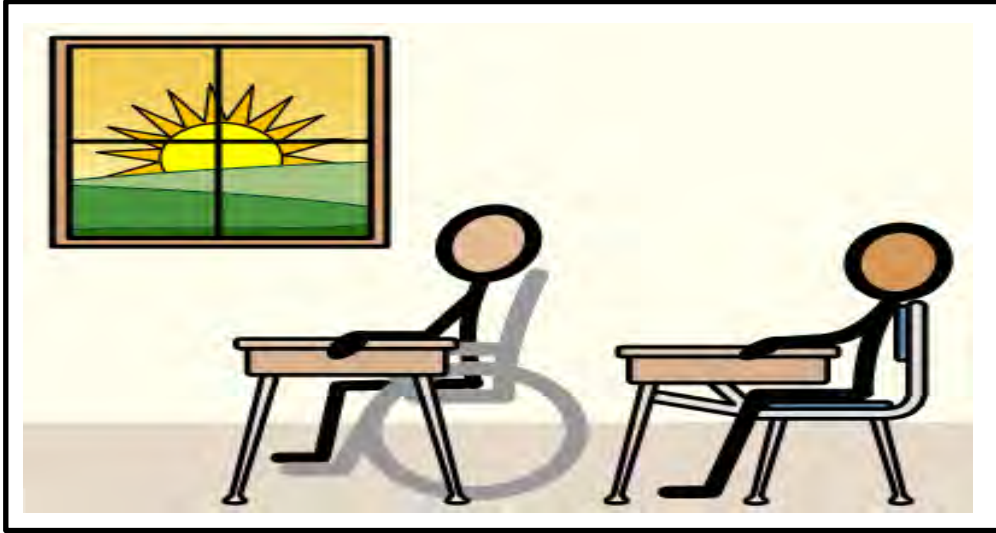
I'm concerned, it's what a man does and not how he looks that counts.



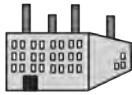
Race is a big deal at Challagi.

Chapter 22

Another Day at Work



I am in academic classes in the morning from 7:30 AM until 12 noon. In



the afternoon, I am in industrial classes from 1 PM until 5 PM. I have geography



class this morning with Mr. Mallett. This class is pointless. We don't have enough



textbooks for all the students. He hardly teaches us anything. He just reads his



magazines and asks that we don't disturb him. The only students aware are me and



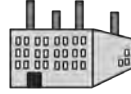
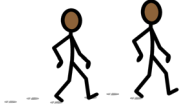
Possum. Possum is



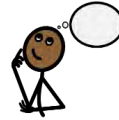
reading *The Call of the Wild*. I am writing in my journal. "Another boring day. How did



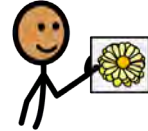
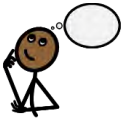
you stand it when you were here, Pop?" The bell rings and then the bugle sounds.



Possum and I walk to mess to eat and then to the industrial class.



Possum says, "You look like you are cogitating about something."



Cogitating is the word of the day. In exchange for Possum showing me the ropes



here at Challagi, I have been finding him a new word of the day from my dictionary. I



respond, "Nothing much." But that isn't true. I am thinking about what I am going to



write in Pop's next letter. I haven't sent them yet, because I haven't heard from him



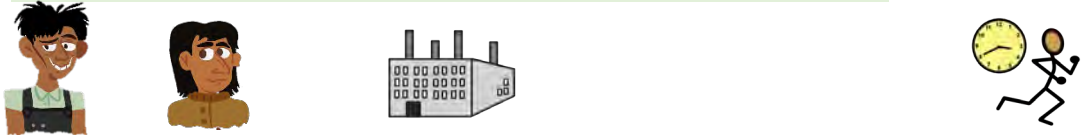
yet, so I have no idea



where to mail them.



Cal learns that he has money to buy things.



Possum and I hurry to our industrial class. We don't want to be late and



earn demerits. As we approach the harness shop, I am opening and closing my fists



trying to loosen them up. I have already started forming calluses from the hard work



of making horse harnesses. They make my hands ache.



"Maybe we'll get shoe repair duties today," Possum says, looking down



at my feet. Shoe repair is much easier work than harness making. Then he replies,



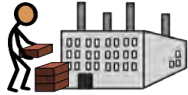
"And maybe pigs are going to fly too." I look down at my



shoes. The bullhides I was issued the first day here are in bad shape, falling apart. I



haven't been able to buy a pair of sneakers like Possum has though. I only earn a



few pennies a day from industrial work. He asks me why I don't get new sneakers. I



pull out my empty pockets. Possum asks, "Didn't your Pop leave you no money on



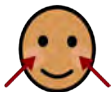
your account with the school bursar?" I am surprised and ask, "Accounts? People do



that? Possum tells me that he bought his with money his grandma left on his



account. I ask, "Do you think I have an account?" Possum jokes, puffs out his



cheeks, sticks out his chest, and ruffles his hair pretending to be Mr. Cash, the



chubby White man who handles the school accounts, "Do I look



like the school bursar?" I laugh. He asks if anyone ever explained accounts to me, to



which I replied, "No."



Possum explains to me that Superintendent Morrell is an honest man



and believes that the students should be paid for their labor, or work. Everyday a few



cents gets deposited into each student's account for their labor. Some jobs pay more



like cutting the grass in the summertime or harvesting crops, like vegetables and



grain.



Cal learns that he has money to buy things.



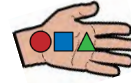
"BIRD! Over here!" I hear Mr. Handler yell. I hurry fast so I don't earn a



demerit. He is a Challagi graduate, a dark-skinned North Carolina



Cherokee. He is holding the leather to make harnesses and tools. He sees my



flapping shoe and orders me to come over. He puts the things in his hand aside and



tells me to take off my boots. He rips the soles of my boots off, tosses them aside,



and fixes them in no time at all. "Thank you," I tell him. He tells me that I can thank



him by getting back to work. Time to build more calluses.



