CRAZY HORSE

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Contents

Whiskey at dawn

The morning smelled of stale smoke, horse manure, and cheap whiskey sticking to dirty tin cups like blood under fingernails. No rooster crowed, no church bell rang, only the cracking of bones from men who had gotten up too early because they'd been drinking too late. The sun crouched somewhere behind a gray sky, as if it too had a hangover, and no one wanted to see it.

The whiskey came from a dealer who had more rats than friends, and the stuff was so diluted that even a dying coyote would have turned its face up. But the men didn't care. The main thing was that the stuff burned their throats and laid a rusty film over their memories. The memories were worse than the whiskey. Much worse.

Crazy Horse never drank. Not like the whites drank, not like the Lakota, who had found the devil in the bottle and no longer recognized their own shadows. He stayed away from firewater. But he knew the men who lived and died by it. He knew the faces when the sun refused to rise and the whiskey was the only light left flickering.

The army knew this. They brought the substance into the country, just as they brought bullets, just as they brought Bibles. Everything was a different form of lead. Those who didn't die from it became lame and weak, and weak men are easier to break than strong ones. Whiskey at dawn—that wasn't a pleasure; that was strategy.

I remember an old fellow in Fort Laramie, a trader with eyes like glass marbles. He called the stuff "soul soup." He grinned, and his teeth were so black you could mistake them for small gravestones in the dark. "Soul soup," he said, "because it boils the soul out of you and leaves you like an empty pot." And then he poured more, more, until the men dropped like buffalo after a shot.

It was a time when no god mattered anymore, only guns and barrels of alcohol. The palefaces had their dollars, the Lakota had their horses, and somewhere in between, there was enough room for blood. Whiskey was the cheapest interpreter between the worlds: it turned warriors into drooling beggars and traders into kings.

Crazy Horse wasn't a king, and he didn't want to be one. He was the guy who got up in the morning while others were still lying in their own vomit. He untied his horse, tightened the saddle, and rode out into the cold air, where the world still smelled the way it should: of dust, of sweat, of iron in the wind. No

whiskey. No deceit. Just the sound of hooves and the breathing of the animal, which was just as restless as he was.

But back at the camps, the barrels were overflowing. White traders arrived with carts full of glass bottles, like snake oil salesmen who knew full well they were carrying poison. They grinned, they clapped their hands, and they traded death for furs and meat. And the Lakota, who had stared too long at the sun and heard too many white promises, grabbed at them like children grab sugar.

I swear to you, I've seen men give their last buffalo hide for half a jug. Men sell their horses because thirst was greater than pride. And when the sun rose, they lay there, with cut lips, broken teeth, with nothing in their pockets but regret. But that didn't stop them. The next night, they were there again, as if someone had turned back the clock.

The officers in the forts saw it and grinned. They wrote reports on "civilizing measures" and issued orders that smacked more of execution than diplomacy. The missionaries prayed over the bodies of the drunkards, and the generals counted bullets. Everything went according to plan. Whiskey was a weapon, and it always struck the heart.

Crazy Horse stood on the edge of this stinking truth, just as he always stood on the edge. He was no chief, no orator, no man of big words. He was the one who watched and committed everything to memory like a wolf who knows it's bound to bite. He saw the men fall, one by one. He saw the women cry because their men drowned in whiskey before a river could swallow them. And he swore to himself that he would never end up like that.

I remember one night when an old Lakota fell into the dirt, his head against a rock, blood streaming down his forehead. They picked him up, shook him, called his name. But he didn't come back. The whiskey had taken him before the blood had even begun to flow. They buried him by the river, without a song, without a fire, because no one had the strength anymore. The trader drank to his business.

This is the whiskey at dawn: it tastes of hope, but it smells of the grave.

And Crazy Horse, this man without pose, without feathers in his hair, without the painted faces that others sported, he rode out into the morning. He saw the fog hanging over the land like the last shirt of a hanged man, and he knew he had to fight—not just against guns, but against what accompanied the guns: the barrels, the sermons, the lies.

Whiskey was the beginning of the end. No gunshot, no battlefield. Just a tin cup at dawn.

The morning stank of man's breath, rotten teeth, and the cheap liquor some bastard had poured into a barrel that had once held pitch or paint. They called it whiskey, but the truth was, you could kill horses with it if you let them drink it long enough.

The sun had eaten its way through the gray haze and looked like a rotten tooth in the sky. Men lay across the ground, their hands still clutching bottle necks as if they were the last women they had ever touched. They snored, they wheezed, some moaned as if the devil had thrust his cock deep into their intestines.

Crazy Horse stood aside, as always. He had no desire to sit in this circle of vomit, smoke, and lies. He drank water, cold, stale water from a jug he had filled himself. The others laughed at him for it. "The hero drinks water," they said, "like a child or a woman." But they laughed with split lips and broken teeth, and their voices sounded like rusty knives scraping on stone.

The whites knew they had won when the warriors laughed while their throats withered. A man with whiskey in his blood is easier to kill than a man with hunger. Whiskey weakens the body, but worse still, it brittles the soul. You can take a man's horse, his wife, his land—if he stays sober, he'll fight. But if you give him whiskey, he'll only fight with himself.

The barrels rolled across the prairie like coffins on wheels. Traders arrived in dusty wagons, grins on their faces and fingers already deep in their victims' pockets. A blanket would buy a bottle, a horse two, a woman maybe three. The men gave everything, seeking the burning taste, that small feeling of warmth that pretended to be peace, but was nothing more than a slow death.

Crazy Horse watched them. He said nothing. Words were cheap, whiskey was more expensive. He let the hatred grow inside him like a snake in his stomach. Some men drink to silence the voice in their heads. Crazy Horse listened. Every voice, every whisper, every promise the white man had made gnawed at him.

I remember one morning when a boy barely older than twelve crouched by the campfire while his father lay unconscious in the dirt. The boy held the bottle in his hands, turning it as if trying to understand. Then he took a sip. He grimaced, spat, coughed. And yet he drank again. There was the same hunger in his eyes as in the men's. Whiskey is not a drink. It's a disease, passed on like a curse.

The whites had their churches, their flags, their uniforms. The Lakota had their horses, their drums, their dances. But the whiskey belonged to no one. It belonged to Death. And Death is a good businessman. He knows when to strike.

Crazy Horse wasn't a preacher. He didn't give speeches about whiskey being poison. He showed it with his contempt. He didn't drink, he didn't dance drunk, he didn't fall into the dust like a dog. And for that, some people hated him. Because he held up a mirror to them. No one likes a sober man in a group of drunks. He reminds them that they're weak.

The officers in the forts knew. They kept records of how many barrels they had delivered, how many furs they had received in return, how many men had fought and stabbed each other after drinking. They were numbers on paper, and behind every number lay a dead man.

"Civilization," they called it. I call it: whiskey at dawn, the laughter of rats while the world bleeds.

Crazy Horse saddled his horse. The stallion snorted as if he knew he was the only one who remained sober. He rode out, away from the stench. The wind over the hills smelled of grass, of rain, of freedom. But somewhere beyond lay the next wagon, the next trader, the next morning full of drowned souls.

And Crazy Horse knew he wouldn't just be fighting soldiers. He also had to fight the spirits in the barrels. Whiskey is an army without uniforms.

Day slowly crept out of the darkness like a wounded dog. One could hear the panting of the men lying in the dirt with half-dried tongues. Some still had their mouths open, as if begging in their sleep—for water, for forgiveness, or simply for another drink. But forgiveness didn't exist here. Not in the camps, not in the fort, not on the damned prairies.

The whiskey had softened them up. They used to bellow like buffalo when the war dance began. Now they just bellowed in their drunkenness, stumbling, and hitting each other as if they were their own enemies. A warrior who goes into battle drunk is nothing but cannon fodder. The whites knew this, and that's why they brought the stuff. Every bottle was a bullet no one had to fire.

Crazy Horse knew that. He also knew it wasn't an accident. The army didn't march with barrels by chance. The traders didn't roll through the country

without purpose. Whiskey was part of the war. No drumming, no flag-waving—just the dull thud of wooden barrels on the wagon boards.

I remember a scene in one of those wretched trading posts. Three Lakota were sitting there, already half-blind from drinking, and the trader poured the stuff as if he were a priest distributing holy water. "Another drink, brothers," he said. Brothers! The devil's tongue always tastes like honey. At one point, one of the Lakota drew his knife, but toppled backward before he could even raise the blade. The others laughed. The trader grinned. I swear, even the walls reeked of betrayal.

And then the women. They watched, knowing that in the end, they would have to pick up the bodies, the corpses, the broken skulls. Women who had shed more tears than a river could carry. They saw their men die—not in battle, but in drunkenness. And Crazy Horse? He saw them, too. He saw the shadows in their eyes, and he remained silent. He was a man of silence. But silence could scream louder than any words.

Whiskey made everything ugly. The dances that were once sacred became a staggering, a grotesque twitching in the firelight. The songs that once summoned the spirits became slurred and stammered. Even the smoke from the pipes smelled bitter, as if the spirits had long since left the Lakota.

It wasn't as if everyone drank. Some held their ground. But it was enough if enough men fell. A chain always breaks at its weakest link. And the army knew exactly which end to pull.

Crazy Horse often sat off to one side at night, staring into the darkness. Some said he talked to ghosts. Others claimed he was simply crazy, like his name. But perhaps madness was the last vestige of lucidity left when the world around you is drowning in drunkenness.

I swear, sometimes you could hear laughter in the wind. Not human laughter, but the dry cackle of ravens, who already knew the next deaths weren't far behind. Whiskey wasn't just a weapon. Whiskey was a promise. A promise that death always took precedence.

Morning came, the sun burned weakly, and once again men lay in the dust. Some woke up, others didn't. The merchant counted his money. The officers marked their books. And Crazy Horse rode off, out of the stench, into a world that was slowly tightening, like a noose around his neck.

Whiskey at dawn: the sound of a nation clinging to the bottle while the guns are already loaded.

The next morning hit like a punch in the face. Cold, harsh, and merciless. The men lay scattered everywhere like broken dolls someone had carelessly thrown out of a window. Some were gasping for breath, others lay still, and no one knew whether the silence came from sleep or death.

The floor was littered with broken glass. Empty bottles, shattered dreams. The camp smelled of urine and burnt flesh. One had vomited into the fire, and now the embers stank of half-digested corn porridge. Another lay in his own shit. And yet, as soon as one of them was halfway awake again, he reached for the next cup. As if they hadn't learned anything.

Whiskey makes you stupid, but not deaf. They knew they were destroying themselves. But they laughed, they roared, they ripped open the barrels as if they could outsmart death with a drunken stupor. Death laughed along with them.

Crazy Horse stood by, wordless. He had that look—as if he could see through the skin, through the bones, down to the rotten core. He didn't just see men drinking. He saw warriors who had sold their backbone. He saw children who knew their fathers as wrecks. He saw women who buried before anyone died.

And somewhere far away, the officers sat and made their mark. A new report:*"The natives continue to turn to alcohol. Morale is low. No significant danger."*
You could just as well have written:*"Plan works. Whiskey works for us. Cheaper than any bullet."*

I remember an old Lakota lying on the ground, the bottle in his hand like a weapon. He stared at me, his eyes full of hatred—not against the whites, not against the army, but against himself. "It burns," he murmured. "It burns, and I can't stop." Then he coughed up blood. Not a beautiful death. Not a heroic exit. Just a miserable descent into hell, sip by sip.

The women tried to prevent the worst. They poured water over the heads of the drunks, dragged them into the shade, and wrapped blankets around them. But what good did that do? You can't save a man if he doesn't want to be saved. Whiskey was stronger than love. Stronger than hunger. Stronger than pride.

Crazy Horse rarely spoke, but sometimes you could hear him say quietly, "The land dies with the men." He didn't just mean the earth. He meant the heart, the whole, that which sustains a nation. When the warriors fall, not in battle, but in drunkenness, everything dies with them.

The traders kept coming. Wagon-loaded barrels, faces filled with greed. They knew the Lakota were desperate. The buffalo were dwindling, the land was narrower, the army's bullets were more numerous. Whiskey was a quick escape. A consolation that wasn't one. A cheap light in the darkness that only led deeper into the night.

And while the men drank, the ravens sat in the trees. They waited. Patiently. Whiskey didn't just fill barrels—it also filled the bellies of scavengers.

Crazy Horse rode out into the plains, his gaze hard, his thoughts silent. Some said he was aloof, cold, crazy. But perhaps he was simply the only one still sober enough to see the truth: that a nation dies faster from a bottle than from a thousand guns.

The wind blew through the camp, carrying the stench with it—but only for a moment. As soon as it passed, the smell returned: fermented breath, cold smoke, the sweet whiff of decay that never faded. It was as if the earth itself had decided to keep the stench, to breathe it in, like the men breathed in the whiskey.

A few children played in the dirt, barefoot, with pieces of bone that had once belonged to a bison. They laughed, they screamed, they threw the bones like dice. Their fathers lay drunkenly beside them, like dead trees around which life continued, even though their trunks had long since rotted.

An old man muttered something about visions. He claimed that while he was drunk, spirits had whispered to him that the world was about to end. But the spirits that speak to you when your tongue tastes of cheap booze aren't spirits. They're demons laughing while you eat yourself.

Crazy Horse didn't listen to that. He had no ear for twaddle. His mind was sharp as an arrow. He wasn't thinking about visions, he was thinking about war. He knew that every cup emptied was one less arrow that could be shot. Every drunken warrior meant a hole in the front. And eventually, the front would be made entirely of holes.

