

Chapter One

A sound in the silence of the dark night rises from the frozen landscape. It is familiar...but i do not know what it is. It lingers.

Is it the sound of ice melting?...Is that what i hear? Nushhùkòwěn, ice_icles dripping?...The distant sound of a glacier melting? From long ago? Far away...

Long sculpted tapers hanging like clear frozen bats stirred, touching one another, clinking softly, glass blown by a bitter wind? Is that what i hear? No. No, it is not a tinkling, nor is it the sound of ice melting. It is too cold. The wind...the wind blows like the ocean from within the darkness of my blanket pulled up to my clos-ed eye-s, smell of sheep_s wool my father traded for beaver pelts, smell of sweet grass deep inside where we are huddled closely, my sister and i. Is it the sound of cracking sea ice? No words. We do not speak. The sound of our breath, each of us struggling to maintain a semblance of warmth, holding hands under the layers covering us...Is it the sound of the wind?...some cave dwelling beast, it's roar intensified by the silence...our breathing keeping time with the sound...the warmth from my nostrils filling the blanket... Around my face the air leaves my nose cold...leaves...yes, leaves left, right, on alert now. My eyes begin darting. Yes, it is the sound of feet crushing frozen leaves lying cold upon the stiff ground. Yes, that is the sound. Whose feet? The feet of my people? No. No. No, we walk soundlessly. We walk without making noise. We do not draw attention to our feet. It is the feet of the white face. Yes, it is their feet.

We hunker further within the blanket, chilled by the thought the feet of the white face may be about the village, wandering around, touching...our lives, the skin of our homes...laying hands...What is it they are looking for? What do they want...in the darkness? In the time it takes to move from one thought to the next, they are upon us, within our home, ripping open the door. My next thought never comes. I can only hear the sound of chaos-trampling feet, voices calling out, yelling, cries-fear choking me. Startled, my sister jumps from within the blanket balling up what covered her atop me, and walks across the longhouse. I turn and follow her through a woolen peep hole. There is my sister standing greeting a man encased by armor who has pushed open the door, a mace in his hand which he summarily raises with both arms and brings down with such ferocity upon my sister, hitting her square in the forehead, he sends her crashing backwards...Oh my god, my god, ohhh, and the image is immediately frozen in place, suspended...in blood...blood, blood blown everywhere, spurting from out the gash splattering the man's iron mask and the walls of our home, and in the next instant he is within pounding away, raising and lowering his weapon with a vicious brutality. I am frozen in place watching as he goes about the room slamming his weapon upon those still under blanket-women and children, those sleeping in the lodge, my cousins, my brother. And then, i am hit, and the air is knocked out of me, but the blow is not deadly as the thickness of the blankets saves me. I lay frozen with fear struggling to soundlessly catch my breath, a frightened ball of terror still as a Rock. My sister, oh my sister...my sister, my sister...my sister has saved my life i silently weep, over and over again. my sister, my sister. And then the man steps on top of me pushing all the air out of me in his effort to gain another part of the dwelling, whereupon he wields his weapon again and again, relentlessly, a savagery as cold as the devil. Cries of havoc and terror rise and fill the air.

From deep within the blanket, as tight a ball as i can make of myself, i hear the sounds of bloodshed. I can see spears flying, clubs, a skull. I hear a shot, thwacks...an axe sinking deep into meat, the air expelled, anguish, crying...Twisted bodies, faces gnarled, falling shapes in the darkness upon the cold hard ground. Oh my people, my people...my people...Silent tears flow from ice cold sockets, freezing in place upon my skin. I will never again lie with my sister hidden amongst the rocks trading secrets, nor will i touch the cheeks of my dear aunt, or be shown the proper way to tie a knot by my uncle, gathered up within the arms of my mother, hugged and kissed incessantly, hunt with my father, fish with my cousins. The barbarous sounds of Bedlam continue as i lay helplessly shaking.

They poured into our stronghold. The firing was intense and it was everywhere. It was impossible to determine who was shooting or from which direction. In a single instant the world became senseless and

cruel, inhuman, revolving insane. A gruesome smell pervaded the air. It smelled like shit. Shit. It began to smell like shit in the cold dark night, like shit, i say and the smell was everywhere.

They began setting fire to our village. I could hear the crackling of wood as it caught, the severe strain of wooden pillars chattering in their effort to hold up a burning roof, and then, without notice, i was swept up, and frightened nearly to death until i realized it was my uncle, my mother's brother who had grabbed me from around my waist and carried me off. I held onto my blanket as we quickly fled my home. The fire raged. We picked our way through a shroud of thick smoke. We were coughing. Carnage was everywhere. Limbs were on fire and falling as we made our way to a soft spot in the palisade where the white face had clearly entered. We left as the food stores went ablaze, and turning toward the inferno, we could see the white face indiscriminately killing our people—wonton butchery. The shrieks and cries of the women and children, my friends, and cousins, tormented sounds, mixed with the yelling of warriors, rose up as a single horrible and relentless sound in the cold night air. They are burning their enemy alive, i thought, burning my people, burning my village to the ground. Nothing will be left, Nothing. The smell of burning flesh began to overwhelm the night. How is this consistent with the humanity and benevolent principles of their gospel? Perhaps this who they really are? Yes, i cried out, this is who you really are. Look how they revel in their work. Sister, oh my sister!

We struggled through a blizzard for hours, hours and hours, for days, one blending into the next. There was no knowing. It was bitterly cold, snow was everywhere, thick and three feet deep, mid thigh. Four days; days on end; we trudged barely awake, barely able to feel, unable to talk, scared, yet too exhausted to really be afraid or hungry. It was interminable. A wicked and wild wind broke the silence as far as the ear could hear. The forest was stiff and perfectly still, frozen in place, lifeless. My skin stung without cease. We huddled under the blanket, close upon one another, stone still, hoping to calm our shivering, silently praying as we were able. A smidgeon of warmth was not easy to gain. There was no food and no opportunity to hunt. We spent a harrowing several days holed up under pine tree boughs until the wicked spell of winter suddenly broke and we were able to scavenge, slack our hunger to some extent, and resume our flight west where we could take refuge amongst our distant cousins. In silence we hoped they were still alive.

excerpted from the journal kept by a young Menton

In the darkness of a bitter cold winter night, an armed man entered the sanctuary of a synagogue in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, and began firing upon those seated, praying. Eleven parishioners fell: Joyce Feinberg, 75, of Oakland; Richard Gottfried, 65, of Ross Township; Rose Mallinger, 97, of Squirrel Hill; Jerry Rabinowitz, 66, of Edgewood; Cecil Rosenthal, 59, and David Rosenthal, 54, brothers, of Squirrel Hill; Bernice Simon, 84, and Sylvan Simon, 86, a married couple, from Wilksburg; Daniel Stein, 71, of Squirrel Hill; Melvin Wax, 87, of Squirrel Hill; and Irving Younger, 69, of Mount Washington.