As promised, Possum takes me to Mr. Cash. He tells me I have "\$13.28.



Ten dollars left on the account and \$3.28 earned." He tells me \$5 is the most he can



give him. Possum signals that his shoes cost him \$3, I ask him for \$4 in case there is



anything extra I want to get in town at



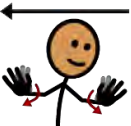
O'Boyle's Dry Goods.



On Saturday we ride into town. We first stop at the train stop. It makes



me miss Pop and riding the rails. I stand there and memorize the train schedule.



Possum asks, "Done?," and I say "Done." Now it is time to get some shoes. We



go and enter O'Boyle's Dry Goods. The front of the store says, WHATEVER



YOU NEED, WE HAVE GOT IT. I walk in and Mr. O'Boyle gives me a pair of



shoes— Ked's sneakers— to try on. He then tells me the entire history of tennis



shoes. He asks, "You like-um them shoes, Chief? You want to buy-um?" I do not



like how he has judged me for



being Indian and spoken to me in broken English, but I sigh, and hand him \$3.



Cal learns that he has money to buy things.

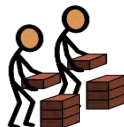
Chapter 23 To Help Indians



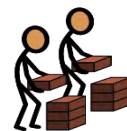
I've been at Challagi for two months. The "noble mission of this fine



institution" is to help the Indian. I think the purpose is to wear the Indian out. The 5



AM wake ups, the marching, the hard labor, the many rules make me want to run



away. But I don't. Because I promised Pop. Even the girls do hard labor. If you don't



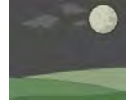
follow the rules, you get demerits. Not only do the staff give demerits, but the older



students do



as well. The official punishments are extra work or losing privileges like taking part in



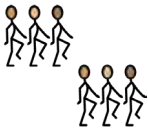
get-togethers or going into town. The students are so tired at the end of the day, they



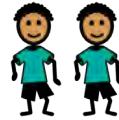
have no energy left to run away.



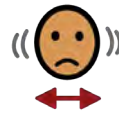
Speaking of running away, I have disappointed Sergeant Chapman, our



drill captain, who continues to invite me to be on the track team. "Where's your



school spirit?", he asks. Despite the privileges of the boys on the track team, like not



having to do chores and getting to visit other schools, I still say, "No." I have no



interest in joining a team. I am just waiting for Pop to return and for me to get out of

here.



Cal is in a boxing match.



The students who get treated the best are on the boxing team. Boxing is



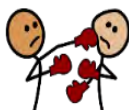
Superintendent Morrell's favorite sport and the reason why we have it twice a week



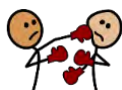
in our physical education class. The coach is



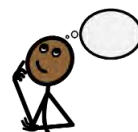
Mr. Handler, who was very good back in his day. He even had a chance at becoming



a pro-fighter but did not. Rumor has it that he boxed as an adult. I daydream about



Pop fighting in the army in Europe.



"BIRD, it's your turn!" I hear him shout. "Against who?" I think as I slip on



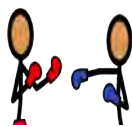
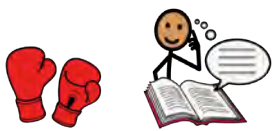
the boxing gloves and step into the boxing ring. I see Bear Meat. He weighs at least



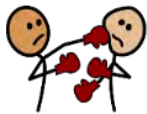
50 lbs., more than me. "Go get him, Jay!" Possum yells. No one else is cheering for



me. Mr. Handler reminds me of the



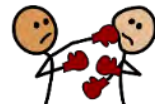
boxing lesson he taught me today. "Touch gloves." Mr. Handler starts the 2-minute



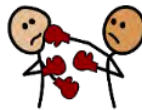
stopwatch. "FIGHT!"



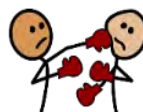
I try my hardest. Possum yells, "Finesse it, Jay Bird," which is today's



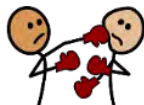
word of the day, but he pronounces it "fin-essay." Bear Meat hits me hard in the right



shoulder. I stumble but don't fall. I give him a right uppercut in his right jaw, but he



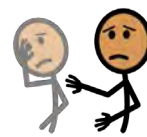
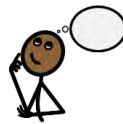
barely stumbles. It hurts my hand. Then, he throws a hard left hook. WHOMP! It



lands square on my chin and knocks me flat on my backside. I get up on my knee,



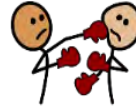
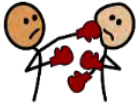
trying to get up again.



Mr. Handler yells, "TIME!" I think he has taken pity on me because I don't



think it has been 2 minutes. I was not going to quit, but if



Bear Meat hit me again with one of those pile-driver punches, it would have



scrambled my brains. Possum and Little Coon are helping me up. Bear Meat is



holding his hands up and saying something that I can't make out because the ringing



in my ears is too bad. Mr. Handler's pulling off my gloves and gives me credit for



hanging in there, but he definitely does not invite me to be on the boxing team.



Cal is in a boxing match.

Chapter 24

Stomp Dance



There is one place at Challagi that is truly free— the woods. We can hunt



and catch fish. The woods are where you can get away, where you're no longer



here. Deacon is the one who said that to me first. Deacon is like a major league



baseball pitcher. He has the best throwing arm. He is also the most thoughtful one of



the gang, saying things that make you think. His nickname is one of the few that



actually makes sense.