The whites didn't just send soldiers. They sent preachers with Bibles, traders with whiskey, surveyors with maps. All weapons. All tools. They didn't just take land, they took the will to defend the land. And whiskey was the cheapest weapon of all.

I remember a conversation between two merchants that I overheard. "Give them twice as much," said one. "They'll pay with everything they have." The other grinned: "And when they have nothing left?" - "Then they'll pay with themselves." And they laughed as if they had just cheated the devil himself.

The Lakota were proud. They had survived for centuries. Cold, hunger, and enemies that surrounded them. But they had no defense against the fire in the glass. Pride burned more slowly than alcohol, and in the end, only ash remained.

Crazy Horse didn't drink. He swore never to drink. Perhaps this was his silent war against the whites. No word, no contract, no grand gestures. Simply: No. But sometimes a no isn't enough. Sometimes blood is needed.

And plenty of blood flowed. Not just in the battles, but in the camps themselves. Drunken men drew knives against their own brothers. One word too many, one laugh in the wrong place – and suddenly someone was lying on the ground, their throat open, their blood steaming in the frost. The next morning, no one remembered. Only the earth knew, and it absorbed the blood like a silent witness.

Whiskey at dawn—that wasn't a song. It was the cough of a man who couldn't get up. It was the clink of a bottle rolling across the floor while the ravens waited outside.

And Crazy Horse? He rode on. He knew the battle wasn't just taking place outside against the soldiers. The real battle raged here, in the camps, at dawn, when the whiskey sucked the last bit of pride out of the men.

The morning gnawed at the bones. A frosty breath crept through the camp, biting into the faces of the men who had lain too long in the embers of the night. But no one moved. They lay there like corpses who had forgotten to get up. Only the horses stamped restlessly, as if they could smell that something was wrong.

A boy—barely thirteen—tried to rouse his father. The old man lay with his mouth open, a bottle at his chest like a sleeping child. The boy tapped his

shoulder, calling his name. No response. So he took the bottle, lifted it carefully, and sniffed it. He grimaced, coughed, and put the bottle down again. Then he sat down next to it, his knees drawn up, his eyes empty. That's how it starts. First you pick up the bottle, then it picks you up.

The women moved through the camp like shadows. Some collected the bottles and threw them into the fire, where they shattered with a dull crack. Others carried water jugs and held them to the lips of the men who were still half alive. But most knew: It was in vain. You can't fill a hole with water if the ground has collapsed.

Crazy Horse stood a little way off, his horse at his side. He watched. He didn't speak, he didn't shout, he didn't preach. But his gaze said it all: that not just men were dying here, but an entire people. And it didn't happen in battle, not by bullets or cannons. It happened quietly, drop by drop, sip by sip.

The whites knew it worked. They didn't have to shoot every warrior. They just had to wait. Whiskey did the rest. Some officers considered themselves geniuses. But it wasn't genius—it was cowardice wrapped in glass.

I remember a scene at Fort Robinson. A major laughed as he recounted how easy it was to "soften up the Indians." "We supply them with the bottles, and they supply us with the victory," he said. "No shot, no risk. Just trade." Trade! That's what they called it when they sold poison.

A fight broke out in the camp. Two men, both drunk, were yelling at each other, one claiming the other had drunk more than him. Words turned into fists, fists into knives. In the end, one lay in the dust, his throat slit, the other staggered away as if he had done nothing. The children watched. They didn't scream. They didn't cry. They just stared, with eyes too young for so much blood.

Whiskey at dawn – that wasn't a metaphor. It was everyday life. It was the sun rising over corpses, over bottles, over broken glass. It was the song no one wanted to sing, but everyone needed to hear.

And Crazy Horse? He looked up at the sky, his hand on his horse's reins, and swore to himself that he would not die like those men. If he fell, it would be in battle, not drunk. Not with a bottle in his hand, but with a knife, an arrow, a heart that still beat.

The morning was a judge without mercy. It laid bare the truth like a butcher cutting open an animal's belly. And what it revealed wasn't pretty. Men lay everywhere who had been warriors yesterday. Now they were mere wrecks, decomposing in their own stench. The whiskey had brought them to their knees, not with thunder, not with cannons—but with silence.

Crazy Horse walked through the camp. His shadow fell over faces that no longer recognized anything. He saw the gaping mouths, the bloody teeth, the glassy eyes. He saw hands still reaching for bottles, even though there were none left. This wasn't drunkenness anymore. This was slavery.

The women were silent. Their eyes were cold, no longer filled with tears, but with emptiness. They knew they had lost their husbands long ago. Some still cared, pulling blankets over the bodies, giving them water. Others simply turned away, as if looking at a grave that had long since been closed.

In the distance, plumes of smoke hung over the land. Trading posts, forts, traders' wagons—always the same haze. Wherever the white people were, the air smelled of burnt wood and spilled whiskey. And wherever that smoke went, a piece of the world that had once belonged to the Lakota died.

I remember one night a young warrior came to me drunk. He was staggering, his eyes red, his tongue heavy. "Why fight?" he slurred. "All is lost. Whiskey stays. Whiskey doesn't talk. Whiskey doesn't hit. Whiskey loves." Then he fell at my feet, unconscious. I looked down at him and knew: He had already lost, even before the first bullet was aimed at him.

Crazy Horse stopped. He picked up a handful of earth and let it trickle through his fingers. "The land remains," he murmured, barely audibly. Perhaps he was speaking to himself, perhaps to the spirits, perhaps to the wind. But it was clear: as long as the earth remained, as long as there was still a breath of air, there was something worth staying sober for.

Whiskey at dawn—that was the overture. No bang, no fireworks. Just the slow, sickening creep of a poison that was more silent, more effective, and more deadly than any battle.

And Crazy Horse swore: He would never die with the cup in his hand. When death came, it would come with smoke, with arrows, with blood in the dust—but not with whiskey on his lips.

Thus the war began. Not with a battle, but with a frenzy.

A horse eats the sun

There were stories about Crazy Horse, stories that drifted through the camps like smoke, and no one knew for sure whether they were true or only half-true. But they stuck in people's minds, stuck to their hands like old blood.

It was said that he had visions, even as a boy. Not drunken hallucinations like the men in the whiskey haze, but piercing images that came like lightning in his sleep. A horse devouring the sun. An animal, black as night, tearing at the sky as if it were made of leather. The sun vanished into its mouth, leaving only darkness.

Thus began the legend. Not with a fight, not with a victory, but with a vision so nasty that even the ancients held their breath. For when a horse eats the sun, nothing remains but cold. And cold kills more slowly, but more surely, than bullets.

Crazy Horse didn't talk much about it. He was never one of those great orators. No Sitting Bull, no Red Cloud, no one who could raise an army with words. He was the man who saw and remained silent. But silence could be louder than any roar, and those who knew him knew that.

His father called him "Tȟašúŋke Witkó" – "His-Horse-Is-Crazy." A name that sounded like a blow. Not honorable, not solemn, more like a curse. But sometimes curses are stronger than blessings. A man who is called crazy has nothing to lose. And men without loss are dangerous.

I remember one night they sat around the fire, the old, the young, the women, who had heard it all a hundred times before. One asked, "What does it mean when a horse eats the sun?" Another laughed, drunk as ever: "It means we're all screwed." But an old medicine man shook his head. "It means he'll fight in darkness," he said. "That his path won't be bright. That blood will accompany him."

Crazy Horse heard this and said nothing. He stared into the fire, and his eyes reflected not the light, but the shadows. Some said he wasn't afraid. Others claimed he had always been outside of fear, like a wolf who knows he's alone and simply accepts it.

The horse in his vision—it wasn't just any animal. It was black, without spots, without shine. It was like night itself, on four legs, with a mouth bigger than the

sun. It was hunger in form, hunger for light, hunger for life. And Crazy Horse understood: This was him. Or it was his path. Or both.

A horse eats the sun – that wasn't a fairy tale, it was a promise. A promise that the day would end one day, not slowly, but abruptly, like a bite that swallows everything.

The white people would have called it "symbolism," some word from their thick books. But the Lakota didn't know any books. They knew only earth, wind, blood, and smoke. And in these four things lay more truth than paper could ever contain.

Crazy Horse wore no feathers, no colorful paint. He needed no jewelry. He had his vision. And that was worth more than a thousand speeches. People said, "He saw what was coming." And when a man sees what's coming, he has more power than a general with an entire army.

Thus began the story of the horse that ate the sun. Not just a dream, but a curse that hung like a shadow over Crazy Horse. Some considered him holy. Others considered him accursed. He himself—he said nothing. He just rode on as if none of it mattered.

But deep down, he knew: If the horse eats the sun, only darkness will remain. And in darkness, there's no place for heroes.

The ancients said visions are a gift. But sometimes gifts are just traps wrapped in beautiful paper. Crazy Horse hadn't sought his vision. It simply came, like a thief in the night. A black horse eating the sun, and he stood there, alone, with the feeling that the world was about to end. No applause, no drumming, no song. Only the sound of teeth crushing light.

He didn't tell everyone about it. Only a few. He knew that words are weaker than looks. But those who heard about it spread the word, and soon the vision was everywhere. Men whispered about it while they carved their arrows. Women told their children when the night was too dark. And the children grew up believing that Crazy Horse was the one who had seen the sun—and seen it disappear.

The whites didn't understand anything about visions. They spoke of "superstition," "primitivity." But the same men who laughed at the Lakota wore crosses around their necks and believed in a man who supposedly walked on water. No difference? None. Except that the whites wrote their stories in books

and defended them with cannons. The Lakota painted their dreams in the sand and sang them into the wind.

A horse eats the sun. Some said this was a warning. That the sun, which had warmed the land until then, would soon disappear—not just from the sky, but from people's hearts. That darkness would come, with guns, with forts, with paper treaties that no one but the whites could read.

Crazy Horse carried the vision like a burden. He wasn't proud of it. He didn't run around shouting, "Look at me, I'm the chosen one!" That wasn't his style. His style was silence. He was the guy who sits next to you, silent, and yet you sense that he's seen more than you'll ever see. And that's exactly what made him dangerous.

I remember a young warrior once asking him, "What does it mean when the horse eats the sun?" Crazy Horse simply replied, "It means we fight in the shadows." Nothing more. No long lecture, no chant. Just this one sentence, and it burned into his memory, like a brand on skin.

The whites had their generals, their officers, their plans. The Lakota had their dreams, their visions. Sometimes a dream was more powerful than a rifle. But sometimes it just made you tired because you overlooked. Crazy Horse was both strong and tired. A man who had to bear everything, but hadn't asked for it.

The black horse in the vision—it wasn't just an animal. It was hunger. Hunger for land, for blood, for revenge. Some said it was a symbol of the white people who would devour everything. Others claimed it was Crazy Horse himself, destined to consume all the light that remained. Truth? Who cares. In the end, it was the actions that mattered.

And Crazy Horse did what he could: He fought. Not for fame, not for titles, but because in his vision the horse had already started running. And he knew: When the sun disappears, you can only fight in the dark.

The legend spread faster than fire in dry grass. In every camp, in every smoke hut, the whispers could be heard:*“Crazy Horse saw a horse swallow the sun.”*The words were like a virus – one that pumped hope and fear into the bodies at the same time.

To some, he was a prophet. To others, a madman. But no matter what they believed, they knew: Anyone who witnesses something like that is no longer on the sidelines. They're right in the thick of it, with both feet in the storm.

The elders remembered other visions. Some had dreamed of buffaloes ascending to heaven. Others of rivers made of blood. But no one had ever heard of a horse eating the sun. That was new. And new things are frightening.

Crazy Horse didn't live for talk. He lived for action. He didn't adorn himself, he wore no feathers, no chains, no face paint. While others painted themselves, he came with bare skin. When others beat drums, he remained silent. And yet he seemed greater than those who danced screaming in circles. Because he had something inside him that they didn't: that look, that damned vision that never left him.

The whites would have said:*"Psychosis."*They would have put him in a straitjacket and sedated him with laudanum. But the Lakota saw something else: a man speaking with the spirits. Whether he wanted to or not didn't matter.

I remember one evening when an old medicine man sat next to him and asked, "What did you feel when the horse ate the sun?" After a long silence, Crazy Horse answered, "Cold." Just that one word. And that was enough. Because cold is worse than fire. Fire burns, but cold takes everything away. First your fingers, then your breath, then your heart.

The others continued talking. Some said the vision meant that Crazy Horse himself was like the horse—that he would swallow the white man's sun, their armies, their banners, their light. Others claimed it was an omen of doom, that all light would disappear and only darkness would remain.

The truth? Perhaps both. Perhaps Crazy Horse was destined to burn, but also to go out. A man who devours the light must eventually disappear into the darkness himself.

The children listened to the stories secretly as the elders spoke. Their eyes grew wide, and with their fingers they drew horses swallowing the sky in the ash. For them, Crazy Horse was a hero. For the women, he was a hope. For the men, he was a mirror that showed them how small they themselves were.

But Crazy Horse himself—he hated the stories. He didn't want to be a legend. He didn't want to live as a prophet. He simply wanted to fight, because that

was all that remained. But fate laughs at simple wishes. Once you'd seen the black horse, you could no longer pretend to be normal.

A horse eats the sun. A man eats his destiny. And the world holds its breath, waiting to see who will devour whom first.

The vision didn't make him popular. It made him dangerous. Men who have visions are unpredictable. They either lead you to victory or straight to the grave. And no one really knew where Crazy Horse would go.

The elders respected him, but they also feared him. They said:*“A man who sees the sun disappear cannot lead a normal life.”*Women whispered his name as if it were a magic spell. And boys looked up to him because he was what they would never be: someone unafraid of the dark.

