



Listening Woman

by Tony Hillerman

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The southwest wind picked up turbulence around the San Francisco Peaks, howled across the emptiness of the Moenkopi plateau, and made a thousand strange sounds in windows of the old Hopi villages at Shongopovi and Second Mesa. Two hundred vacant miles to the north and east, it sand-blasted the stone sculptures of Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park and whistled eastward across the maze of canyons on the Utah-Arizona border. Over the arid immensity of the Nokaito Bench it filled the blank blue sky with a rushing sound. At the hogan of Hosteen Tso, at 3:17 P.M., it gusted and eddied, and formed a dust devil, which crossed the wagon track and raced with a swirling roar across Margaret Cigarettes old Dodge pickup truck and past the Tso brush arbor. The three people under the arbor huddled against the driven dust. Tso covered his eyes with his hands and leaned forward in his rocking chair as the sand stung his naked shoulders. Anna Atcitty turned her back to the wind and put her hands over her hair because when this business was finished and she got Margaret Cigarette home again, she would meet the new boy from the Short Mountain Trading Post. And Mrs. Margaret Cigarette, who was

also called Blind Eyes, and Listening Woman, threw her shawl over the magic odds and ends arrayed on the arbor table. She held down the edges of the shawl.

Damn dirty wind, she said. Dirty son-of-a-bitch.

Its the Blue Flint boys playing tricks with it, Hosteen Tso said in his old mans voice. He wiped his eyes with the backs of his hands and looked after the whirlwind. That's what my mothers father told me. The Blue Flint boys make the wind do that when they play one of their games.

Listening Woman put the shawl back around her shoulders, felt carefully among the assortment of bottles, brushes and fetishes on the table, selected a clear plastic prescription vial, and uncapped it.

Don't think about that, she said. Think about what were doing. Think about how you got this trouble in your body. She poured a measure of yellow corn pollen from the vial and swiveled her blind face toward where the girl was standing. You pay attention now, daughter-of-my-sister. Were going to bless this man with this pollen. You remember how we do that?

You sing the song of the Talking God, Anna Atcitty said. The one about Born of Water and the Monster Slayer. She was a pretty girl, perhaps sixteen. The legends GANADO HIGH SCHOOL and TIGER PEP were printed across the front of her T-shirt.

Listening Woman sprinkled the pollen carefully over the shoulders of Hosteen Tso, chanting in low, melodic Navajo. From the cheekbone to the scalp, the left side of the old mans face was painted blue-black. Another patch of blackness covered his bony rib cage over his heart. Above that, the colorful curved stick figure of the Rainbow Man arched over Tsos chest from nipple to nipple painted by Anna Atcitty in the ritual tints of blue, yellow, green and gray. He held his wiry body straight in the chair, his face stiff with sickness, patience and suppressed pain. Listening Woman's chant rose abruptly in volume. In beauty it is finished, she sang. In beauty it is finished.

Okay, she said. Now I will go and listen for the earth to tell me what makes you sick. She felt carefully across the plank table, collecting the fetishes and amulets of her profession, and then found her walking cane. She was a large woman, handsome once, dressed in the traditional voluminous skirt and blue velvet blouse of the People. She put the last of the vials in her black plastic purse, snapped it shut, and turned her sightless eyes toward Tso. Think about it now, before I go. When you dream, you dream of your son who is dead and of that place you call the painted cave? You don't have any witch in that dream? She paused, giving Tso a chance to answer.

No, he said. No witches.

No dogs? No wolves? Nothing about Navajo Wolves?

Nothing about witches, Tso said. I dream about the cave.

You been with the whores over at Flagstaff? You been laying with any kinfolks?

Too old, Tso said. He smiled slightly.

Been burning any wood struck by lightning?

No.

Listening Woman stood, face stern, staring past him with her blind eyes. Listen, Old Man, she said, I think you better tell me more about how these sand paintings got messed up. If you're worried about people knowing about it, Anna here can go away behind the hogan. Then nobody knows but you and me. And I don't tell secrets.

Hosteen Tso smiled, very slightly. Now nobody knows but me, he said, and I don't tell secrets either.

Maybe it will help tell why you're sick, Listening Woman said. It sounds like witchery to me. Sand paintings getting messed up. If there was more than one sand painting at a time, then that would be doing the ceremonial wrong. That would be turning the blessing around. That would be witch business. If you been fooling around with the Navajo Wolves, then you're going to need a different kind of cure.