Despite the rule of “No Dancing,” at Challagi, when we sneak to the woods, Deacon



leads up in Stomp Dances.



Most of the staff at the school turn a blind eye on the boys sneaking out



at night. The girls are not allowed though. I feel bad for them. We walk to a remote



part of campus, following the moonlight, through the woods to a clearing. I see a



makeshift clubhouse that has been built with scrap material. Little Coon looks at me



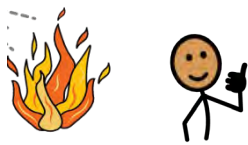
and asks if I know how to make a fire. I began building it in no time at all. They all



knew I had never stomp danced before. It didn't matter. I found myself in that circle,



dancing



around that fire, feeling fine.



Deacon calls out, "Heee-yah heee," and the 12 of us in the gang



respond, "Whey-ya-hey!" It keeps on like that, us dancing, repeating that chant, while



Deacon shakes his handmade rattle.



On another night out stomp dancing, I tended to the fire, which has now



become my job, and it makes me think of Pop and all the fires I tended for us on the



road. It leads me down a path of questions: What is Pop doing now? Is he in



Washington? Is he part of the Bonus Marchers I read about in the old newspapers



Mrs. Tygue donates to the school



library? Is he okay? Is he ever going to come back for me? How long am I going to



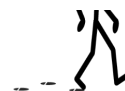
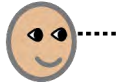
be here?



Deacon hands the rattle to Little Coon. We are about to start another



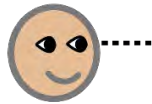
round of stomp dancing when suddenly Bear Meat says, "Hold on!" He realizes



someone is in the woods watching them and demands they step out. It is Tommy



Wilson. Bear Meat is angry and yells, "Stahitkey, what are you doing here?" Tommy



hesitates and says, "Just watching."



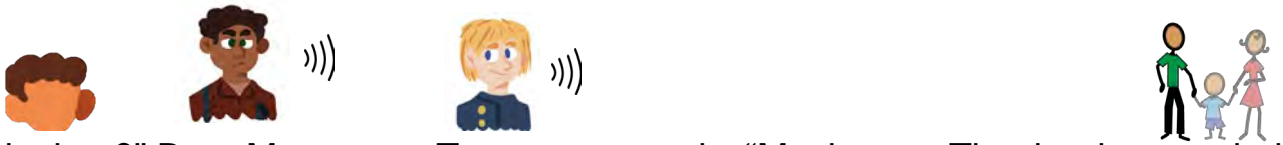
Bear Meat growls back, "You don't belong here, stahitkey." Tommy mumbles, "Isti-



cah-ti," under his breath, which means Indian. Little Coon asks him to say it louder.



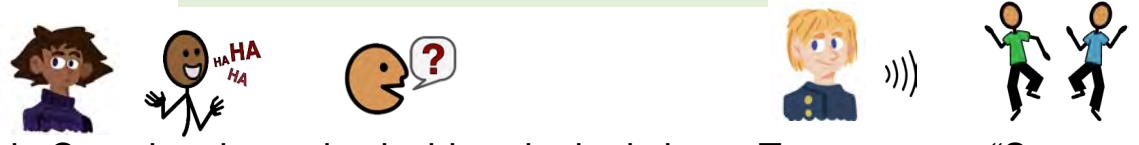
"What? Are you saying you are an Indian,



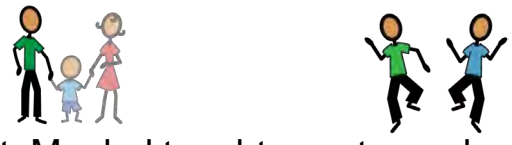
White boy?" Bear Meat says. Tommy responds, "Muskogee. That is what my dad



says we are, even if my mom is White. Cal knows I'm Indian."



Little Coon laughs and asks him why he is here. Tommy says, "Stomp



dancing. I like it. My dad taught me stomp dances even though we didn't have any



Indians living near us. The song you just did, he called it 'Old Rooster.'" Little Coon



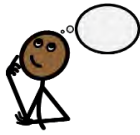
asks if he knows any other stomp dances. Tommy responds, "One or two." Little



Coon hands the rattle to Tommy and says, "Let's hear one." Tommy is hesitant at



first, but then starts singing. Deacon follows behind him, and soon we all are. I find it



ironic— me, an Indian boy who thought he was White, and Tommy, a White boy who



knows he is Indian. All of us are free and stomp dancing together.



Cal learns stomp dances.

Chapter 25

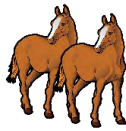
First Letter



I am excited to report to my job at the stables. I have done just about



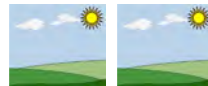
every other job here at Challagi. The job I am going to have now is the best one of



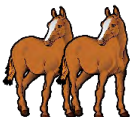
all— taking care of animals, especially horses.



Some days it feels like I have been here 2 years, even though it has only



been 2 months, but when I walk in the stable it feels like only 2 days. There are the



two horses that Pop and I helped unload from the



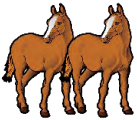
railcar– Dakota and Black Jack. A man speaks, “My, my. Looks like old Satan there



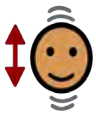
knows you.” An older Creek Indian man approaches me and introduces himself as



John Adams. He asks if I am the new student and tells me he knew Pop. “Best boy



with horses we had back then. Does he still know that horse song I taught him?” I



reply, “Yes, sir.” We discuss how he and Pop were both hurt in the war, and then we



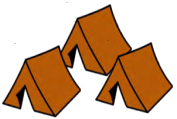
discuss the Bonus Army March in Washington. I try to listen to the radio and read the



1,000



newspapers when I can. I know that thousands of men have made it there and set up



a tent city in Washington. Some people help the men get there, and others feel like



they should be punished.