But darkness is no friend. It consumes you, slowly, without you noticing when it starts. Crazy Horse wore it inside him, like a second skin. He rarely laughed. He spoke little. He didn't look at faces; he looked through them. As if he saw the black horse everywhere, its mouth open, ready to devour all the light.

Eventually, the whites also heard about this vision. Scouts, translators, traders – they carried the stories to the forts. And there, the officers grinned, drank their own bourbon, and said:*"A savage with nightmares. A fool, nothing more."*They didn't understand that nightmares are sometimes more powerful than cannons.

I remember one night in the camp. It was quiet, except for the crackling of the fire. Crazy Horse sat alone, his legs tucked up, his chin resting on his knees. He stared into the flames, and it was as if he saw nothing. One of the boys asked him, "Are you afraid of the horse?" Crazy Horse raised his eyes, slowly, and answered, "Fear is the horse's food. When you're afraid, it grows." The boy was silent, and from then on, he acted as if he had never asked.

A horse eats the sun. Perhaps that was just an image, a dream, a symbol. But symbols kill. Symbols lead armies. Symbols are the weapons that have no blades and yet cut deeper than any knife.

The Lakota understood this. They knew they had to cling to such stories when everything else crumbled: the buffalo, the land, freedom. Words could become weapons when nothing else remained. And Crazy Horse—whether he wanted it or not—was now a sword of words.

But he himself didn't want to be a sword. He didn't want to be a chief, a prophet, or a hero. He wanted to fight, and he wanted to be free. But the vision had long since put him in the saddle. And the black horse ran, inexorably, with the sun in its mouth.

Some said the sun in the vision was not the Lakota sun, but the white man's. That Crazy Horse was destined to swallow the light of their world—their flags, their forts, their shining buttons and medals. But others said:*"Don't be stupid. The sun is ours. If it disappears, everything disappears."*

Either way, the story remained. It etched itself into people's minds, it grew in their hearts. And every time Crazy Horse climbed into the saddle, the men saw more than just a warrior. They saw the black horse that ate the sun.

And in the dark, when the camps were silent and only the ravens cawed in the wind, you could swear you heard the chewing of teeth in the sky.

The ancients said:*"A man with a vision carries two lives. His own—and the one the vision forces upon him."*And Crazy Horse carried both as if he were walking twice as heavy as the others. You could see it in his posture. Even when he was just sitting quietly by the fire, he seemed to have more weight on his shoulders than ten others combined.

The black horse in his vision didn't just eat the sun. It ate him from within. No smile, no dance, no song truly reached him. He lived as if everything he did was merely a preparation for something bigger, something darker.

The boys admired him. They told stories about how he rode alone against a group of enemy warriors, how he seemed invulnerable because the spirits protected him. Whether it was true didn't matter. Stories have their own truth, and sometimes that's stronger than facts.

The women watched him with a mixture of longing and fear. A man like him was not a man to live for. He was a man to die for. They knew they could never build a house, a field, or a family with him. He was a shadow rider. One who never stood still, driven by his own vision.

The whites got wind of the story and made fun of it. "The savage dreams of ponies that eat stars," they sneered in the forts. But behind the mockery lay nervousness. They knew that men who are believed are dangerous. A general can bark orders until his voice fails. But a man with a vision only needs to stand still, and the people follow him.

I remember an incident: An old Lakota, half-blind, approached Crazy Horse and said, "Your horse that eats the sun—it's already here." Crazy Horse frowned. "Where?" he asked. The old man pointed in the direction where the railroad lines grew, where the forts were being built, where plumes of train smoke darkened the sky. "There. The horse has already started."

Crazy Horse remained silent. But his silence spoke volumes. He understood: The black horse wasn't just an image. It was reality. The white people were devouring the land, the sun, life. And he was destined to jump into their mouths, with bow and arrow, with knife and blood.

The others thought he was crazy. But crazy people sometimes have the clearest vision. Crazy people run where normal people flee. Crazy people stand when everyone else falls. Crazy Horse wasn't crazy in his head—he was crazy in his heart. And that was precisely what made him invincible as long as he rode.

A horse eats the sun. And a man eats his destiny. It was only a matter of time before the two would meet in the dark.

It wasn't that Crazy Horse was looking for the vision. It was looking for him. Again and again. Sometimes in the middle of the night, sometimes while he was riding, sometimes when he was simply staring into the embers of a fire. Then it was there—the horse, black as burnt wood, teeth like knives, and the sun disappearing in its mouth as if it had never been.

He didn't talk about it. But everyone knew he carried it inside. He seemed like someone who had an invisible companion, always riding beside him. Some said you could see the horse in his eyes when he got angry. A glimmer of something bigger than himself, bigger than everyone else combined.

People talked. They always talked. Some called him the chosen one. Others said he was cursed. But no matter what they called it, they couldn't get away from the fact: He had something the others didn't. Something that frightened them and gave them hope at the same time.

The whites laughed at such stories until they realized they had an impact. One sober, cold warrior with a vision in his head was harder to break than a hundred drunks with kegs in their bellies. They sent their scouts, their translators, their liars—but no one could destroy the story. It grew. With every day, with every battle, with every word whispered in the camp.

I remember one night when a storm swept across the plain. Lightning ripped open the sky, and one of the boys shouted, "The horse! Do you see the horse!" He pointed into the clouds where the lightning painted shapes, and for a moment, it really did look like that: a mouth swallowing the light. The old men nodded. They said nothing, but they thought it: the vision lives on.

Crazy Horse rode silently through the rain, water running down his face, and he looked as if he belonged more to the storm than to men. He wasn't made of stories. He was made of darkness and silence. A man who didn't spare himself, because he knew there would be no sparing anyway.

A horse eats the sun. That wasn't just an image. It was a law. A sign that the end was not far away. But perhaps also that someone would fight in the dark as long as there was still something to eat.

Thus, Crazy Horse became more than a warrior. He became a shadow. A promise. A curse. One who doesn't pray, doesn't drink, doesn't talk—but rides. And the men who looked at him knew: If he falls, the sun falls with him.

The story of the horse that ate the sun had long since become more than just a vision. It was a virus that crept through people's hearts. It turned Crazy Horse into a man who was no longer himself, but something greater—or something more terrible.

The boys in the camp played war and shouted his name as if it made them stronger. The women told the story around the fire, and there was both comfort and fear in their voices. The old men nodded, murmuring prayers, some quietly, some defiantly. And Crazy Horse? He was silent. He carried the burden, never saying whether it was crushing him.

Once, so the story goes, he stood alone on a hill. Behind him was the prairie, before him the sun, red as blood in the morning mist. A warrior came to him and asked, "What did you see?" Crazy Horse replied, "I saw that the light is not ours. And that we must fight when it disappears." Then he turned and left. No big speech, no drama. Just that one sentence, and it burned itself into people's minds.

The whites made fun of it. "A savage who dreams of ponies," they said in their forts while swigging bourbon. But secretly, they knew they couldn't kill the legend. Bullets kill bodies. Legends survive.

I remember one night when the stars were particularly clear. You could almost believe the world was still intact. But then the wind blew, and it smelled of iron, of smoke, of something coming. And I swear to you, Michael: at that moment, it really did look as if a mouth was gaping in the sky, ready to devour the light.

A horse eats the sun. For the Lakota, it was an omen. For Crazy Horse, it was fate. And fates are like knives: you can't turn them. They cut, whether you want them to or not.

So the story didn't end, but rather just began. For the horse hadn't yet completely devoured the sun. It had only taken the first bite. And the rest was to come—with blood, with smoke, with screams in the wind.

Crazy Horse rode on, on and on. Not for fame. Not for titles. But because the black horse was already running. And if the sun really did disappear, then he wanted to stand in the middle of the shadows, with his arrow, his bow, his heart beating like drums in a storm.

Thus the vision came full circle: no light, no peace, no end – only darkness, and a man willing to fight in it.

The woman with the cold eyes

Women in that era weren't ornaments, trophies, or poetry. They were bones, muscles, blood, and an iron will. They carried the weight that men left behind when they lost themselves in whiskey or fell in battle. Without them, every camp would have collapsed like a horse with broken legs.

Crazy Horse wasn't someone who charmed women with speeches. He wasn't the kind of man who sought attention at dances. But he, too, had found his destiny in the eyes of a woman. A woman with a gaze so cold that even firewood froze beside her.

She wasn't a beauty in the white sense, not a doll for salons. She was tough, straight, with hands that knew how to work. Her hair hung black and heavy, but it was her eyes that everyone remembered. Gray, almost colorless. Eyes that didn't melt, didn't glitter, but froze. When she looked at you, you felt your skin thinning, that she was looking right through you, until only your bones remained.

Crazy Horse was young when he met her. But young among the Lakota didn't mean stupid. He had already seen blood, buried the dead, and felt hunger. But when he looked at her, he felt something else. Not warmth, not security. But cold. And sometimes cold is more honest than any warm smile.

The woman with the cold eyes—she was like the prairie in winter. Beautiful in its vastness, deadly in its indifference. You could lose yourself in her, but you knew she would freeze you to death if you gave in.

I remember a story that was told in the camp. How she once put a knife to the throat of a man who was harassing her, without flinching. No screaming, no trembling, just that look, those cold eyes that said:*"One more step and you're history."*The man backed away, and from then on no one spoke lightly of her name.

Crazy Horse wasn't a man for loud passions. But this woman—she was a mirror to his own silence. She didn't speak much, she barely smiled, and yet there was something between them that was stronger than words. Two sheets of ice colliding. Not fire, but a frozen bond that held because it didn't burn.

The others whispered. They said Crazy Horse was crazy for choosing a woman who didn't give, but took. But perhaps that was exactly what he needed: someone who wouldn't idolize him, wouldn't pity him, but would see him as he was—naked, without makeup, with all his demons.

The woman with the cold eyes was not a song. She was not a dance. She was not a feather in your hair. She was a knife placed at your side: useful, deadly, incorruptible. And Crazy Horse knew: that was exactly what could save his life—or cost him it.

It was said that Crazy Horse avoided women like others avoided whiskey. He wasn't the kind of man who chased dances or adorned himself with words. He was taciturn, withdrawn, almost unapproachable. But the woman with the cold eyes—she broke down that wall without a word. She didn't need one.

Her name rarely appeared. Names signify commitment, and she wasn't one for commitment. She spoke little, she worked hard. She could skin a hide, light a fire, draw a bow—all with the same stoic calm. When you looked at her, you knew she would never lie to you. But you also knew she wouldn't give you warmth you didn't deserve.

Crazy Horse was already a warrior by this time, but not one the entire plains feared. He was one of many. But beside her, he seemed different. Some said she had shaped him, toughened him, because in her eyes he could not show any weakness. Others said she was his curse—a woman who denied him the peace he never found.

The men in the camp whispered. "Why her?" they asked. There were women with laughing faces, with voices like music, with arms that wrapped around you until you forgot that war was waiting outside. But Crazy Horse chose the cold. Maybe because he knew he would burn in the fire. Maybe because he lasted longer in the ice.

I remember one scene: He was returning from a battle, dust and blood clinging to him. The other women were weeping for their husbands, screaming, singing songs for the dead. She stood there, motionless, her eyes gray as stone. She looked at him, and he looked at her. Not a word. Not a kiss. Not a scream. Just this cold acceptance: You're still alive. Good. Go on.

That made him stronger. In a world where everyone tried to numb themselves—with whiskey, with songs, with dreams—she kept him sober. She was like a mirror in which he saw himself, without distortion. Brutally honest, merciless, cold.

The other women didn't like her. They said she was heartless, a shadow woman who knew no light. But they were wrong. It wasn't heartlessness, it was clarity. In a world that was falling apart, she was what remained: a steady gaze that reminded you that you didn't last forever.

Crazy Horse needed that. Because he wasn't a man drowning in love. He was a man swimming in darkness. And the woman with the cold eyes was the only one who could breathe with him there.

It wasn't a fairy tale, not a romance with flowers and songs. The woman with the cold eyes didn't bring gentleness into Crazy Horse's life. She brought clarity—and clarity hurts more than any knife stab.

Sometimes they sat next to each other, but never shoulder to shoulder. There was always this space between them, an invisible distance that reeked not of closeness, but of respect. She didn't speak much, and when she did, it wasn't in the sweet tones that weaken men. Her words were like stones, hard, heavy, sometimes deadly.

The men in the camp said she had put a spell on him. "He's no longer ours," they murmured. "She froze his heart." But the truth was: his heart had never been warm. She was just the only one who could handle the cold.

Crazy Horse loved her—if you want to use that word. But it wasn't the kind of love you hear in stories. It wasn't a hug in the moonlight, or a laugh over the fire. It was a pact. A silent knowing:*We see each other, we recognize each other, we carry the same frost.*

But cold creates cracks. In the camp, there were others who looked at her. Men who wanted her eyes, men who believed they could warm them. One of them was a warrior with too much of a mouth, someone who liked to boast. He sought her company, talked too much, laughed too loudly. Crazy Horse saw it, said nothing. But with him, silence was more dangerous than any threat.

I remember the night things escalated. The braggart emerged drunk from the whiskey circle, stumbled to her cabin, calling her name, babbling about beauty and warmth. She stepped out, knife in hand, her eyes cold as ever. "Go," she said. Just that. He laughed. But then Crazy Horse stepped out of the shadows. Not a word. Just a look. The braggart felt he'd gone too far. He backed away, nearly tripping over his own feet, and from then on, he never spoke her name again.

But the poison remained. Men hate it when they see someone else has something they can't reach. And hatred grows faster than corn. In the camps, in the whispers, in the glances, something began to ferment. Not only against her, but against him as well.