Tsos face was stubborn now. Understand this, woman. A long time ago I made a promise. Some things I cant talk about.

The silence stretched, Listening Woman looking at whatever vision the blind see inside their skulls, Hosteen Tso staring out across the mesa, and Anna Atcitty, her face expressionless, waiting for the outcome of this contest.

I forgot to tell you, Tso said. On the same day the sand paintings got ruined, I killed a frog.

Listening Woman looked startled. How? she asked. In the complex Navajo metaphysics, the concept that would evolve into frogs was one of the Holy People. To kill the animals or insects which represented such holy thoughts violated a very basic taboo and was known to bring on crippling diseases.

I was climbing among the rocks, Tso said. A boulder fell down and crushed the frog.

Before the sand paintings were messed up? Or after?

After, Tso said. He paused. I talk no more about the sand paintings. I've told all that I can tell. The promise was to my father, and to the father of my father. If I have a ghost sickness, it would be a sickness from my great-grandfathers ghost, because I was where his ghost might be. I can tell you no more.

Listening Woman's expression was grim. Why you want to waste your money, Old Man? she asked. You get me to come all the way out here to find out what kind of a cure you need. Now you wont tell me what I need to know.

Tso sat motionless, looking straight ahead.

Listening Woman waited, frowning. God damn it! she said. Some things I got to know. You think you been around some witches. Just being around them skin-walkers can make you sick. I got to know more about it.

Tso said nothing.

How many witches?

It was dark, Tso said. Maybe two.

Did they do anything to you? Blow anything at you? Throw corpse powder on you? Anything like that?

No, Tso said.

Why not? Mrs. Cigarette asked. Are you a Navajo Wolf yourself? You one of them witches?

Tso laughed. It was a nervous sound. He glanced at Anna Atcitty a look which asked help.

I'm no skinwalker, he said.

It was dark, said Listening Woman, almost mockingly. But you said it was daytime. Were you in the witches den?

Tsos embarrassment turned to anger. Woman, he said, I told you I couldn't talk about where it was. I made a promise. We will talk about that no more.

Big secret, Mrs. Cigarette said. Her tone was sarcastic.

Yes, Tso said. A secret.

She made an impatient gesture. Well, hell, she said. You want to waste your money, no use me wasting my time. If I don't hear anything, or if I get it wrong, its because you wouldn't tell me enough to know anything. Now Anna will take me to where I can hear the voice-in-the-earth. Don't mess with the painting on your chest. When I get back I will try to tell you what sing you need.

Wait, Tso said. He hesitated. One more thing. Do you know how to send a letter to somebody who went on the Jesus Road?

Listening Woman frowned. You mean moved off the Big Reservation? Ask Old Man McGinnis. Hell send it for you.

I asked. McGinnis didn't know how, Tso said. He said you had to write down on it the place it goes to.

Listening Woman laughed. Sure, she said. The address. Like Gallup, or Flagstaff, or wherever they live, and the name of the street they live on. Things like that. Who do you want to write to?

My grandson, Tso said. I have to get him to come. But all I know is he went with the Jesus People.

I don't know how you're going to find him, Listening Woman said. She found her cane. Don't worry about it. Somebody else can take care of getting a singer for you and all that.

But there's something I have to tell him, Hosteen Tso said. I have to tell him something before I die. I have to.

I don't know, Listening Woman said. She turned away from Tso and tapped the brush arbor pole with her cane, getting her direction. Come on, Anna. Take me up to that place where I can listen.

Listening Woman felt the coolness of the cliff before its shadow touched her face. She had Anna lead her to a place where erosion had formed a sand-floored cul-de-sac. Then she sent the girl away to await her call. Anna was a good student in some ways, and a bad one in others. But when she got over being crazy about boys, she would be an effective Listener. This niece of Listening Woman's had the rare gift of hearing the voices in the wind and getting the visions that came out of the earth. It was something that ran in the family a gift of divining the cause of illness. Her mothers uncle had been a Hand-Trembler famous throughout the Short Mountain territory for diagnosing lightning sickness. Listening Woman herself she knew was widely known up and down this corner of the Big Reservation. And someday Anna would be famous, too.

Listening Woman settled herself on the sand, arranged her skirts around her and leaned her forehead against the stone. It was cool, and rough. At first she found herself thinking about what Old Man Tso had told her, trying to diagnose his illness from that. There was something about Tso that troubled her and made her very sad. Then she cleared her mind of all this and thought only of the early-evening sky and the light of a single star. She made the star grow larger in her mind, remembering how it had looked before her blindness came.