Cal receives a letter from Pop.



John Adams redirects me to the horse he calls, "Satan," because of his



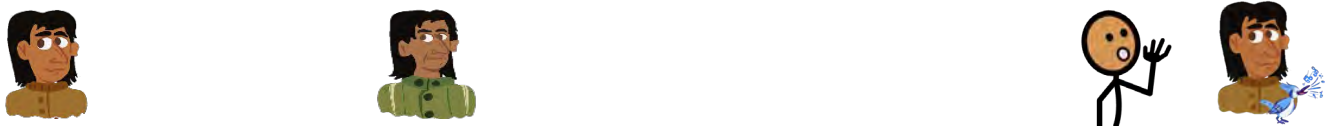
devil temper. I tell him that his name is Dakota, and the bay is



Black Jack. He tells me that Dakota bites, and I reach into my pocket and get out an



apple to offer him. He starts munching the apple, and I stroke his neck. He says,



"You surely are like your father." Suddenly Possum comes in and shouts, "Jay Bird,



you got a letter!" Mr. Adams lets me take a hall pass to go get the letter. Everyone



knows I have been waiting to hear from Pop. There is no return address, but I see it



was stamped in Washington.



When I reenter the stables, Mr. Adams sees the letter in my hand and



points me to his office. "Go on," he says. I go in and shut the door. My heart is



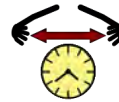
pounding. I am crying. I open the envelope and read the letter. Pop tells me he is



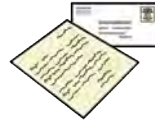
proud of me. He tells me all about the tent city and how many thousands of men are



there in his camp. He tells me that he has helped many men take trains to



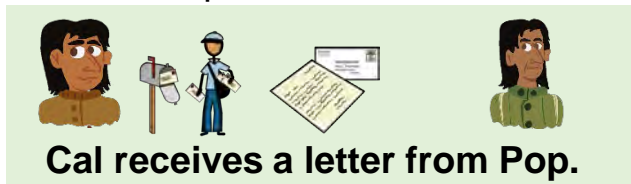
Washington. Finally, he tells me he doesn't know how long he will be there, but he



will come and get me when he can. I read the letter three times! I want to make Pop



proud. As much as I miss him, I am proud of him too.



Chapter 26

A Bad Dream



It's July and I am still here. Half of the gang went home for summer to



their little plots of land– Bear Meat, Skinny, Dirt Seller, and Grasshopper. Deacon



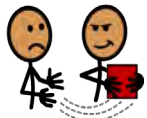
tells me about the Curtis Act of 1898 when all of the Oklahoma Indian reservations



were broken by the U.S. Government, and tribes were given little plots of land. For



the first time, Indians were forced to pay taxes on their land. If they couldn't pay, then



they lost



their land. For others, White men stole plots of land, especially where there was oil,



or they tricked the Indians into signing bills of sale and didn't pay them for it, or they



married Indian women to steal the land. I don't know that I think it was right for



Pop to hide this from me and raise me as a White boy, but I can see why he did it. To



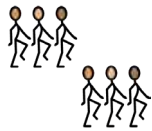
protect me from the pain.



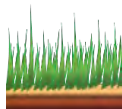
Since most of the student body is gone, things are much quieter.



Possum, Little Coon, and Deacon are still here. There are no academic classes or



drill. We are mainly laborers and farmhands. Even though it is summer, the animals



still have to be fed, the grass still has to be cut,



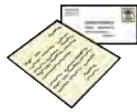
the crops need to be tended, and there is upkeep needed in the school buildings



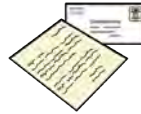
while school is out.



So why am I still here? Well first, I have no land to go home to. Second,



Pop sent Superintendent Morrell a letter asking him to let me stay over summer. He



brought me into his office and let me read the letter that Pop had written on a torn



paper bag. Pop explained in the letter that the Bonus Army continues to grow and it



is taking longer than expected. Pop is a leader in the Bonus Army and needs to stay.



He is hopeful that the upcoming election helps the veterans get the money



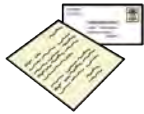
they deserve.



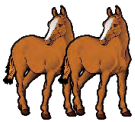
Superintendent Morrell asks, "Does this sit well with you,



Mr. Blackbird?" As if I have any choice in the matter. I just nod. I have been here



three weeks since that letter doing jobs around campus. I love working with the



horses. I also have been given a plot of land to farm. Any money I make from the



sale of the crops is deposited in my school funds account. The library got a donation



of books, which Mrs. Tygue told Superintendent Morrell that it was my job to shelve



them. I have 10 new favorite books. Right now, I am reading *Treasure Island* for the



second time. I guess what I like best about it is that while I'm reading it, I'm not



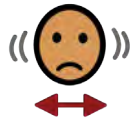
here at Challagi or missing Pop. I love imagining that I am with the pirates and



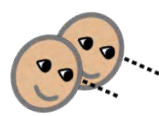
hunting for buried treasure.



Cal has a bad dream about Pop.



The shouting wakes me up suddenly— “NOO! LOOK OUT! NOOOO!” The



book is still on my chest, and I see Possum and Little Coon staring down at me with



worried faces. I realized that I was the one shouting. “Jay Bird, it’s okay. It was just a



dream,” Possum says. I shake my head and sit up in bed. I wipe my eyes which have




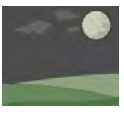






tears. Possum sees my face and understands that I had a vision. He knows because










of his aunt that what I saw was real.



   
My vision was about Pop. I was seeing through his eyes. It was night.