The woman with the cold eyes wasn't the cause of the betrayal that came later—but she was a catalyst. She made him harder, more distant. And the more distant he became, the greater his envy grew.

A man with a vision is already dangerous. A man with a woman who doesn't soften him, but rather makes him even harder, is deadly. And deadly men rarely have long-lasting friends.

It was a time when every camp had more spies than friends. The whites had their translators, their lackeys, their false promises. And within the tribes, things fermented like rotten whiskey. Rivalries, mistrust, old grievances. A woman could be like fuel on the fire.

The woman with the cold eyes wasn't a piece of cattle to be traded or a jewel to be displayed. She was a choice. And Crazy Horse chose her—against expectations, against other men, against voices that told him:*"Take another one to calm the camp."*But Crazy Horse was never the man for compromises.

Her presence made him stronger, but it also made him vulnerable. A man who has nothing is free. A man who has a woman who draws all eyes to him is vulnerable. The envious men knew this. They saw how Crazy Horse walked beside her, how he remained silent, how he didn't show her, but didn't hide her either. And that was enough to make the poison grow in their hearts.

I remember one evening when a chief stood there with his arms crossed and said, "You're binding yourself to ice." Crazy Horse just looked at him and replied, "Ice doesn't break as quickly as flesh." Then he moved on. And that sentence stuck. To some, it was wise. To others, a declaration of war.

The woman herself didn't care about the gossip. She carried water, she skinned animals, she looked people in the eye, and her gaze silenced them all. But the silence wasn't peace. It was the beginning of thunder.

Some men said she made Crazy Horse arrogant. Others claimed she was the reason he was more isolated than ever. Perhaps they were right. Perhaps she made him a fortress, harder than stone. But fortresses have walls—and walls awaken besiegers.

The whites knew about her. Of course they knew. They had their scouts, their liars. "He has a woman," they were heard saying in the forts. "A woman who binds him. Binding is weakness." They thought they could break him through her. But that was their mistake. Crazy Horse wasn't a man you could control with a dagger in a woman's heart. He was more like the kind who would slit your throat before you even drew the dagger.

But inside, in the tribe, where blood kinship carried more weight than any bullet, the whispers began to grow louder. A warrior like Crazy Horse, a man with vision, with shadows in his eyes, with a wife who made men weak and women bitter—such a man garnered not only respect. He garnered envy. And envy is the cheapest currency for betrayal.

The woman with the cold eyes suspected this. She never said it out loud, but you could see it in her posture, in the way she sharpened the blade, the way she checked every step, as if she expected the knife to come from behind, not from the front.

Crazy Horse knew it too. But he said nothing. He remained silent, as always. But silence can be louder than any war horn.

They say that a tree is not only shattered by bullets, but by words that fly like arrows, invisible, silent, deadly. The woman with the cold eyes was one of those arrows—not because she did anything, but because others took her into their mouths.

"She's put a spell on him." "He only listens to her." "She's frozen his heart." So they whispered when the fire had become small and the shadows large.

But the truth was much simpler: Crazy Horse had always been different. His silence, his coldness, his rejection of whiskey and loud dancing—all of this made him a stranger. She was merely the mirror that showed it to everyone.

But mirrors are dangerous. No one likes to see themselves in their true light. And anyone who holds the mirror will eventually hate them.

Tensions in the camp grew. Some warriors sided with Crazy Horse, reverent, as if he were already a ghost among the living. Others distanced themselves from him, seeing him as a threat to the fragile balance between the clans. A woman can be the last straw when the cup is already full of jealousy, lust for power, and mistrust.

I remember a meeting of the elders. Red Cloud was there, Sitting Bull had sent a messenger, and everyone was talking too much. It was about the whites, about land, about treaties that no one but the whites could read. And suddenly, almost casually, her name came up. An old man said, "He's not following us, he's following her." Crazy Horse stood up without a word and left the meeting. That was all it took to turn half the men against him.

The woman with the cold eyes didn't speak about it. But she knew that her very existence was a wound that kept opening. She bore it like everything else—silently, with that gaze that doesn't warm you, but tests you. Some said she had split the trunk. But in truth, the trunk was already split. She was merely the knife that made the seam visible.

Crazy Horse saw the poison growing. But he said nothing. He didn't trust words. He trusted in actions, in blood, in fighting. Words were the chiefs' business, not his. But words kill more slowly—and sometimes more cruelly—than arrows.

The whites didn't even need to fight to drive the wedge deeper into the flesh. They only had to wait. And that's what they did. While the cold grew inside the trunks, coming not from her, but from all the tongues their eyes couldn't bear.

Thus, she became a symbol—not of love, not of beauty, but of division. A woman who did nothing but be there. And sometimes being there is the greatest provocation.

There are women who bring peace to a home. They put the blanket over you when you come home, they warm your heart, they soften you. The woman with the cold eyes was the opposite. She made you sharper, harder, more alert. A knife near you that never hurt you—as long as you held it firmly in your hand.

Crazy Horse held her tight, not with his hands, but with silence. They spoke little, and that was precisely what made their bond stronger. No drama, no sweet words, just that cold gaze that said more than any declaration of love.

The men saw this and didn't understand. They mistook proximity for what they knew: whiskey, shouting, laughter in the smoke. But there was no smoke between Crazy Horse and her. Only clarity. And clarity hurts.

The envious voices grew louder. Some said she had led him away from tradition. Others said she was a bad omen—a sign that the spirits were against him. It was nonsense, but nonsense is often stronger than truth when enough people speak it.

Once, an old warrior came to her. He stared at her for a long time and then said, "Your eyes are too cold. Men freeze in them." She looked at him, unmoved, and replied, "Only those who are already weak." Then he left. But in the camp, they recounted the scene as if she had cursed him. Words twist like knives when they are passed on.

Crazy Horse didn't care about the gossip. But silence is no shield. Silence is sometimes a red rag that attracts enemies. And he had plenty of enemies. Whites on the outside, envious people on the inside. He stood between both fronts – and at his side a woman who did nothing but watch. But sometimes just a glance is enough to spark wars.

I remember how she once took his knife with cold hands, sharpened it without a word, and then handed it back to him. No smile, no gesture. Just a knife, sharper than before. That was her language. And Crazy Horse understood it.

But the tribe didn't understand them. And what the tribe doesn't understand, it fears. And what it fears, it destroys.

So Crazy Horse stood there, with his vision of the black horse eating the sun—and with a woman whose eyes were colder than any night. Together they weren't lovers. Together they were a storm. And storms don't bring calm. They sweep everything away.

It was inevitable that she would become a target. Not because she plotted or sharpened tongues—but because she existed. Men always need someone to blame when their world falls apart. And women with cold eyes are perfect targets.

The camp talked more about them than about the approaching army. More about their looks than about the treaties the whites wanted to impose on them. As if a pair of gray eyes were more dangerous than cannons. But maybe that was true. Because cannons shoot bodies. Cold eyes pierce souls.

Crazy Horse remained unmoved. He went his own way, doing what had to be done. But the more he remained silent, the louder the voices around him became. He felt it, even if he didn't say it: treason doesn't grow outside, in enemy territory. Treason grows inside, in the hearts of one's own people.

The woman knew it too. She strode through the camp with the bearing of one who needs no friends. Her hands did what needed to be done. Fire, water, meat. She spoke little, but whenever she looked at someone, they recoiled. And this recoiling ate away at the men's pride. Every step she took was a silent slap in the face to those who no longer respected their own women.

I remember one evening when the drums had fallen silent. Crazy Horse stood alone, his shadow in the fire as tall as a giant. She came to him, didn't place a hand on his shoulder, didn't say anything. She just looked at him. And he nodded. That was all. But that nod meant more than a thousand vows.

The world around them was decaying. Buffalo herds were disappearing. White settlers came as if they had bought the land, even though they were only holding paper in their hands. The Lakota people were fighting, but they were also fighting each other. Between clans, between chiefs, between pride and hunger. And in the middle of it all was Crazy Horse—and them.

The woman with the cold eyes offered no comfort, no support, no smile. She was a mirror. And anyone who looked into her didn't see her, but themselves.

And they didn't like that. Because whoever sees themselves in the cold light sees decay.

Thus, she became part of his story. Not a trinket, not a footnote, but a blade that always lay beside him. She made him tougher, but she also made him more vulnerable. Because everyone knew: whoever couldn't break him in battle would try to do it with her.

But until then, she remained what she always was: a woman with cold eyes. No fire, no warmth. Only clarity. And clarity is the last thing that remains when everything else has gone up in smoke.

Blood on the snow

Winter was no friend. It was a bastard, squeezing the air from your lungs and scraping your flesh from your bones piece by piece. Snow is beautiful for poets, for children playing in the dirt. For warriors, it is only cold, hunger, and the smell of blood, which spreads faster when it drips onto the white.

Crazy Horse knew that snow concealed nothing. Blood that disappeared in the dust was forgettable. But blood on snow remained like a scream, frozen, visible to everyone who passed by. Every drop was a sign: Here, someone died. Here, someone fell. Here, something broke.

The white people loved winter. Their rifles didn't freeze, their cannons rolled more easily on the hard ground. They had supplies, blankets, whiskey. They had forts, walls, and warm beds. The Lakota had horses that coughed in the frost, children with thin blankets, and hunger that screamed louder than any war horn.

I remember a march, somewhere in Dakota country. Snow up to my knees, wind that tore my face like glass. Men stumbled, women carried children on their backs, old people slowed down—and the scouts reported that the army was not far away. Every breath was a knife. Every step a curse.

And then came the blood. Not in streams, not like in stories. But drop by drop. A boy stumbled, fell, cut himself on a stone, and the red on white burned like fire. A man later died from a bullet that hit him while trying to gather wood. His blood spread like a dark shadow across the snow until the earth absorbed it.

Blood on the snow—that was the signature of winter. No song, no drum, no heroic death. Only cold blades piercing the heart, and the snow preserving it as a reminder that winter was no ally.

Crazy Horse didn't just fight soldiers. He fought against hunger, against frost, against the cold that crept into the bones and weakened even the strongest. And yet – he stood. While others wept, while others cursed, while others died – he stood, silent, the horse beneath him, his eyes like steel.

Winter made no distinctions. White, red, man, woman, child—it devoured them all. But blood on the snow certainly did. It showed who had fallen, who was still standing, who was still fighting. And Crazy Horse knew: As long as his blood wasn't there, the war wasn't over.

The Winter War was a war against the elements, and the elements were the cruellest bastards of all. The white men's soldiers had boots, thick coats, tents that weren't immediately torn apart by the wind. They had supplies, canned goods, barrels of whiskey. They even had music in the forts, damned fiddles and trumpets that sounded in the warmth while men froze outside.

The Lakota had horses that collapsed in the cold if they went without food for too long. They had thin buffalo hide blankets, which were becoming increasingly scarce because the buffalo themselves were scarce. They had children whose skin turned blue because the blood no longer flowed quickly enough through their veins.

I remember one night, so quiet that even the wind held its breath. The fire in the camp was small, more smoke than flame. An old man simply died, without a scream, without a struggle. He lay down, pulled the blanket over his head—and in the morning he was stiff as a board. They didn't bury him. The ground was too hard. They left him there, the snow covered him, and the ravens would do the rest.

That's blood on the snow—not always red, sometimes just invisible. Sometimes just the heart that no longer beats, and the breath that freezes in the air, never to return.

The soldiers hunted them in the winter too. It was a tactic. In the summer, the Lakota could ride, fast as the wind. In the winter, every step was a battle, and the army knew that. They burned villages when the frost was at its harshest. They shot when the people were at their weakest. This wasn't a war, this was a hunt.

Crazy Horse saw this. He knew the snow wasn't neutral. It was on the side of the whites because it took everything that kept a people alive: speed, warmth, strength. But he wouldn't be broken. While others crawled toward the flames, he sat still, the blanket pulled over his shoulders, his eyes open. Always open.

There was a battle in the winter that was still talked about for years afterward. Not because of the number of dead—but because of the snow. The ground was white when it began. White and still. And when it was over, it was red, black, and brown. Blood, smoke, and earth. Men who were still alive, but no longer had hands. Horses lying open-bellied in the frost, steam rising from their entrails like prayers no one heard.

Blood on the snow doesn't lie. It doesn't tell pretty stories. It only says: People died here. And Crazy Horse rode through this red and white, the cracking of frozen bodies beneath his hooves, and he knew: Winter was an enemy you couldn't defeat. You could only survive.

Snow makes everything honest. You can brush blood away in the dust, it disappears in the mud, but on the snow it stays like a letter no one can tear open. White and red – two colors that don't mix, yet they keep coming together.

The white people knew this. They loved the sight of red tracks in the snow because it showed them that their bullets had hit something. For them, it was a statistic. A report. "Five dead. Three women. Two children." A few lines on paper, and that was it. For the Lakota, it was a song of despair. Every track was a name, a face, a story that ended in the frost.

I remember one of those nights. An attack on a winter camp. Bullets ripped through the tents, men fell half-naked into the snow, women screamed, children fell silent too quickly. The fire spread to the blankets, and suddenly the snow itself was burning—black smoke over white ground. The survivors fled into the darkness, but everywhere they left traces. Blood. It was like a map of death.

Crazy Horse was there. He saw a boy fall in the snow, blood like a small river beneath him. He picked him up, but the child was already still. No breath, only staring eyes staring up at the sky as if they'd already lost the sun. Crazy Horse laid him down to one side, pulled the blanket over him, and swore that the white people would pay for this. But oaths don't keep you warm. They only burn inside as the wind tears your skin open.