An eddy of wind whistled through the piñons at the mouth of this pocket-in-the-cliff. It stirred the skirt of Listening Woman, uncovering a blue tennis shoe. But now her breathing was deep and regular. The shadow of the cliff moved inch by inch across the sandy

space. Listening Woman moaned, moaned again, muttered some-thing unintelligible and lapsed into silence.

From somewhere out of sight down the slope, a half-dozen ravens squawked into startled flight. The wind rose again, and fell. A lizard emerged from a crevice in the cliff, turned its cold, unblinking eyes on the woman, and then scurried to its late-afternoon hunting stand under a pile of tumbleweeds. A sound partly obscured by wind and distance reached the sandy place. A woman screaming. It rose and fell, sobbing. Then it stopped. The lizard caught a horsefly. Listening Woman breathed on.

The shadow of the cliff had moved fifty yards down the slope when Listening Woman pushed herself stiffly from the sand and got to her feet. She stood a moment with her head down and both hands pressed to her face still half immersed in the strangeness of the trance. It was as if she had gone into the rock, and through it into the Black World at the very beginning when there were only Holy People and the things that would become the Navajos were only mist. Finally she had heard the voice, and found herself in the Fourth World. She had looked down through the emergence hole, peering at Hosteen Tso in what must have been Tsos painted cave. An old man had rocked on a rocking chair on its floor, braiding his hair with string. At first it was Tso, but when the man looked up at her she had seen the face was dead. Blackness was swelling up around the rocking chair.

Listening Woman rubbed her knuckles against her eyes, and shook her head, and called for Anna. She knew what the diagnosis would have to be. Hosteen Tso would need a Mountain Way Chant and a Black Rain Chant. There had been a witch in the painted cave, and Tso had been there, and had been infected with some sort of ghost sickness. That meant he should find a singer who knew how to do the Mountain Way and one to sing the Black Rain. She knew that. But she also thought that it would be too late. She shook her head again.

Girl, she called. I'm ready now.

What would she tell Tso? With the sensitized hearing of the blind, she listened for Anna Atcitty's footsteps. And heard nothing but the breeze.

Girl, she shouted. Girl! Still hearing nothing, she fumbled against the cliff, and found her cane. She felt her way carefully back to the pathway toward the hogan. Should she tell Tso of the darkness she had seen all around as the voice spoke to her? Should she tell him of the crying of ghosts she had heard in the stone? Should she tell him he was dying?

Listening Woman's feet found the pathway. She called again for Anna, then shouted for Old Man Tso to come and lead her. Waiting, she heard nothing but the moving air. She tapped her way cautiously down the sheep trail, muttering angrily. The tip of her cane warned her away from a cactus, guided her around a depression and past an outcrop of sandstone. It tapped against a hummock of dead grass and contacted the little finger of the outstretched left hand of Anna Atcitty. The hand lay palm up, and the wind had drifted a little sand against it, and even to Listening Woman's sensitive touch, it felt like nothing more than another stick. And so she tapped her way, still calling and muttering, down the path toward the place where the body of Hosteen Tso lay sprawled beside his overturned rocking chair the Rainbow Man still arched across his chest.

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he speaker on the radio crackled and growled and said, Tuba City. Unit Nine, Joe Leaphorn said. You got anything for me?

Just a minute, Joe. The radio's voice was pleasantly feminine.

The young man sitting on the passenger side of the Navajo police carryall was staring out the window toward the sunset. The afterglow outlined the rough shape of the San Francisco Peaks on the horizon, and turned a lacy brushwork of high clouds luminescent rose, and reflected down on the desert below and onto the face of the man. It was a flat Mongolian face, with tiny lines around the eyes giving it a sardonic cast. He was wearing a black felt Stetson, a denim jacket and a rodeo-style shirt. On his left wrist was a \$12.95 Timex watch held by a heavy sand-cast silver watchband, and his left wrist was fastened to his right one with a pair of standard-issue police handcuffs. He glanced at Leaphorn, caught his eye, and nodded toward the sunset.

Yeah, Leaphorn said. I noticed it.

The radio crackled again. Two or three things, it said. The captain asked if you got the Begay boy. He said if you got him, don't let him get away again.

Yes, Ma'am, the young man said. Tell the captain the Begay boy is in custody.

I got him, Leaphorn said.