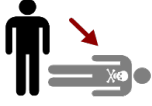


   
There were bright spotlights shining on us. We were on a bridge facing armed men.

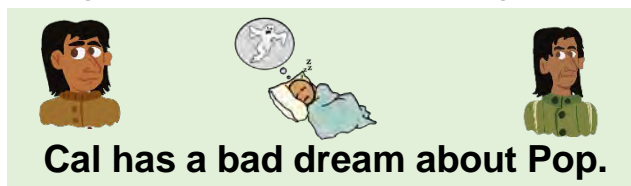
  
We were not armed, but we wouldn't let them pass us. We kept marching forward.

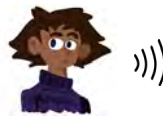
   
“GET BACK! STOP OR WE WILL FIRE!” a man was shouting through a bullhorn.

   
The man next to me said, “They won't shoot us. We are veterans. We are like them.

  
Soldiers on American soil.” That's when soldiers started firing bullets. I felt a bullet hit

   
my chest. I was falling, dying... And woke up shouting, “NOOOOO!”

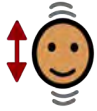




I realize Deacon is not in his bed. Little Coon tells me to put on my



sneakers. "Deacon woke up two hours before you started yelling." Possum adds,



"Yep. Seems like he had one of those visions too."



Little Coon nods and tells me that Deacon said the time had come that I needed



help, and he was going to the camp to get things ready.



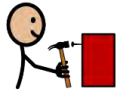
Cal has a bad dream about Pop.

Chapter 27

Time To Go



As I approach the camp, I see a fire that is much larger than usual. I also



see a hut has been built that looks like a giant mushroom. Little Coon says, "Nice,



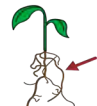
innit? Three of us spent the last four days making it." It's all covered in horse



blankets from the stable. Possum tells me that Mr. Adams turned a blind eye,



knowing how we'd be using them as covering for the lodge."



The lodge isn't big enough to live in. It is made of poles, roots, and twine.



There is one deer antler inside. There is a hole dug in the middle in the ground.



“That’s for stones. Don’t go inside yet” Little Coon says. I see Possum, and then



Deacon stands up from the other side of the fire. I hadn’t seen him yet. “Never seen



a lodge before?” Deacon asks. I shake my head no. He tells me to sit down beside



the fire. There are stones in the middle that are so hot they are glowing red. Little



Coon and Possum sit down next to me. They have taken off their shirts and their



sneakers. I follow their lead.



Cal and his Creek brothers participate in an Indian ceremony.



Possum says, “Deacon was taught to do this by his granddad. Because



of this, he can make a lodge and run a sweat.” *What’s a sweat? I think.* Deacon

begins to explain.



“Grandad Harjo. He told it to me this way. There was a holy person a



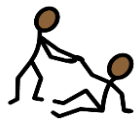
long time ago. Way before White men came. He showed himself to a



boy who needed help. He taught him this way to cleanse his words,



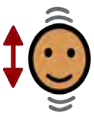
cleanse his body. Then that boy went on to help others in the same



way. Now, Jay Bird, this lodge is here to help you.”



He asks if I am ready to enter the lodge and perform the ceremony. I say,



“yes,” and enter, sitting facing east, the direction of dawn, a new day, the beginning



of life. Possum scoops up a fiery stone on a pitchfork and brings it to the hold.



Deacon scoops it off with the deer antler. He keeps doing this repeatedly.



It gets hot inside the lodge. Deacon holds up his hand to signal enough. Little Coon,



the door's keeper, passes a bucket of water to Deacon and the leaves, pulling down



the blankets to cover the door.



Cal and his Creek brothers participate in an Indian ceremony.



I don't know how long we were in the lodge. Deacon prays and sings



songs, and I try my best to follow along. He continues to pour water over the stones



and steam rises, making us sweat. My skin feels like it is on fire but cleansed at the



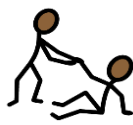
same time. Then Deacon let's out a loud call like a wild turkey. Little Coon opens the



door. Deacon tells me to go jump in the cold stream. I do. When I stand up, I seem



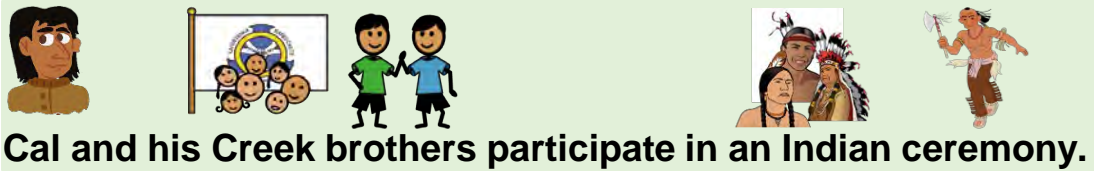
more alive than I have ever felt before. Deacon jumps in right after me. Little Coon



and Possum offer their hands to help pull us out of the water, but we pull them in



instead for a little fun.



As we sit by the fire drying off, I realize we are truly brothers. Whatever



happens from here on in we'll always be as close as kin. Deacon looks at me and



tells me to tell them about the visions of Pop being shot in the war in D.C. because



they have had relatives who have had visions, I ask them about it. Deacon explains



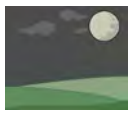
that they can be more like warnings of something that might happen, not what has to



happen. I repeat his words in my head, "not what has to happen." I am filled with



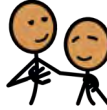
hope. I have to get out of here and rescue Pop.