The snow made treason easier. Traces gave everything away. A single footprint, a drop of blood, a hoof print—the army could follow them like dogs on a scent. There was no hiding. Only running. And those who run in the snow will eventually fall.

The woman with the cold eyes was there too. She helped drag the wounded, bandaging wounds with scraps of cloth that barely held any warmth. Her gaze was as calm as ever. Cold recognized cold. The snow didn't bother her. It was just another wall she stared at until it gave way.

Blood on the snow also signified division. Some warriors said, "We can't go on. We must make peace." Others roared, "Better to die in the frost than to live under the white flag." The snow didn't take sides. But it preserved every drop until spring came and turned everything to slush.

Crazy Horse stood between them. Not a word, just that look, as if he could pierce the snow itself. He knew: Winter wasn't just a season. It was a judge. And every drop of blood was a judgment.

There was a winter that no one who was there forgot. Powder River, 1876. The wind devoured faces, the horses coughed up ice, and the snow was so deep that every step was a curse. The soldiers believed they had the advantage because they had thick coats and wagons full of supplies. But the snow doesn't discriminate. It eats whites and reds alike, it eats soldiers and children alike.

The army arrived when the Lakota were at their weakest. They burned lodges, destroyed supplies, and shot horses. No honor, no hand-to-hand combat—just fire in the snow, bullets in tents, and children silenced by the frost.

Crazy Horse led a counterattack. No heroic drumming, no war cries, but quiet, cold killing. They came in the dark, their faces painted, their weapons sharp. Men who were almost frozen became shadows emerging from the night. They stormed the wagons, stabbed horses, and tore the soldiers from their tents.

Blood in the snow. Screams in the frost. A man fell, his head bursting like frozen fruit. Another crawled, his entrails in the snow like sausages from a torn-open bag. The bullets whipped through the night, but often found only cold, smoke, and emptiness.

Crazy Horse fought like one with nothing to lose. His horse stamped, its hooves spraying blood and snow, his knife flashing in the moonlight. He didn't say a word. No command, no shout. Just that stare, cold as the land itself. Men

followed him because he didn't doubt. Because he looked like he was made of snow, not flesh.

The soldiers were surprised, taken by surprise, but not broken. They had cannons, they had rifles, and they had the advantage of growing in numbers. Every fallen soldier was a loss, every fallen woman a wound. For the army, it was just another report.

I remember what the snow looked like the next morning. It was no longer white. It was red, black, gray. Blood, smoke, ash. Tents were nothing but charred poles. Children's bodies lay in the frost, their eyes open, as if still afraid. Women knelt beside them, their faces still, no tears—cold doesn't allow tears.

And Crazy Horse? He stood in the middle of the red snow, breathing steamy air, and looked into the distance. No pose, no victory cry. Just a man who knew this was just the beginning. That the snow would see more blood.

Blood on the snow was no exception. It had become the norm.

Winter made every step a life-or-death decision. It was no place for heroes, no place for grand speeches. Only cold, hunger, and blood that spread through the snow like ink on paper.

The Lakota no longer had any supply caches. Too many had been burned, too many horses shot. Children chewed on old pieces of leather, women gathered frozen roots as if they were gold. Men rode out to hunt, but often returned with nothing but frost on their eyelashes.

And every time a person fell, the snow traced it. Red. Simple, brutal truth. No negotiations, no contracts, no false promises – just blood.

The army knew they could break them in the winter. It was cheaper than fighting large battles in the summer. They just had to wait until the frost weakened the Lakota, and then strike. No courage, no pride, just calculation. Soldiers marched with beards covered in ice, rifles that cracked like thunder, and bottles full of bourbon in their pockets.

Crazy Horse held his people together. Not through words, but through being. He was there. He stood. He was cold, he was hungry, he was bleeding—just like them. No distinction, no distance. He wasn't a chief who sat in his tent while others died. He was in the snow, his horse beneath him, his knife in his hand.

I remember a march where three old men were left behind. They couldn't go on. Their legs gave way, their eyes could only see the ground. They were left lying there. They had no strength, no one could carry them. The next morning they lay like statues, covered in snow, only their hands still sticking out, frozen in their final movement. And the snow beneath them – red where they had bled.

Blood on the snow isn't loud. It doesn't scream, it doesn't complain. It simply lies there, like a testimony that no one can wipe away. Even when spring comes, the memory remains.

Crazy Horse saw all this, and something grew within him. Not just hatred. Hatred is too simple. It was more—a cold determination. As cold as the snow itself. The white men could weaken them, they could hunt them, they could starve them. But as long as he breathed, his blood would not voluntarily flow into the snow.

And those who followed him knew it. When they stood up in the frost, their bones heavy, their stomachs empty, they saw him. Silent. Unbroken. And that was enough to keep going.

Snow is a bastard. It pretends to be pure, clean, bright. But in truth, it's just a canvas for blood. Every drop tells a story, and there were too many stories in winter.

Sometimes it was just a small cut, a hand slipping on a blade. Immediately, the white turned red, a sharp contrast, a signal that screamed:*Someone bled here.*And sometimes it was more – a body ripped open by bullets, the warm life steaming in the frost until it froze and the snow became hard as glass.

The Lakota lived with this truth. They knew snow as an enemy. It ate horses that broke through when the ice was too thin. It ate children whose breath became too weak. It ate warriors who never woke in their sleep. Blood in the snow was merely winter's signature on death's contract.

Crazy Horse knew this. He saw it, he kept quiet, he bore it. Men asked him for hope. He gave none. Hope was a cheap drink that drowned you faster than whiskey. What he gave was presence. He was there. And sometimes that's enough.

I remember one night when a fire was almost out. Men sat huddled together, blankets thin, faces hollow. One whispered, "We're already dead, we just don't

know it yet." Then Crazy Horse stepped out into the snow, coatless, without words. He stood there, the blood from his last stand still on his knife, his breath steaming like smoke. The men saw him standing there, unmoving, in the cold. And suddenly, silence was stronger than any song.

Blood on the snow was no longer a coincidence. It became a symbol. Some saw in it the sacrifices that were necessary. Others saw only defeat. But no one could ignore it. Every red pattern in the white was a scream that remained, even when the bodies were long gone.

The whites laughed about it. "They die faster in the frost than from our bullets," officers were heard to say. Perhaps they were right. But they didn't understand that every drop of blood in the snow was also a memory. And memories don't disappear. They burn in minds, turning men into shadows who continue to fight, even when all seems lost.

Crazy Horse didn't get weaker during those winters. He got colder. And cold is sometimes harder than steel.

Winter never simply ended. It didn't leave, it only slowly retreated, as if baring its teeth before retreating. And what it left behind was worse than the cold itself: blood in the snow, which turned to mud in the spring. Memories that didn't disappear, but merely changed color.

The children who survived no longer knew games without hunger. Their first steps were in the frost, their first images in their minds were bodies in white. Women grew old before they were thirty, their faces furrowed by the wind, their eyes dulled by the sight of blood. Men went out and never returned—sometimes in battle, sometimes simply in the frost.

Blood on the snow wasn't just an image; it was a daily companion. It stuck in one's mind, it colored one's dreams. Even when the sun was shining, one could still see it—red stains in the white, shadows of what had been.

Crazy Horse saw more of it than anyone else. Every winter made him quieter. Not broken—no, broken men scream. He was silent. And silence can be harder than any screaming. He carried the images within him, and the men who looked at him knew: he would never give up, but he would also never be the same.

I remember the spring after a particularly harsh winter. The ice melted, the rivers swelled, and the ground was wet with meltwater. Where people had

fallen, no grass grew. Only black soil that smelled of iron. Blood, which had colored the snow, now colored the earth. And the earth forgets nothing.

The whites thought they had won if they let enough winters pass over the Lakota. But they were wrong. Cold kills bodies. But it also sharpens souls. And Crazy Horse was the clearest proof of that. Every drop of blood in the snow made him harder, more aloof, more determined.

So winter didn't really end. It remained, in minds, in hearts, in stories. And every time someone in the camp saw the snow falling, they thought:*Blood comes back.*

Blood on the Snow wasn't a chapter, it was a law. A law Crazy Horse knew—and one he was willing to continue writing with his own life.

There were only rifles

The white people always talked about their God. A man on a cross, a book full of words that none of the Lakota understood. They came with missionaries, with sermons, with psalms, and they believed they could buy souls like whiskey or guns. But on the plains, in the wind, in the blood. There was only what you could hold in your hand.

A knife. An arrow. A gun.

The sky was big, yes. The wind sang, the earth breathed, the sun rose and fell. But when bullets flew through your tent, no prayer helped. No "Our Father," no "Hail Mary." Only a gun in your hand, only the decision: shoot or die.

Crazy Horse knew this. He wasn't a man who bowed to gods. His vision wasn't a blessing, not a priest's dream. It was a black horse devouring the sun. No angels, no salvation. Only darkness and struggle. He never had illusions.

The whites said they were bringing civilization. They brought churches, schools, preachers. But what they really brought was lead. Lead in bodies, lead in hearts. And they called it God's will.

I remember a missionary who came to a camp. He carried a cross that was bigger than his own understanding. He preached about love while outside the

soldiers loaded their rifles. The women listened to him, the men laughed. One spat in the snow and said, "Your God is a rifle." And he was right.

No god stopped the bullets. No god brought back the buffalo. No god provided warmth in the winter. Only weapons. Only metal, which decided life or death.

Crazy Horse rode with this knowledge. He was not a man of prayers, not a man of songs. He was a man of action, and action knew only blood.

There were only guns. That was the truth. Everything else was just smoke in the minds of those too weak to bear it.

Once, a bow was enough. A good warrior could pierce a heart from a hundred paces away, could cripple a horse with an arrow, could sing a song with the bowstring that was more deadly than any sermon. But the time of arrows was over.

The white man's rifles spat lead like hungry demons. They ripped through air and flesh, faster, harder, more deadly than any arrow ever could. A man with a rifle could kill from a distance without smelling his opponent's breath. And that's exactly what the white man did: They killed without looking.

The Lakota had guns too, yes. Bought them. Traded them. Stolen them. But there were never enough. Never enough powder, never enough bullets. A warrior could shoot three arrows while a soldier fired five bullets from his repeater. It wasn't a fight. It was a scorecard. And the score rarely worked out in the Lakota's favor.

I remember a battle in which an old warrior fired his last shot. He had only this one rifle, a rusty thing that spewed more smoke than bullets when fired. When he pulled the trigger, it jammed. The soldiers were closing in, and he had nothing left. Only a knife. He jumped up, screamed, ran. They laughed before striking him down. His blood steamed in the grass, and his rifle lay beside him like a bad joke.

That was the truth: A people who came from arrows fought against a people who spat lead. No God, only guns.

Crazy Horse knew that every fight wasn't just man against man, but arrow against bullet. And the bullet almost always won. But he kept going. Not because he believed he could defeat the guns, but because he knew: Even an arrow can hit the right man. Even a bullet can jam in the barrel. Even a knife can be worth more in the dark than a Bible and a Winchester.

The whites talked of destiny, of God, of mission. But their true religion was the gunpowder they stuffed into their weapons. Every shot was an amen. Every death a prayer.

There were only guns. And the one who understood that best had the best chance of seeing another dawn.

Crazy Horse wasn't a dreamer when it came to weapons. He knew that a knife was only useful until the bullet hit you. He knew that courage alone won't break a chest. Courage makes you loud, but bullets make you silent.

He used rifles wherever he could. He took them from the soldiers when the battle was over. He traded, he stole, he hoarded. But he also knew: A rifle without ammunition is just a stick. So he let the boys continue carving arrows, drawing bows, and sharpening knives. Not out of nostalgia, not out of tradition, but because a knife never jams, an arrow never needs powder.

I remember an ambush. The soldiers rode in a long line, confident, their uniform buttons shining in the sun. They had rifles, they had cannons. But Crazy Horse had the wind and the shadows. His men shot arrows from a distance, then leaped from the trenches, knives in their hands. Bullets flew, yes, but chaos is faster than any bullet. A soldier couldn't aim when a knife was ripping open his throat.

Blood splattered on uniforms, horses screamed, men fell into the dust and grass. At the end, rifles lay in the dirt, and Crazy Horse collected them, one by one, with cold eyes, as if they were just stones he was putting in his pocket.

The Lakota knew they would never have as many guns as the whites. But they also knew that guns alone did not make a warrior. It was not the weapon that counted, but the hand that wielded it and the will behind it. And in that will, they were stronger.

The whites prayed before every battle, made the sign of the cross, and whispered to their God. The Lakota wore war paint, sang songs, and smoked pipes. And when the bullets flew through the air, only one truth remained: No God, only guns.

Crazy Horse was the embodiment of this truth. He didn't believe in salvation. He believed in the slash of a knife, the bite of an arrow, the crack of a gun. He wasn't a man of the sky. He was a man of gunpowder and steel.

And that's precisely what made him dangerous. Because while the others were still praying, he was already drawing his blade.

The Lakota had their dances, their songs, their whistles. They had visions, dreams, spirits that sang in the wind. But the spirits didn't stop bullets. No dance could stop a bayonet. No prayer could bring back the buffalo.

Spirituality provided support – yes. It gave courage, it provided rhythm, it provided meaning. But in the dust, when the soldiers came, it was just drums against thunder. And thunder was louder.

Crazy Horse knew this. He respected the ceremonies, but he didn't live for them. He wore no feathers, no colorful paint. He went into battle as he was: naked in the truth that only steel and gunpowder would decide. He was no dancer. He was no singer. He was a fighter, and fighters didn't need illusions.