Tell her I want the cell with the window this time, the young man said.

Begay says he wants the cell with the window, Leaphorn said.

And the waterbed, Begay said.

And the captain wants to talk to you when you get in, the radio said.

What about?

He didn't say.

But I'll bet you know.

The radio speaker rattled with laughter. Well, it said. Window Rock called and asked the captain why you weren't over there helping out with the Boy Scouts. When will you be in?

Were coming down on Navajo Route 1 west of Tsegi, Leaphorn said. Be in Tuba City in maybe an hour. He flicked off the transmit button.

What's this Boy Scout business? Begay asked.

Leaphorn groaned. Window Rock got the bright idea of inviting the Boy Scouts of America to have some sort of regional encampment at Canyon de Chelly. Kids swarming in from all over the West. And of course they tell Law and Order Division to make sure nobody gets lost or falls off a cliff or anything.

Well, said Begay. That's what were paying you for.

Far to the left, perhaps ten miles up the dark Klethla Valley, a pinpoint of light was sliding along Route 1 toward them. Begay stopped admiring the sunset and watched the light. He whistled between his teeth. Here comes a fast Indian.

Yeah, Leaphorn said. He started the carryall rolling down the slope toward the highway and snapped off the headlights.

That's sneaky, Begay said.

Saves the battery, Leaphorn said.

Pretty sneaky the way you got me, too, Begay said. There was no rancor in his words. Parkin over the hill and walkin up to the hogan like that, so nobody figured you was a cop.

Yeah, Leaphorn said.

How'd you know I'd be there? You find out the Endischees was my people?

That's right, Leaphorn said.

And you found out there was a Kinaalda for the Endischee girl?

Yeah, Leaphorn said. So maybe you'd come to that.

Begay laughed. And even if I didn't, it beat hell out of running all over looking for me. He glanced at Leaphorn. You learn that in college?

Yeah, Leaphorn said. We had a course on how to catch Begays.

The carryall jolted over a cattle guard and down the steep incline of the borrow ditch bank. Leaphorn parked on the shoulder and cut the ignition. It was almost night now the afterglow dying on the western horizon and Venus hanging bright halfway up the sky. The heat had left with the light and now the thin high-altitude air was touched with coolness. A breeze stirred through the windows, carrying the faint sound of insects and the call of a hunting nighthawk. It died away, and when it came again it carried the high whine of engine and tires still distant.

Son-of-a-bitch is moving, Begay said. Listen to that.

Leaphorn listened.

Hundred miles an hour, Begay said. He chuckled. He's going to tell you his speedometer needs fixing.

The headlights topped the hill, dipped downward and then raced up the slope behind them. Leaphorn started his engine and flicked on his headlights, and then the red warning blinker atop the car. For a moment there was no change in the accelerating whine. Then abruptly the pitch changed, a brief squealing sound of rubber on pavement, and the roar of a car gearing down. It pulled off on the shoulder and stopped some fifty feet behind the carryall. Leaphorn picked his clipboard off the dash and stepped out.

At first he could see nothing through the blinding glare of the headlights. Then he made out the circled Mercedes trademark on the hood, and behind the ornament, the windshield. Every two seconds, the beam of his revolving warning blinker flashed across it. Leaphorn walked down the gravel toward the car, irritated by the rudeness of the high beam lights. In the flashing red illumination he saw the face of the driver, staring at him through round gold-rimmed glasses. And behind the man, in the back seat, another face, unusually large and oddly shaped.

The driver leaned out the window. Officer, he shouted. Your cars rolling backward.

The driver was grinning a broad, delighted, anticipatory grin outlined in red by the blinker light. And behind the grinning man, the eyes in the narrow face still stared dim but somehow avid from the back seat.

Leaphorn spun and, blinded by glare, peered toward his carryall. His mind told him that he had set the handbrake and his eyes registered that the parked car was not rolling toward him. And then there was the voice of Begay screaming a warning. Leaphorn made a desperate, instinctive lunge for the ditch, hearing the squalling roar of the Mercedes accelerating, and then the thumping, oddly painless sound of the front fender striking his leg and spinning his already flying body into the roadside weeds.

A moment later he was trying to get up. The Mercedes had disappeared down the highway, trailing the diminishing scream of rapid acceleration, and Begay was beside him, helping him up.

Watch the leg, Leaphorn said. Let me see how it is.