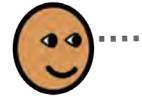
The next night I leave Challagi. Possum has helped me gather the things



for my pack. Little Coon helps us keep watch. Possum goes with me all the way to



the stables. I choke up. I want to thank him, but I can't get the words out. He laughs



and says, "Ain't no word in Creek for good-bye because we will all see each other



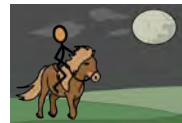
down the road one way or another." I walk into the stable to Dakota. He is excited to



see me. I put on his bridle and slip it into his mouth. I don't have time to put a saddle



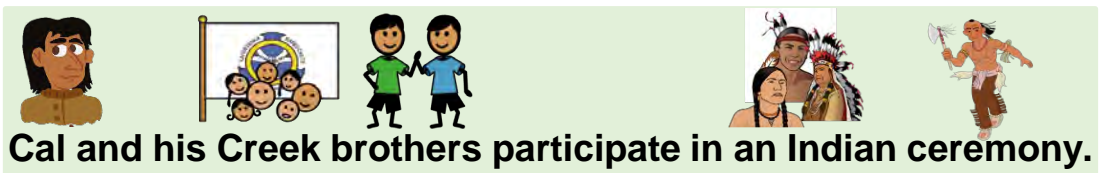
on him, but I don't mind riding bearback. "Giddyup," I say, and Dakota bolts out of the



stable. We leave Challagi under an almost full moon prancing across the prairie. It

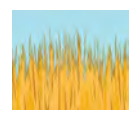
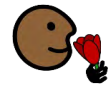


feels like a dream.

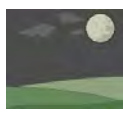


Chapter 28

One Hand on the Rail



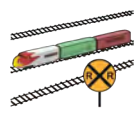
The moonlight shining on the field, the scent of the prairie grasses being



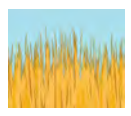
kicked up by Dakota's hooves, the warm night wind in my face, and the feel of the



horse's strong, muscular body beneath me is almost like a dream.



It's ten miles by road to the railyard at the edge of town. But only 7 cutting



across the prairie as we've done. We haven't been at full gallop all the way, but still



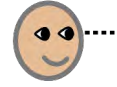
moving along at a good clip, Dakota's breathing easy and relaxed beneath me.



I slow him to a walk as we approach the depot.



His long, tireless strides brought us here even quicker than I'd expected,



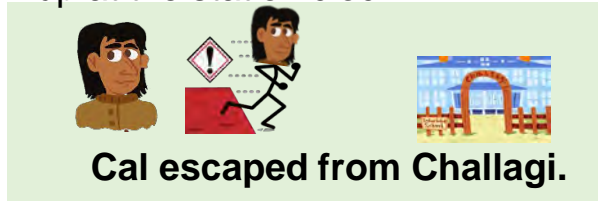
quick enough to outdistance any pursuit, assuming anyone saw me going. Which is



not likely. It's so early, just before dawn, that no one other than us is stirring. The



streets are empty. I look up at the station clock.



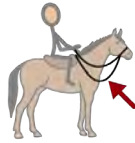
If I have remembered the schedule right, there'll be a freight train here



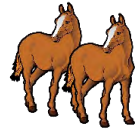
soon. It's not a passenger stop, but it has a mail car. So, it will be slowing down to a



near halt to drop off 1 mailbag and grab the other waiting on the platform.



I tied Dakota's reins to the hitching post near the watering trough in front



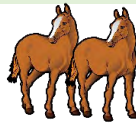
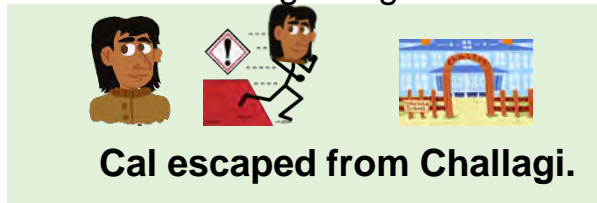
of the livery stable. It's where Pop and I brought him and the other horses back in



early April. So much has happened since then. Thinking about it all just about makes



my head spin. But there's no time for cogitating now. I've a train to catch.



I run my hands along the big horses' sides, pat him a couple of times.



He's not lathered up from his run. 7 miles is nothing for a cavalry mount. He should



be okay without being rubbed down. He lowers his head down so I can stroke his



forehead.



Good boy," I say. I push myself away from him and shift the pack on my shoulder.



Dakota is dipping this head to drink from the trough. *Don't know if I'll ever see*



you again. But I'll be remembering you.



I haven't yet heard a train whistle, but from the position of the hands of



the station clock, the freight I'm counting on should be here soon.



I bend to place my left hand on the nearest iron rail, feel the vibration of the metal.



I walk down along the tracks, staying low to keep from being seen. I



almost tripped over a pile of tools, left by some careless workmen-- a 5 ft long claw



bar, a track chisel, and a wrench. A hundred yards on, I stop, position myself in the



brush at just the right place to make the run alongside the train and swing myself up



onto a freight car before it picks up too much speed.



The screech of the train whistle cut through the still dawn air. So loud it



would make most men jump, but not an experienced knight of the road like me. I



can't quite see the train yet, but its smoke is visible, rising high in the blue



morning sky. The clacking of its wheels is getting louder and louder, so loud



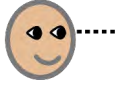
as it comes into sight that almost nothing else can be heard.



The freight's almost reached me. I turn and start to run. The engine



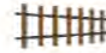
The freight's almost reached me. I turn and start to run. The engine



passes me, its driver looking straight ahead. I let the coal car pass, then another



freight car.



My feet are pounding on the loose stones along the track. Now! I reach



my left arm-- the one closest to the train-- to grab the ladder side rail. My right arm



takes firm hold of the rail parallel to it and I lift my feet.



I climb up the three rungs, fast as a squirrel scooting up



an oak tree.