I remember a medicine man coming to him and saying, "The spirits are with you." Crazy Horse just looked at him, silent. Then he raised his knife and said, "This knife is with me." The medicine man remained silent, and from then on, he never spoke much around him again.

The whites had their priests, their Bibles, their gods. But they also had Gatlings, cannons, and Springfield rifles. And in the end, the winner wasn't the one who prayed the loudest, but the one who reloaded the fastest.

This was a contention in the camp. Some said, "We need to believe more in the spirits, then we will win." Others said, "We need more guns, otherwise we will perish." Both were true, and both were false. Because in the end, they needed both, and yet they had neither in sufficient quantities.

Crazy Horse stood in the middle. He knew that spirits gave strength—but only in the mind. And that guns took lives—instantly, without delay. So he took what he could. He fought with knife, arrow, and gun. Anything that drew blood was welcome.

There were only guns. And sometimes only a knife. But no matter what – blood had to flow for someone to live. That wasn't faith. That was mathematics.

And Crazy Horse was the man who understood the equation.

There was a battle, and the air itself seemed to tear apart. A valley, snow still on the edges, dust in the middle, and the sun burning so brightly that it betrayed every movement. The Lakota came with songs, with war paint, with

the chants of the elders behind them. The drums pounded, the voices echoed over the hills. And then came the guns.

The soldiers stood in line, their Springfield rifles at the ready, the officer shouting orders in a voice louder than any song. A single command, a single shot—and the drums fell silent.

Arrows flew, yes. Some hit. Horses collapsed, soldiers fell, an arrow lodged in the neck, blood spurting. But the bullets came faster, harder. They ripped through bodies, through tents, through everything. The chants turned into screams.

Crazy Horse rode right into the middle of it. No jewelry, no colorful feathers, just skin, dust, and blood. He didn't scream, he didn't shout slogans. He urged his horse on, knife in one hand, rifle in the other. He was no bigger than the others, no stronger. But he rode as if he couldn't die. And that was precisely what made him terrifying.

The soldiers shot, one after the other. But he moved like a shadow, leaped from his horse, pushed a bayonet aside, stabbed a man in the stomach, and withdrew the blade. Blood spurted, steaming in the dust. A soldier cried out for his god, fell to his knees—and Crazy Horse slit his throat.

The Lakota fought with everything they had. Arrows, knives, old muskets, captured Winchesters. They fell, yes. But they fell with blades in their hands, not with prayers on their lips. And every soldier who bit the dust was proof that courage alone was not enough, but courage with a weapon was deadly.

I remember the smell. Not just blood—iron, sweat, gunpowder, burnt flesh. A stench that eats into your lungs until you can smell it even in your dreams. The drums had long since fallen silent. There was only the crack of rifles, the hiss of arrows, the screams of men clutching their entrails.

In the end, the Lakota withdrew. Not defeated, not broken—just empty. Many lay in the dust, blood at their mouths, eyes open. The soldiers gathered their dead, prayed over them, and spoke of God. But their Bibles were soaked red, just like the ground.

And Crazy Horse? He stood in the shadows, his knife dripping, his eyes cold. He knew: They hadn't won, they hadn't lost. They had simply survived. And that was all that mattered.

After every battle, they came—the priests. They crawled out of the forts, with their crosses, their Bibles, their voices trembling as if sent from heaven. They blessed the fallen, spoke of salvation, of the gates of heaven, of a God who sees all.

But the fallen could no longer see anything. Their eyes were fixed, their mouths open, their entrails in the dust. No prayer could bring that back.

The Lakota watched with cold faces. They heard the words, but they understood only the echo of the rifles still hanging in the hills. Words for bullets—that was the deal the whites offered. A bad deal.

Crazy Horse spat in the dust when he heard preachers speak. He had nothing against faith, but he had everything against lies. And what was greater than the lie that a God watches over everything while bullets rip through children's bodies?

I remember a missionary telling a Lakota woman that her dead son was now with God. She just stood there, her hands bloody from trying to close the boy's wound. Then she laughed—a bitter, dry laugh—and said, "If your God wanted him, he should have taken him himself, not with a bullet from your gun." The missionary lowered his gaze, but the words stuck like blood.

The whites prayed over their own dead, but they never prayed over the Lakota they had killed. For them, these weren't souls, merely obstacles. But for the Lakota, every dead person was a song, a name, a loss that could not be replaced by words.

Crazy Horse carried no crosses. He bore scars. He didn't pray. He was silent. And in that silence lay more truth than in a thousand psalms. When he sharpened his knife, that was his prayer. When he rode his horse, that was his psalm. When he charged into battle, that was his worship.

The men who followed him knew this. They had no illusions. They knew: the only god who answered was the one who shot from a barrel or flashed from a blade. Everything else was dust in the wind.

And so they lived, so they fought, so they died. Not with "Amen" on their lips. But with blood in their mouths.

At the end of every battle, the same scene remained: smoke, blood, bodies in the dust. The rifles smoked, the Bibles lay closed, and the air stank of

gunpowder. The priests could shout their psalms, the officers could shout their orders—it made no difference. Bullets listened to no one.

The Lakota didn't always bury their dead. Sometimes there wasn't time. Sometimes the ground was too hard. Sometimes the number was too large. So they remained, laid out in the dust, circled by ravens, covered by the wind. And the white people continued on, writing reports, drawing maps, and drawing lines.

"God is with us," they said. But what kind of God is this who hides behind guns? Crazy Horse didn't need an answer. He knew this God was made of iron and lead. No spirit, no song, no prayer—just smoke and thunder.

I remember one evening, after a battle, when the men sat wearily in a circle. One asked, "Which is stronger, their guns or our spirits?" No one answered. But Crazy Horse, standing silently in the shadows, slowly drew his knife, turned it in the firelight, and said, "Neither is worthless if you don't have the will to use it."

That was his truth. There were only guns. No angels, only men with scars. No heaven, only earth that drinks blood, no matter whose blood it comes from. The white people built churches, forts, cities. The Lakota built only memories. And memories are heavier than stone. They stick to the flesh, they burn in dreams, they tear you from sleep.

Crazy Horse wasn't a leader of words. He was a leader of action. And his action was clear: fight while blood still flowed in his veins. Whether with an arrow, a knife, or a stolen rifle—it didn't matter. The main thing was that his opponent fell.

At the end of the day, as the fire faded and the men stared silently into the embers, the truth hung like a curse in the wind. And Crazy Horse was ready to die in that truth.

Firewater and broken teeth

Whiskey—or firewater, as they called it—was worse than any bullet. Bullets kill you quickly. Whiskey kills you slowly, ugly, without honor. It doesn't just burn your throat, it eats your brains, it turns warriors into slobbering wrecks, men into slinking dogs.

The whites knew this. They brought barrels before they brought guns. Firewater was their dirtiest weapon. A drop made you light, a cup blinded you, and a barrel killed you before a bullet even hit you.

Crazy Horse saw it, and he hated it. He didn't drink. He didn't touch the dirt. He knew that a man with whiskey in his veins couldn't hold a gun. And a tribe full of drunkards was easier to conquer than a bunch of kids.

I remember one scene: men in the camp, drunk, staggering, laughing with bloody teeth. One fell into the embers, burned himself, got up again, laughing and screaming until he fell over. Women dragged their children away, their eyes filled with disgust. Men who had been warriors yesterday lay there like corpses, only twitching.

Firewater and broken teeth—that was the new music in the camps. No drumming, no singing, but the cracking of bones when someone fell while drunk, the splintering of teeth when someone struck with their fist, just to feel something.

The whites gave it away cheaply. They knew that a tribe disintegrates faster in whiskey than under bullets. A drunken village burns more easily. A drunken warrior is quicker to sell his horse, his weapon, his honor.

Crazy Horse despised those who drank. Not because he was better, but because he knew they were self-destructing weapons. And a self-destructing weapon is worthless.

Firewater – it burned more than throats. It burned the people themselves. And all that remained were broken teeth, cold ground, and the laughter of the whites in the forts.

Whiskey was like a creeping enemy that was allowed into the tents. No army, no thunder, no trumpet call. Just a brown liquid in bottles that cost more blood than any battle.

The whites sold him for everything: horses, furs, meat, women. Half a barrel could destroy more than a cannonball. They placed it in front of the forts, let the Lakota drink, and laughed at their staggering. They knew full well: a drunken warrior doesn't fight, he falls.

I remember one night. A man, strong, fast, a warrior who was respected. He drank too much. He staggered, grabbed his knife, wanted to dance, wanted to fight. But he was fighting against air. Then he fell, hitting his face on a rock. When they pulled him up, he spat teeth and blood. The next day, he was no longer a warrior. He just sat by the fire, silent, the gaps between his teeth like scars. Whiskey had broken him more than any bullet.

This happened to many. Men who once rode proudly were suddenly lying in the dirt, laughing, urinating on themselves while their children watched. Women had to pull them away, had to hold them down when they attacked their own brothers in a frenzy.

Firewater turned the Lakota not into warriors, but into clowns. And that was worse than death. A dead warrior could be a hero. A drunken warrior was merely a disgrace.

Crazy Horse never drank. He kept his distance from the poison as if it were a demon itself. Some said he was arrogant because he didn't take the cup when it was offered to him. But he knew: A man who drinks sells his own heart. And Crazy Horse sold nothing.

But he couldn't save everyone. Whiskey crept through the camp like smoke, like the plague. Everyone who fell dragged others down with them. The whites didn't have to shoot. They only had to pour.

Firewater and broken teeth – that's how the decay began. Slowly. Silently. More brutal than any bullet.

Whiskey didn't just make men weak. It made them cruel. A sober warrior could fight, could suffer, could lead. A drunken warrior would beat those closest to him.

I remember one night a father came home drunk, his eyes glazed over, his shirt covered in vomit. His son came to him, tried to support him, and the man punched him. The boy's nose was bleeding, his teeth wobbly. The woman screamed, but the man just laughed, staggering, unable to stand up straight.

The next morning, he couldn't remember anything. But his son remembered. And he would remember forever.

Whiskey didn't just burn throats—it burned families apart. Brothers who should have been fighting side by side suddenly lay in the dust, fists clenched because the firewater had robbed them of their senses. Teeth flew, lips burst, blood dripped onto the ground, and the white people laughed when they heard about it. "They're destroying themselves," they said. And they were right.

Women pulled their children away from the fires when the men were drunk. They whispered to them: "These are not your fathers. Your fathers are warriors. These are just shadows." But the children soon knew only shadows.

Crazy Horse hated it. He didn't speak often, but when he saw how whiskey transformed men, his voice grew hard. "It's not a drink," he once said. "It's a knife you stick into yourself." But words were of no use. A man who tastes the intoxication can no longer hear.

Firewater made more orphans than bullets. It broke more bones than bayonets. It robbed men of their teeth, their honor, their names. And all that remained were the gaps—in their faces, in their hearts, in their tribes.

Broken teeth became a symbol. Everyone knew what they meant: a man who had lost to the ground, to his brother, to the fire. And there were many, far too many.

Crazy Horse didn't drink. He gritted his teeth until they ground. But even he couldn't stop the firewater from flowing, from consuming men, from turning tents into piles of shards.

And so whiskey became the white man's second army—an army that wore no uniforms, that fired no bullets. It only needed glasses.

Whiskey wasn't an accident. It was a tactic. The whites knew exactly what they were doing. They sent not just soldiers, but traders. And these traders were worse than cannons.

A barrel of firewater cost them nothing. A few coins, a bit of grain, and they had enough to poison an entire village. And what did they get in return? Horses, weapons, furs, sometimes even land. Whiskey was a trade in which only one person ever won—and that was never the Lakota.

The traders stood in front of the forts, smiled, and refilled their glasses. They knew that a warrior who drank today would sell his rifle tomorrow. That a chieftain with a drunken head would more easily sign a treaty he couldn't read. Whiskey was ink in the blood. And every signature made with it was treason.

Crazy Horse saw this. He despised the men who traded whiskey almost more than the soldiers who shot. Because soldiers were openly enemies. But the traders smiled in your face while they slit your throat. Not with knives, but with glasses.

I remember one night near a fort. The whites had set up barrels. Men from the tribe went there, greedy, tired, hungry for oblivion. They drank, laughed, and staggered back. One sold his horse for a bottle. Another gave his knife. The next day they were helpless, naked and without weapons, and the whites stood there as if they had won without wasting a bullet.

"This is war," said Crazy Horse. "Only they don't have to shoot. They let us shoot—at ourselves."

Women hated the firewater because they knew it weakened their men. But even they couldn't stop it. It flowed like blood. It flowed like lies.

Broken teeth were the mark of this war. Men who once laughed proudly now had gaps in their mouths from drunken falls or from hitting each other in a frenzy. A people who once sang songs now had only curses in their throats.

Whiskey wasn't just a drink. It was a weapon, used precisely, mercilessly, cheaply, and effectively. And Crazy Horse knew: this weapon was perhaps the most dangerous of all.

A night in the camp—I can still see it. The wind blew cold, but the fire burned in the men's circle, and the whiskey burned even hotter in their throats. They laughed, they screamed, they spat into the fire as if they were immortal. But whiskey doesn't make you immortal. Whiskey makes you stupid.

Two brothers were arguing. At first they laughed, pushed each other, and mocked each other. But then came the blow. One fell, got up again, and spat blood and two teeth into the fire. The flames hissed, as if even the fire didn't want the taste. The other grabbed a knife, staggered, and stabbed—not purposefully, just furiously. He struck his brother's arm, and blood spurted. Women screamed, children cried. But the men around them laughed, because the whiskey had long since dulled their senses.