It was numb, but it bore his weight. What pain he had was mostly in his hands, which had broken his fall on the weeds and dirt of the ditch bank, and his cheek which somehow had picked up a long, but shallow, cut. It burned.

Son-of-a-bitch tried to run you over, Begay said. How about that?

Leaphorn limped to the carryall, slid under the wheel, and flicked on the radio with one bleeding hand and the ignition with the other. By the time he had arranged for a roadblock at Red Lake, the speedometer needle had passed 90.

Always wanted a ride like this, Begay was shouting over the sound of the siren. The tribe got a liability policy in case I get hurt?

Just burial insurance, Leaphorn said.

You're never going to catch him, Begay said. You get a look at that car? That was a rich mans car.

You get a look at the license? Or at that guy in the back seat?

It was a dog, Begay said. Great big rough-looking dog. I didn't think about the license.

The radio cleared its throat. It was Tomas Charley reporting he was set up in a half block at the Red Lake intersection. Charley asked, in precise Navajo, whether to figure the man in the gray car had a gun and how to handle it.

Play it like he's dangerous, Leaphorn said. The bastard tried to run over me. Use the shotgun and if he's not slowing for you, shoot for the tires. Don't get hurt.

Charley said he didn't intend to and signed off.

He might have a gun, come to think of it, Begay said. He held his cuffed wrists in front of him. You oughta take this off in case you need help.

Leaphorn glanced at him, fished in his pocket for a key ring and tossed it on the seat. Its the little shiny one.

Begay unlocked the cuffs and put them in the glove compartment.

Why the hell don't you stop stealing sheep? Leaphorn asked. He didn't want to remember the Mercedes roaring toward him.

Begay rubbed his wrists. They're just white mans sheep. They don't hardly miss em.

And slipping off from jail. Do that again and its your ass!

Begay shrugged. Stop to think about it, though, he said. And about the worst they can do to you for getting out of jail is get you back in again.

This is three times, Leaphorn said. The patrol car skidded around a flat turn, swayed, and straightened. Leaphorn jammed down on the accelerator.

That bird sure didn't want a ticket, Begay said. He glanced at Leaphorn, grinning. Either that, or he just likes running over cops. I believe a man could learn to enjoy that.

They covered the last twenty miles to the Red Lake intersection in just under thirteen minutes and slid to a gravel-spraying stop on the shoulder beside Charley's patrol car.

What happened? Leaphorn shouted. Did he get past you?

Never got here, Charley said. He was a stocky man wearing a corporals stripes on the sleeves of his uniform shirt. He raised his eyebrows. Ain't no place to turn off, he said. Its fifty-something miles back up there to the Kayenta turnoff

He was past that when I started chasing him, Leaphorn interrupted. He must have pulled it off somewhere.

Begay laughed. That dog in the back. Maybe that was a Navajo Wolf.

Leaphorn didn't say anything. He was spinning the car across the highway in a pursuit turn.

Them witches, they can fly, you know, Begay said. Reckon they could carry along a big car like that?

It took more than half an hour to find where the Mercedes had left the highway. It had pulled off the north shoulder on the up-slope of a hill leaving the roadbed and plowing

through a thin growth of creosote bush. Leaphorn followed the track with his flashlight in one hand and his .38 in the other. Begay and Charley trotted along behind him Begay carrying Leaphorn's 30-30. About fifty yards off the highway, the car had bottomed on an outcrop of sandstone. After that, its path was blotched with oil spurting from a broken pan. Hell of a way to treat a car, Begay said.

They found it thirty yards away, rolled into a shallow arroyo out of sight from the highway. Leaphorn studied it a moment in the beam of his flashlight. He walked up to it cautiously. The driver's door was open. So was the trunk. The front seat was empty. So was the back seat. The front floorboards were littered with the odds and ends of a long trip gum wrappers, paper cups, the wrapper from a Lotaburger. Leaphorn picked it up and sniffed it. It smelled of onions and fried meat. He dropped it. The nearest Lotaburger stand he could remember was at Farmington about 175 miles east in New Mexico. The safety inspection sticker inside the windshield had been issued by the District of Columbia. It bore the name of Frederick Lynch, and a Silver Spring, Maryland, address. Leaphorn jotted it in his notebook. The car, he noticed, smelled of dog urine.

He didn't leave nothing much back here, Chancy said. But here's a muzzle for a dog. A big one.

I guess he went for a walk, Leaphorn said. He's got a lot of room for that.

Thirty miles to a drink of water, Charley said. If you know where to find it.