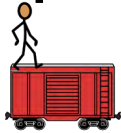


I'm on my way.



Cal escaped from Challagi.

Chapter 29 Wounds



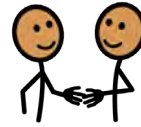
I walk along the top of the train and swing down into an empty boxcar. I



step on a slippery spot on the floor and fall backwards, almost out of the car.



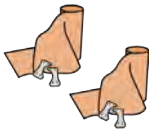
Someone grabs my arm and saves me. "Watch it young fella!" I mistake the person



for man, but the middle-aged woman with long gray hair introduces herself as Gale.



She gives me a shirt to wear since mine ripped on a nail in my fall and feeds me. I



notice her stuff- bandages and medicine. I'm in the presence of an "Angel of Mercy"



– a hobo doctor.



Gale asks me where I am heading. "D.C.," I reply. She asks me what is in



D.C. "My pop. He's with the Bonus Army. Gale knows so much about what is



happening in D.C.- about the different Bonus Armies and where they are located and



about President Hoover's evil plan to clear the Bonus army while Congress is not in



session. She warns me, "You be careful Cal! You just might be walking into a war



zone.' Gale knows so much because she was there but had to leave to go visit her



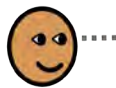
sick daughter. I listen to her stories and drift off to sleep.



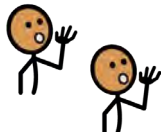
When I awake, she is gone. I hear the railroad bulls checking the cars,



and I hide in a crate. The train starts to roll on. I look out at the landscape, and I start



having a vision about Gale's words. I see where my father is. There is fire



everywhere and people are screaming. "Tanks! Tanks are coming." I see tanks,



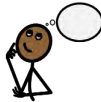
men marching with rifles, and blood. I snap out of my vision.



I travel for two more days. I begin to think of Challagi. I've left behind the



best friends I have ever had; The only friends I have ever had other than Pop. Before



going to Challagi, I thought I knew who I was- a hobo riding the rails with Pop until



we could get back our farm. But now I know I am an Indian, and that I will always



belong to my Creek gang regardless of whether I am with Pop or not. I feel confused.



Does this mean I miss Challagi? Definitely not the teachers or the work, but I do miss



my Creek Gang. I truly belonged there with them. I wonder, "What will I do after I find



Pop? Where will I go? Will I ride the rails with him or go back to Challagi?" I shake



my head. Right now, I need to focus on getting to Pop. It is my turn to take care of



him.

Cal is traveling to D.C. to find Pop.

Chapter 30a

Tanks on Pennsylvania Avenue



It took me two more days to get to Washington on the rail. I am in awe at



how many different kinds of people are here. I am also in awe at how big the



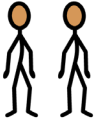
buildings are and how they make you feel so small. I crane my neck to try to see the



top of the Washington monument. I stare at the White House which stands behind a



locked gate with a lot of patrolmen. "Old Hoover's in there," a familiar voice says



from behind me. "Locked himself up safe from all us Bonusers." I turn around to see



the dark, handsome face of Corporal Esom Dart, the man Pop and I helped escape



the sheriffs at the bonus camp months ago. What luck! He will know where Pop is.



Cal arrives in Washington.



He is in full army uniform with his medals pinned on his chest. He asks if



I still have the medal he gave me. "Yes sir!" I respond and pat my shirt pocket. He



asks why I have come to Washington rather than staying at school where Pop left



me to be safe. "Pop," I say. "I gotta find him." Corporal Esom Dart tells me that he



left Pop just an hour ago. "Let's go," he says and leads the way. We turn away from



the White House and head down Pennsylvania Avenue. Thousands of civilians fill



the sidewalks. Police keep people from crossing the street to the other side occupied



by veterans and their families. Veterans are holding up signs like, "BONUS NOW.



MY CHILDREN ARE STARVING." Some men are hurt. Corporal Dart explains that



the police came an hour ago and told the Bonusers to all leave. Some men were



injured. He asks, "But how can a man go back to his home if he don't have any home

to go to?"



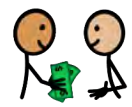
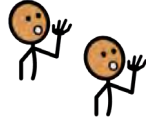
He explains that Pop and he have set up tents over the Anacostia River



drawbridge in Camp Marks. There are over 7,000 veterans and 600 women and



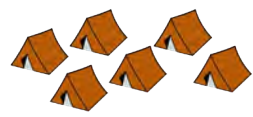
children. Black and White men, women, and children all together. We pass another



group of Black and White men standing together chanting, "Pay the Bonus!" Corporal



Dart looks at me and smiles as he says, "Black vets and White vets together. Here,



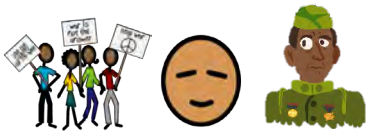
at least for now, that color line is gone." We pass another camp- Camp Glassford. It



was named for the Chief of Police. Corporal Dart tells me that Chief Glassford is a



vet himself, and is respectful to the Bonusers because they have vowed to keep the



protest peaceful. He further explains that it doesn't matter. President Hoover wants



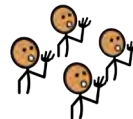
them all to leave and is going to let his General's army, General MacArthur, force



them to leave. "You mark my words, Pal. If they do bring in the army to drive us out,



old Hoover is going to get voted out in favor of the new man Roosevelt."



Suddenly, I hear a roar of people shouting. As they get closer, they are saying,



"They're coming." A troop of hundreds of men mounted on horses appear. Behind



the calvary, come Infantrymen with marching feet. And behind them come a half



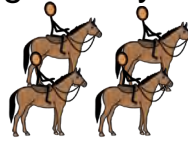
dozen tanks rumbling into view. An officer on horseback raises his sword. The



Infantrymen begin fixing their bayonets. They pull gas masks over their faces.