Crazy Horse was there. He stepped forward and took the knife from the drunk's hand, as easily as if he were snatching a toy from a child. He didn't hit him. He didn't curse him. He just looked at him, that look, cold, unmoving, harder than any blow. The man slumped, like an animal that knows it's trapped.

The others were silent. They knew that look. No god, no preacher, no chief could have stopped the men in this frenzy. Only Crazy Horse could—not with words, but with silence that was sharper than steel.

But in the morning, the firewater was still there. The teeth remained in the pile of ash. The trail of blood stretched across the floor. And the men reached for the bottles again as if nothing had happened.

That was the worst part: Whiskey didn't just make you weak, it made you indifferent. You could have blood in your mouth, fewer teeth in your skull, brothers slicing each other open—and you still reached for the next sip.

Firewater wasn't a weapon that killed once. It killed every day, over and over again, bit by bit. And Crazy Horse knew: A people that drinks like that is a people that buries itself before the enemy does.

Whiskey didn't always kill quickly. Sometimes it took weeks, months. But it killed reliably. And that made it worse than bullets.

The men who drank didn't immediately become corpses—they became shadows. Warriors who once rode proudly suddenly crouched in the dirt, their mouths full of gaps, their breath stinking of firewater. They no longer had any poise, no dignity. Only the next drink was on their minds.

Women looked at them with eyes that no longer cried. Tears eventually disappear when they no longer serve any purpose. Instead, there was only this harsh silence that hurt more than any words. They carried the children away, keeping them away from their fathers, who were no longer men, but wrecks.

I remember an old warrior. Once a hunter, swift, sure, respected. Then came the firewater. He drank, he fell, he laughed with bloody mouth. Soon he could no longer hold a horse, no longer wield a knife. He died not in battle, not from bullets, but with his face in the dust, his throat burned by whiskey. No honor. No song. Only stench.

And the children? They saw it all. They saw their fathers intoxicated, heard their curses, smelled the filth. Some hated them for it. Some themselves

became what they despised. Firewater was like a legacy passed down from generation to generation. A disease that ate not at the bodies, but at the souls.

Crazy Horse stayed away, but he couldn't stop it from happening around him. Every sip someone took was like a small betrayal. Not against him, but against the people. Against the children, the future, the blood.

Firewater and broken teeth—that was the sound of the nights. No war horn, no song, just the smacking, the babbling, the cracking of bones as someone fell again.

So the people didn't just die fighting against guns. They also died on the ground, glass in their hands, teeth in the dirt.

There were nights when you heard more clinking bottles than drums. Nights when the men dreamed not of buffalo hunts or victories, but of the next sip. Whiskey had broken their tongues, weakened their hands.

Broken teeth were everywhere. Gaps in faces that had once been strong. Laughter no longer sounded like pride, but rather like mockery of one's own misery. Men spoke with a lisp because they were missing half their teeth, and some even choked on the splinters when they fell while drunk.

The whites knew they had won if they just waited. No shot necessary. No battle. Just barrels. They watched as the Lakota dismantled themselves, as the firewater took more lives than their bullets ever could.

Crazy Horse saw this and remained silent. But his silence wasn't consent. It was hatred. Pure, silent hatred. He knew: the greatest battle wasn't always outside against soldiers. The greatest battle was inside—against the poison the whites poured down his people's throats.

He despised not only the merchants, but also those who drank. He saw them as traitors. Not because they were weak, but because they wanted to be weaker. A warrior may fall—in battle, in blood, in dust. But he may not fall because he himself raises the glass to his lips.

So Crazy Horse stood among his people and watched them crumble. Men who thought more about whiskey than freedom. Women who no longer recognized their husbands. Children who grew up with only wrecks as role models.

Firewater and broken teeth—that was the sound of a people in decline. No thunder, no bang, no great battle. Only the cracking of bones in intoxication, the hiss of alcohol, the silence of those too tired to stand.

And Crazy Horse knew: He could fight rifles. He could fight cannons. But against the fire in blood – that was an enemy that was invisible, unstoppable, more ferocious than any army.

This is how every party, every laugh, every barrel ended: in the dust, with teeth that no one picked up.

The wind that smells of iron

The wind on the plains was neither friend nor foe—it was a messenger. It brought scents long before anything could be seen. And at some point, it no longer smelled of grass, of buffalo, of fire. It smelled of iron.

Iron from rails that ate through the land. Iron from hooves shod with nails. Iron from rifles that weighed more than children. And iron from the blood that ran over blades. The wind carried all of this, and everyone who smelled it knew: The Lakota's time was over.

The whites built tracks like worms burrowing into the earth. Trains rolled, clouds of steam rose, thunder echoed over hills that had never known such a sound. Buffalo fled from the noise, herds scattered, and hunger crept deeper into the tents.

I remember the first train I saw. A monster made of iron, huffing, spitting, and screeching. Men in uniform stood on it, laughing, smoking. They looked down on the land as if they had built it. But the land was older than their god, older than its rails. Nevertheless, they nailed it down as if they could tame it.

The wind, which smelled of iron, brought more than trains. It brought cannons, Gatlings, bullets in crates. It brought men who didn't hunt, but only marched. And it brought treaties, papers full of lies that weighed more than any rifle.

Crazy Horse smelled it too. He stood in the hills, his hair ruffled by the wind, and said, "Iron is eating the land." He didn't speak often, but when he did, it was like a slap in the face. Everyone knew what he meant: The land that had been free now belonged to iron.

And iron made no compromises. It rolled, it crunched, it cut through earth and heart. The wind carried it, and the Lakota knew: Something greater than guns was coming. Something that couldn't be stopped with arrows.

The railroad was not a blessing. It was a steel serpent, eating its way through the land, unstoppable, cold, and mechanical. Every blow of the hammers driving the rails into the earth was like a heartbeat that did not belong to the Lakota people.

With the trains came not only soldiers and traders. With them came massacre. Herds of buffalo, which once flowed like black rivers across the plains, suddenly lay in heaps of carcasses. White men leaned out of the wagons, shot into the crowds for fun, and laughed as the animals crumbled like dust. Tons of meat rotted, the hides were stacked like trophies, and the stench wafted across the land for miles.

The wind carried this smell. No longer just iron, but blood, rot, smoke. A stench that burned in your throat, stronger than any song. Children coughed, women held cloths over their faces, men stared silently into the distance because they knew: without buffalo, there is no life. Without buffalo, there is no people.

I remember an old warrior seeing the railway. He spat in the dust and said, "That's not a train. It's a coffin with wheels." He was right. Every train brought death—not always with bullets, but with what it took: the herds, the land, the peace.

Crazy Horse watched the tracks. He knew you could fight soldiers, forts, and cannons. But against a snake that kept crawling? What was a blade against tracks that lengthened day after day?

The wind smelled of iron, and iron smelled of the end. The end of the hunt, the end of freedom, the end of songs. The wind, which had once carried stories of buffalo, rain, and sun, was now only a messenger of smoke, iron, and blood.

And everyone who breathed it knew: It was a new war, one without drums, without battle – but deadlier than anything before.

The railroad was more than just tracks in the ground. It was a clock. Every meter it ate was a lost hour for the Lakota. Time used to be vast, endless like the plains. People hunted when hunger struck. They moved on when the buffalo moved on. They lived to the rhythm of the wind.

But iron had a different rhythm. Punctual. Hard. Without respite. Trains arrived on time, whether the wind sang or the rain fell. They ripped the land from under the Lakota's feet, but worse still: they ripped time from under them.

The wind now carried the rattling. A sound, steady, cold. No song, no drum, no heartbeat. Just clack-clack-clack – the song of iron. And it didn't stop.

Crazy Horse smelled it, heard it, felt it. The wind, smelling of iron, made him harder. He spoke less, rode longer, slept less. He knew: iron couldn't be prayed to, couldn't be negotiated with. It could only be destroyed. But how do you destroy something that grows like a disease?

I remember one day when children stood at the edge of the tracks. They covered their ears as the train thundered by. One asked his mother, "Why is that monster screaming like that?" The woman remained silent. What could she have said? That this monster would devour the land, life, the future?

Buffalo were scarce. Hunts ended in hunger, not meat. Men rode for days, only to come across rotting carcasses left behind by white men. No respect, no purpose—just the joy of killing. The wind carried the stench, and the stench mingled with the iron.

Crazy Horse saw how the people grew thinner, how their faces grew harder, how their eyes grew emptier. The wind made no difference—it whipped through the children's hair, just as it whipped through the warriors' hair. But it always carried the same taste: iron. And iron tastes like the end.

Thus, the wind became a constant warning. It reminded everyone that the time of the Lakota was not far off. And Crazy Horse became the mirror of this wind: cold, cutting, relentless.

Iron didn't just arrive on rails. It also arrived in crates, bearing army stamps. Rifles, bayonets, chains. All made of the same cold material, all with the same smell. The wind carried it for miles, and once you smelled it, you never forgot it.

Rifles spat iron into bodies. Bayonets ripped open stomachs, letting steaming entrails fall into the dust. Chains closed around wrists, heavy, cold, merciless. Iron made no distinctions: it held you, it cut you, it pierced you.

I remember a camp the army raided. The snow hadn't melted yet, the wind was biting. Men jumped out of their tents, women screamed, children ran. But the rifles rattled, bullets flew, bayonets flashed. In the end, there were more

bodies than tents, and those still breathing were shackled with iron chains. The wind carried the smell—blood and iron, inseparable.

Crazy Horse saw iron for what it was: an enemy that wouldn't negotiate. You could talk to a man, to a chief, to a warrior. But you couldn't talk to iron. You could only break it. But iron was strong. It broke more people than men could break it.

The Lakota knew stone, wood, and fire. But iron was new, foreign, and stronger. And the white people had more of it than the Lakota could ever possess. They built their world out of it: rails, weapons, bars, and locks. And each piece of iron nailed the Lakota's freedom deeper into the ground.

Crazy Horse stood in the hills, his face to the wind. "Iron eats everything," he said. And he was right. It ate herds, it ate land, it ate people. The wind smelled of it, as if to say: There's no turning back.

And Crazy Horse himself became like iron—cold, unyielding, without mercy. But iron also breaks if the blow is hard enough. The only question was: when.

Iron didn't just devour bodies. It also devoured souls. Not always with bullets or chains—sometimes with symbols.

The white people brought their iron crosses, erected high, heavy, and immovable. They said it was a sign of their god. For the Lakota, it was just another nail driven into the land. A cross that didn't fall from the sky, but was built with hammer and sweat.

Then came the treaties. "Signed with an iron hand," the officers said. They unrolled paper, words none of the Lakota could read, but the whites held them like chains. They called it law, they called it right—but the Lakota only felt iron fingers tighten around their throats.

I remember a meeting. An officer with shining buttons spoke, the sun reflected on his chest like shining steel. He talked of peace, while soldiers stood behind him, rifles in hand. It wasn't peace; it was blackmail. Iron in their voices, iron in their eyes.

Crazy Horse saw all this. He didn't say much. But there was truth in his eyes: Iron has no soul. Iron knows no mercy. Anyone who thinks they can negotiate with iron will be crushed by it.

The children in the camp knew the smell before they knew the words. Iron smelled of hunger, of death, of lies. When the wind blew, they said, "It smells like the palefaces." And they were right.

The worst thing wasn't even the iron itself. It was that some in the tribe were beginning to accept it. Some drank whiskey from iron cups, some took iron knives from traders, some wore chains as jewelry. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the iron crept into their hearts.

Crazy Horse despised that. He knew: Once iron enters your soul, you yourself become a piece of it. Cold, heavy, lifeless. And that was worse than any bullet.

Thus, the wind became not just a messenger. It became a warning. And Crazy Horse swore to himself: He would fight until the last whiff of that iron scent was banished from the plains—or until his own blood lay in the dust.

The wind never stopped. It blew day and night, as if it wanted to cleanse the plains. But instead of smelling of grass and buffalo, it brought only iron. A constant pounding in the air, a taste on the tongue as bitter as blood.

The men felt it. They woke up and heard the distant rattle of trains, the clanking of rails, the screech of metal. They didn't always see it, but they knew: It was coming closer. Every day, every hour. Iron had no rest, no fatigue. It rolled, and the wind carried its arrival ahead.

Crazy Horse often stood still, listening, smelling, feeling. He rarely spoke, but his silence was louder than any words. He knew: iron meant the end. And an end cannot be stopped, only postponed. But postponing was better than surrendering.

I remember one night in the camp. Men sat around the fire, the children slept, women whispered. And then a train came, far away, but its thunder echoed over the hills. The horses twitched, the dogs howled. And in the fire, you could see the same thought in the men's eyes:*The monster is coming.*

The wind also brought the sound of iron as cannons were moved. Wheels creaked, chains rattled. Even if you didn't see them, you knew they were there. The wind was like a traitor, revealing everything before it happened.

But Crazy Horse took advantage of it. He once said, "The wind betrays the iron, so we listen." His men listened. They learned to distinguish the smell of gunpowder and recognize the roar of cannons long before the enemy was

visible. The wind wasn't just an enemy—it was also a messenger, if you knew how to read it.

But it always brought the same thing: iron. And iron brought death. The Lakota knew that the final battle would not be against hunger, not against frost, but against this cold metal that knew no mercy.

Crazy Horse grew harder with every breath he took in the iron wind. Harder, colder, more unyielding. The wind shaped him like stone, until nothing soft remained.

In the end, the wind itself became a weapon. It carried the iron into every nose, into every lung, into every heart. No one could escape it. You could close your eyes, but you couldn't banish the smell. You could cover your ears, but you couldn't forget the rattling that crept over the hills.