Begay, Leaphorn said. Take a look in back and give me the license number.

As he said it, it occurred to Leaphorn that his bruised leg, no longer numb, was aching.

It also occurred to him that he hadn't seen Begay since after they'd found the car.

Leaphorn scrambled out of the front seat and made a rapid survey of the landscape with the flashlight. There was Corporal Charley, still inspecting the back seat, and there was Leaphorn's 30-30 leaning against the trunk of the Mercedes, with Leaphorn's key ring hung on the barrel.

Leaphorn cupped his hands and shouted into the darkness: Begay, you dirty bastard! Begay was out there, but he would be laughing too hard to answer.

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he file clerk in the Tuba City subagency of the Navajo Tribal Police was slightly plump and extremely pretty. She deposited a yellow Manila folder and three brown accordion files on the captain's desk, flashed Leaphorn a smile and departed with a swish of skirt.

You already owe me one favor, Captain Largo said. He picked up the yellow folder and peered into it.

This will make two, then, Leaphorn said.

If I do it, it will, Largo said. I may not be that dumb.

You'll do it, Leaphorn said.

Largo ignored him. Here we have a little business that just came in today, Largo said from behind the folder. A discreet inquiry is needed into the welfare of a woman named Theodora Adams, who is believed to be at Short Mountain Trading Post. Somebody in the office of the Chairman of the Tribal Council would appreciate it if we do a little quiet checking so he can pass on the word that all is well.

Leaphorn frowned. At Short Mountain? What would anyone

Largo interrupted him. There's an anthropological dig out there. Maybe she's friendly with one of the diggers. Who knows? All I know is her daddy is a doctor in the Public Health

Service and I guess he called somebody in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the BIA called somebody in . . .

Okay, Leaphorn said. She's out in Indian country and daddies worried and would we look out after her right?

But discreetly, Largo said. That would save me a little work, if you'd take care of that. But it wont look like much of an excuse to ask Window Rock to let you off guarding those Boy Scouts. Largo handed Leaphorn the Manila folder and pulled the accordion files in front of him. Maybe there's an excuse in these, he said. You can take your pick.

Ill take an easy one, Leaphorn said.

Here we have a little heroin stashed in the frame of a junk car over near the Keet Seel ruins, said Largo as he peered into one of the files. He closed the folder. Had a tip on it and staked it out, but nobody ever showed up. That was last winter.

Never any arrests?

Nope. Largo had pulled a bundle of papers and two tape cassettes out of another folder. Here's the Tso-Atcitty killing, he said. You remember that one? It was last spring.

Yeah, Leaphorn said. I meant to ask you about that one. Heard anything new?

Nada, Largo said. Nothing. Not even any sensible gossip. Little bit of witch talk now and then. The kind of talk something like that stirs up. Not a damn thing to go on.

They sat and thought about it.

You got any ideas? Leaphorn asked.

Largo thought about it some more. No sense to it, he said finally.

Leaphorn said nothing. There had to be sense to it. A reason. It had to fit some pattern of cause and effect. Leaphorns sense of order insisted on this. And if the cause happened to be insane by normal human terms, Leaphorns intellect would then hunt for harmony in the kaleidoscopic reality of insanity.

You think the FBI missed something? Leaphorn asked. They screw it up?

They usually do, Largo said. Whether they did or not, its been long enough so we really ought to be checking around on it again. He stared at Leaphorn. You any better at that than at bringing in prisoners?

Leaphorn ignored the jibe. Okay, he said. You tell Window Rock you want me to work on the Atcitty case, and Ill run over to Short Mountain and check on the Adams woman, too. And Ill owe you a favor.

Two favors, Largo said.

Whats the other one?

Largo had put on a pair of horn-rimmed bifocals and was thumbing his way owlishly through the Atcitty report. I didn't hoorah you for letting that Begay boy get away. That's the first one. He glanced at Leaphorn. But I'm not so damn sure this second ones any favor. Dreaming up reasons to borrow you from Window Rock so you can go chasing after that feller that tried to run you down. That's not so damned smart getting mixed up in your own thing. Well find that feller for you.

Leaphorn said nothing. Somewhere back in the subagency building there was a sudden metallic clamora jail inmate rattling something against the bars. Outside the west-facing windows of Largos office an old green pickup rolled down the asphalt road into Tuba City, trailing a thin haze of blue smoke. Largo sighed and began sorting the Atcitty papers and tapes back into the file.