Corporal Dart shouts, "RUN!" and grabs my hand pulling me back from



the avenue. An officer shouts the command, "HERD THE CROWD NORTH!" The



men on horses ride straight for the civilians with their swords raised and start using



the blades to push men and women forward. There are so many people, it is hard to



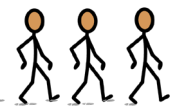
move. The army is attacking Camp Glassford. They are lobbing grenades and setting



the tents in the camp on fire. An American flag burns. Suddenly, the tear gas starts



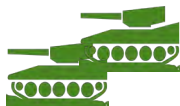
to make my eyes water. Corporal Dart pours water on a bandana and ties it around



my nose and mouth. We keep moving, making it across the drawbridge into Camp



Marks. There are people coughing and crying as far as I can see. It seems like the



calvary, Infantry, and tanks must have stopped at Camp Glassford.



Cal arrives in Washington.

Chapter 30b

Tanks on Pennsylvania Avenue



I'm amazed at Camp Marks. Everything is neat and organized. There are



even streets. Children are playing, women are washing clothes and preparing meals.



Doctors and nurses are tending to the wounded on the riverbank. "Look," Corporal



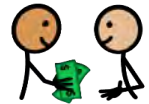
Dart points, "There's your father." I start moving towards him.



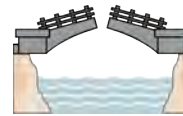
He and the Camp Commander, Captain Eddie Atwell, are talking to



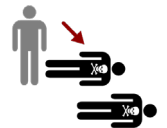
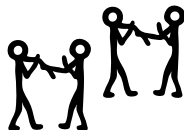
policemen. Captain Atwell explains to the policemen that everyone in the camp is a



veteran, just like them, and they are here peacefully requesting their Bonus check.



Captain Atwell explains though that if the army tries to cross the bridge, they will no



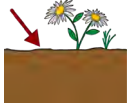
longer be peaceful and they will attack. Suddenly, my vision appears- the massacre



when Pop is in danger. These veterans don't have weapons to protect them like the



army. I don't think Pop has seen me yet, but I am wrong. He drops his left hand and



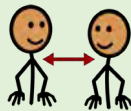
points to the ground. He's signaling me to wait.



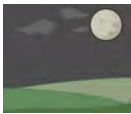
Atwell, the policemen, and several other vets turn to leave, but Pop



stays. He turns and gives me a big hug, "Cal!"



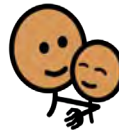
Cal was reunited with Pop.



That night I sit with Pop in front of his tent by the fire, and I tell him



everything- about my friends, about the vision, and about the sweat back at Challagi.



Pop listens patiently. When I finish, I give him the biggest hug. "What now?" I ask.



“Hard to say,” he responds. “We don’t know when MacArthur’s troops will cross the



bridge.” I know me being here will change things. Pop won’t sacrifice himself. Pop



tells me, “It’s good to just sit here with you. I’ve missed you.” I say, “Me too.” I reach



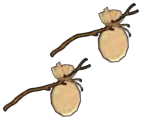
into my coat pocket and hand him all the letters I had written him. I can tell he is



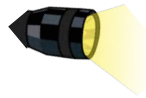
crying as he reads them. He vows to keep the letters as long as he lives. Just like



me- I am going to keep the letter he sent me forever too. Pop and I both have our



packs. General MacArthur’s Army is just across the bridge waiting. Captain Atwell



crosses the bridge with a white flag. A search light is illuminating the camp, just like I



saw in my vision. Thirty minutes later Captain Atwell comes back across the bridge



to camp and shouts, "We have an hour to evacuate." People in the camp start to



panic. People are calling out for their loved ones and running. We escape to the hills



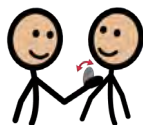
behind the camp. We watch as General MacArthur's Army moves into the camp to



attack. "Who could have thought this could happen here in our own country?" Pop



says. He is silent, then he says, "Unless they were hoboes or Indians." I say, "Like



you and me, Pop." He puts his arm around my shoulder. "Ehi. You could say that,"



he replies. Being experienced knights of the road helps us to escape. We know how



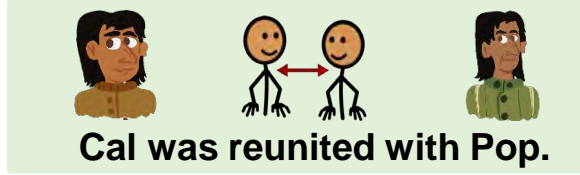
to get around- the rail. Five days later we arrive in Kansas. I find some quarters and



treat us to a movie. President Hoover's face appeared at the end and everyone



boo'ed.



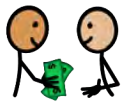
We traveled the roads and worked to earn an honest dime and lived by



the knight's code. Life wasn't easy, but we were together. There was an election



coming up. Hoover was running against a man who had promised a new deal. There



was another Bonus army march coming up. Pop looked at me and asked, "What



now, son?" I looked at him and said, "Going back." Pop knew what I meant. He had



to continue to fight for his Bonus money, and in order to do that I had to go back to



Challagi.



Although I was happy to be back with Pop, I missed the Creek gang.



While I still didn't like parts of Challagi, my brothers would welcome me back. I



belonged to the group. I would learn about farming and get to be with Dakota again.



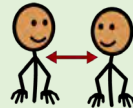
While I would always be a knight of the road and the son of Will Blackbird, my Pop, I



am also Jay Blackbird, Creek Indian, and I had a new road to follow. Pop looked at



me and said, "Are you ready?" He smiled. I said, "You could say that."



Cal was reunited with Pop.