

## Rebirth

*Memory grips the past; hope grips the future.*

Scott Russell Sanders

*Hunting for Hope*

Red Hawk again appeared on the next full moon, the tenth in a row.

*"Hi, Robbie. How have you been doing?"*

*"Great. I went to the Army-Navy game a few days ago. Captain Lewis took my family and me on a tour and then to the game. It was awesome. Navy won!"*

*Red Hawk nodded, knowing the story already. "Did you want to go anywhere specific this time or ask any questions?"*

*"Well, I think we've gotten back to the origin of the stick, haven't we?" Robbie asked.*

*"Yes, we have. There's certainly a lot more to learn about each of the custodians, but perhaps we could just discuss a little bit about where this stick has taken us so far."*

*"Sure."*

*Red Hawk began, "Well, for each of the previous custodians, I've been fortunate to share with them some piece of the story of the stick in the first ten moons. Actually, I attempted to guide them*

*for the most part to the scenes and information I thought would be most useful for their growth as custodian of the stick. It was almost as though they were in a womb for those ten moons, exactly as you and I were in our mothers' wombs, being nourished by their bodies and the Great Spirit. Then at birth, we were all free to pursue our own forms of knowledge through our own experiences.*

*"And so it is now for you. I hope that you've grown in this 'womb' of visits. You know the story of the stick. Now it's time to spread your wings, explore on your own, strive to reach your full potential, discover the great mysteries of life, learn the ways of the world, and, perhaps, find your place in it.*

*"You might recall that the day Captain Lewis presented you with my grandfather's stick, he and your family spared the life of that fledgling which had fallen from a tree."*

*Robbie's heart warmed when he realized that Red Hawk was familiar with that event and might even have had some hand in it.*

*Red Hawk continued, "Perhaps it was not a coincidence that for you the first lesson of the stick was one of life. From there you've seen and learned of some of the great tragedies and horrors known to mankind. You've seen death, war, hate, prejudice,*

*injustice. You saw the death of a great hero, Jack Turnbull. And you witnessed his mother, Mum Turnbull, receive the news that her son had died, perhaps the greatest burden that any person must bear.*

*“You saw the carnage at Gettysburg. You saw the Trail of Tears. You’ve experienced the cruelty of mankind manifested in those two compelling books, Uncle Tom’s Cabin, and Het Achterhuis. But you have also seen acts of honor, mercy, compassion, empathy, and dignity. Remember the heroic dignity of Mrs. Turnbull after Jack’s death. You saw the noble actions of Colonel Casey and Colonel Chamberlain at Little Round Top.*

*“Remember the empathy that Casey showed for the Cherokee, particularly for my sister and me. You saw my great-grandfather release his adopted son to pursue his life with his people. You saw and felt the passion put into the construction of your stick by the Iroquois chief. So many of life’s greatest lessons are held in this stick and through the people who have lived noble—yet very ordinary—lives.*

*“In my discussions with each of the custodians over these one-hundred-and-sixty years, I think that we’ve all agreed that a great place from which to start our relationship is with the gift of*

*life. And so today, I hope that with this insight into this stick, you might begin your life anew—with a more sensitive appreciation of how truly precious and precarious each of our lives is. From there, I hope that you'll find, like the other custodians, what you want to find in your own life and that you may then find a way to use that insight to help others, much as Lieutenant Casey helped me. You see, beginning with my great-great grandfather and then Casey and the others, this stick has been a tribute to the goodness in people, not the evil.*

*“Perhaps one of the great lessons in the lives of these men is that to experience the full range of human emotion, one must endure a great array of experiences, both good and bad.*

*“In order to understand and fully appreciate joy, you must know pain. To know goodness, you must know evil. To know light, you must know darkness. And so it is only through these inextricable opposites, these paradoxes that we're able to experience the entire spectrum of what life has to offer. There's so much to learn from each of the custodians.*

*“So now you've seen the past. You're living the present. There are no guarantees for what the future holds. We can only hope. But to know the past and the present is to provide as sound a footing*

*as possible for the trials of the future. I hope the lessons you've learned so far, as well as the many still ahead, will give you a better chance to conquer adversity, master yourself, and make a positive difference in the world.*

*"I believe this is a stick of life. It is a stick of honor. It is a stick of respect. Above all, though, I think the true spirit of this stick is one of hope.*

*"The men who have had it before you have made it such. Each of the men was forced to cling to hope while they battled their own frailties, fears, self-doubt, frustration, and disappointments. They learned valuable lessons of leadership and courage in internal and external crucibles. Before they could have an impact on others they were forced to confront themselves. Each has left a legacy of honor, goodness, and leadership to you and me. You will get to add your own signature, your own carving on the stick, to its history as you see fit.*

*"We both have a great deal more to learn about each other, the custodians of this stick, and the great mysteries of our lives."*

*With that Red Hawk paused and slowly turned away. Robbie stood silent. On his first step, Red Hawk turned his head back to Robbie and said softly, "My grandfather has always stayed with me when I have needed him. I will stay with you. It is*

*my duty. I owe it not only to him but also to many other people.*

*“Happy Birthday, Robbie.”*

*Robbie stood briefly confused, thinking that it was not his birthday. Then as Red Hawk stepped away, he realized that it was.*