The wind was like a harbinger of death. Whenever it came, people knew: soon the wagons would roll, soon the soldiers would advance, soon the bodies would lie in the dust. And they were right. The wind never lied. It brought no hope. Only iron.

Crazy Horse often stood alone when he carried the scent. Others talked, others cursed, others drank. He remained silent. His eyes were fixed, as if he wanted to pierce the wind itself. He was not a man of illusions. He knew: the wind promised nothing but battle.

I remember a girl who asked, "Will the wind ever smell of buffalo again?" No one answered. Women bowed their heads, men pressed their lips together. Crazy Horse looked up to the sky and said, "Only when the iron is broken." The girl didn't understand, but the men did.

The wind was like a song, only it wasn't a song of joy. It was a song of iron and blood. A song that never fell silent, as long as the rails grew, as long as the guns were loaded, as long as the chains rattled.

And Crazy Horse absorbed this song. He himself became a part of the wind—cold, cutting, unstoppable. He spoke little, but when he did, it sounded like thunder over iron.

So no day ended without the wind smelling of iron. And no morning began without the Lakota knowing: The enemy was already there, long before he could be seen.

The wind that smelled of iron—that was the new breath of the plains. And Crazy Horse was the man who swore to drown it with blood.

Dance in the dirt

There were dances that invoked the heavens, dances for rain, for hunting, for victory. But eventually, all that remained was the dance in the dirt. No ritual fire, no sacred chant, just dust, sweat, and the stamping of bare feet in the mud, as if trying to awaken the earth itself.

The Lakota had needed the dance to remember who they were. But now it was a cry against what they had lost. Buffalo gone, land gone, brothers dead, women tired. So they danced in circles, in the dust, in the blood, in the stench of the horses. No god was watching, no spirits came. Only the children, who watched silently, and the dogs, who howled.

I remember one of those dances. Men with scars, half-starved, yet they beat the drums until their hands were bloody. Women screamed, their voices rough and hoarse, children ran in circles, not laughing, but staring. The ground shook, not because it was sacred, but because it was wet with blood.

Crazy Horse stood at the sidelines. He wasn't dancing. He was just watching, arms crossed, face impassive. He wasn't a man of intoxication. But he understood why they were dancing. Not for spirits. Not for victory. But because dancing was the only thing that kept them from giving up.

The dance in the dirt wasn't a celebration. It was despair, wrapped up in stomping, screaming, and broken voices. It was an outlet, nothing more. Men who would otherwise have drawn knives screamed their rage into the dust. Women who would otherwise have remained silent screamed their grief to the heavens.

And the sky fell silent.

No thunder, no sign, no rain. Only dust, only stench, only the feeling that the ground itself was laughing at the one who stepped on it.

That was the dance in the dirt – no hope, no honor, just a people running in circles because otherwise they would have fallen apart.

Dance used to be a prayer. A call to the spirits, a blow to the air that summoned the invisible. But the less the spirits responded, the louder the drums became. People beat until their hands burst, they stamped until their feet bled. But the sky remained empty.

People no longer danced to be heard. They danced to keep from going mad. Every step in a circle was a curse against fate, every scream an attempt to keep their own heart from suffocating. Dancing was no longer a ritual. It was madness on bare ground.

I remember one night when the drums never stopped. Men staggered, women fell, children screamed. They danced in the blood of horses that had fallen the day before. They tore their skin with thorns, as if trying to beat out the pain before it ate away at them from within.

Crazy Horse was back on the sidelines. Always on the sidelines. He knew he couldn't stop the crowd. And maybe he wasn't allowed to. The dance was all they had left. Even if it ended in the dirt, even if it was just blood and dust.

Dancing in the dirt was like a drug. Some collapsed, foaming at the mouth, their eyes wide as if they were having visions. But they weren't visions. It was just exhaustion, just delusion. They woke up again, staggered on, and no one asked if it made sense.

It was a dance against death, and everyone knew that death was still watching, laughing and waiting.

Sometimes one fell in the circle, and the others continued to kick. Not out of cruelty, but because the dance never stopped. Dust, blood, screams—everything mingled, and no one knew whether he was still alive or had already fallen.

Thus, prayer turned into madness. Hope turned into despair. Ritual became a dance in the dirt that swallowed everything.

The Ghost Dance was once a promise. A dream that the spirits would return, that the buffalo would once again roam the plains, that the dead would rise, and the white people would disappear like snow in spring.

But dreams have weight. And if they become too heavy, they break you.

The men danced until their muscles tore. Women screamed until their voices broke. Children staggered because no one was holding them. It was no longer a dance—it was a chain-rush of bodies that no longer felt themselves.

Some fainted, and others said, "The spirits touched them." But it was only weakness, only hunger, only madness. They woke up, trembling, with foam on their lips, and continued dancing because they had nothing else to do.

I remember a boy who fell over in a circle. He was barely ten, as thin as a twig, his ribs counting under his skin. His mother didn't pick him up. She kept dancing, her eyes wide, as if she were blind. Crazy Horse watched, then finally leaped forward, picked up the boy, and carried him away. The circle kept spinning, no one stopped. It was as if the boy had never been there.

The dance was no longer for the ghosts. It was for the dirt. For the stomping, the screaming, for the feeling that you were still alive, even if there was no longer any reason for it.

The white people sometimes watched this from afar. They laughed. "They're dancing like crazy," they said. And they were right. But what else could the Lakota have done? Give up? Lie down and die? Dancing in the dirt was the last thing they had left, even if it didn't achieve anything.

Crazy Horse never danced. He wasn't a man of illusions. But he knew that a people who stop dancing is already dead. And so he let them. Even though it hurt, even though it filled him with disgust—he let them stomp, scream, fall, and get up again.

The Ghost Dance was no longer a cry for salvation. It was an echo of dust and blood, a circle that kept spinning until it led to nothingness.

The white people didn't understand the dance. For them, it wasn't despair, a scream, or a last resort. For them, it was a threat. They saw men, women, and children stamping in circles, screaming, whirling with raised hands, and they saw it not as grief, but as war.

"This is rioting," the officers said. "This is a sign of rebellion." They were afraid of what they didn't understand. They feared ghosts they didn't know. So they resorted to what they did know: guns.

I remember a camp where the dance was raging. The dust hung like smoke, the drums boomed, the voices screamed. Women with hair fluttering in the wind,

men with scars, children with wide-open eyes. It wasn't a war dance—it was madness. But the soldiers saw it differently.

They stormed in, rifles at the ready. Shots rang out, bullets ripped bodies apart, blood spurted into the circle. Men fell, women fell, children screamed. But the drums continued to beat. The dancers didn't stop, even when the air smelled of iron and blood. Some screamed even louder, stamped their feet harder, as if trying to dance away the bullets.

Crazy Horse intervened, pulled men out of the circle, pushed women aside, yelled at the children to run. But many stayed. They were no longer sane. They danced in the blood as if it were water.

The soldiers continued shooting as if it were a hunt. They didn't distinguish between a man with a knife and a girl with open hands. Everything was a target, everything was a threat.

And the wind carried the smell. Dirt, sweat, blood, iron. A dance in the dirt that ended with bullets.

For the Lakota, it was a prayer that no one answered. For the whites, it was a war they had to win. For Crazy Horse, it was just a memory: no God, no spirits, just guns.

Dancing in the dirt wasn't a path to heaven. It was a path to a mass grave.

Sometimes the dance was so loud that the rattle of rifles was only heard after the first bodies had fallen. The dust swallowed the screams, the pounding of feet mingled with the thunder of bullets. And in a circle, the dead lay while the living continued to thrash.

Children screamed, but they didn't scream out of fear—they screamed because they were dancing. Small bodies jumping to the rhythm, their eyes wide, filled with fire they didn't understand. Some fell, bullets in their chests, arrows in their backs, knives in their hands they couldn't even hold. But they got up again, staggered, danced, until they finally lay in the dirt.

Women sang, their voices harsh, blood in their throats. They sang about buffalo that would never return, about men who were already lying in the dust, about children who were stillborn. It wasn't a song of hope, it was a song of madness. And the drums made it louder, louder and louder, until even the sky seemed to burst.

I remember a boy, maybe twelve. A bullet hit him, knocking him backward. He fell into the circle, blood pouring from his mouth. And those dancing stepped around him, continuing to stomp as if he had become just part of the floor. His sister pulled him away, screaming, but her voice was drowned out. The dance was more powerful.

Crazy Horse stood still, his eyes cold. He hated what he saw—but he knew he couldn't stop it. He could deflect bullets, he could kill men, he could protect women. But he couldn't kill the dance. The dance was a curse that fed on itself.

The soldiers saw it as proof: "Look, they're mad, they're dancing even in death." They didn't understand that this was precisely the madness. No resistance, no hope—just bodies in a circle, blood in the dust, feet dancing out death until they themselves fell.

The dance in the dirt ate the people from within, just as guns did from without. It wasn't a fight; it was a stagger into the abyss. And Crazy Horse knew: everyone who died in this circle died twice. Once in their body. Once in their dignity.

The dance never stopped. It was like a whirlpool, sucking everything into it—despair, hunger, rage, pain. Men tore their skin with thorns, cut their arms and legs with knives, and let the blood drip into the dust, as if the ground needed to drink to awaken their spirits.

But the spirits didn't come. Only the wind. And the wind smelled of iron, not of salvation.

Women scratched their faces bloody, screaming with open throats until their voices broke. Children staggered, some with blood on their lips from biting their tongues, to the rhythm of their madness. It was as if they had decided: If the spirits won't listen, then we'll scream louder—even if we destroy ourselves in the process.

I remember a man cutting his chest with a knife, deep, across, over and over again, while dancing. He laughed, even as blood ran down his stomach, and cried, "The ghosts see me now!" But the only ones who saw him were the children, who stared at him wide-eyed. By morning, he was dead, not by a bullet, but by himself.

Crazy Horse stood there. He was stone, he was shadow, he was silent. But in his silence lay rage, a coldness worse than screams. He knew they were lost—not by enemies, but by themselves.

The drums continued to pound. Hands burst open, blood dripped onto wood. But no one stopped. Even with broken feet, they continued to stomp until bones cracked. Even with their eyes closed, they staggered in circles as if the dance were keeping them alive—or driving them to the grave.

The spirits were silent. The sky was silent. Only the earth took the blood, silent, hungry, indifferent.

And Crazy Horse realized: The dance in the dirt was no longer a prayer. It was a funeral. And they were burying themselves, step by step, blow by blow.

The dance never stopped; it only ended when bodies lay in the dust and no longer twitched. Then they were pulled out of the circle, placed at the edge, and the circle continued to turn as if nothing had happened. No stopping, no silence, no prayer for the dead. Only dust, only stomping, only blood seeping ever deeper into the earth.

The soldiers saw this and feared it. Not because they believed the ghosts, but because they saw the madness. A people who danced in their own blood was unpredictable. A people who embraced death was more dangerous than they seemed weak. And so they shot, even faster, even harder, because they believed: If we mow them down, the dance will stop.

But the dance never stopped. Even in death, arms moved, feet stamped, lips trembled. Even the dead were dragged to the rhythm once more until they lay rigid in the dust.

Crazy Horse stood at the edge, as always. He didn't dance, he didn't sing. He only saw, and what he saw consumed him. The dance in the dirt was not a fight, not a resistance—it was a confession without an audience. It was the admission that the spirits were gone, that heaven was empty, that only earth remained.

Women no longer cried. They had no more tears. Men no longer screamed out of courage, but out of emptiness. Children danced until they fell over, and no one picked them up.

In the end, the dance was just a mirror. A mirror that showed how far they had already fallen. No drum could drown it out. No scream could hide it. They were

no longer dancing for salvation—they were dancing because they could no longer do anything else.

The Dance in the Dirt was the last song of the Lakota. And it wasn't a song anyone wanted to hear.

Crazy Horse turned away. He had no place in this circle. His war was against guns, against iron, against treason. Not against dust, not against dreams. And as the drums continued to pound, he rode out into the darkness.

The dance remained. Dust, blood, bodies. A people burying themselves while the vultures were already waiting.

A knife in the back, a smile on the face

Betrayal smells different than blood. Blood is honest—it stinks of iron, of death, of dust. But betrayal stinks sweetly, rottenly, like meat left in the sun too long. And Crazy Horse learned early on: Not every blade that strikes you comes from the front.

The Lakota had enough enemies from outside—soldiers, traders, priests, trains, iron. But worse were the enemies who sat with them around the fire. Men who laughed while they ate with you and then talked with the whites at night. A knife in your back, a smile on your face.

I remember one who was too involved with the traders. He wore new boots, drank more whiskey than water, and talked of peace while secretly trading horses for bottles. When confronted, he just grinned, his lips glistening with alcohol, and said, "I'm doing it for the people." The next morning, two rifles were missing.

Crazy Horse knew that betrayal was quieter than any bullet. A bullet kills you instantly. Betrayal kills slowly—it erodes trust, it turns brothers into strangers, it chills tents. A tribe that distrusts itself is weaker than a tribe with a hundred dead.

The whites knew this. They shoved knives into hands that were already trembling, they whispered promises of land, food, and safety. They bought betrayal like whiskey. And some took the price.

Crazy Horse didn't wear a mask. He spoke little, but he spoke straight. He hated lies more than guns. An open enemy was an opponent he could kill. A traitor was like a disease—invisible, slow, deadly.

The wind brought not only iron. It also brought rumors. And rumors were knives without handles. Anyone could throw them, no one could hold them.

So Crazy Horse lived between enemies in the East and enemies in his own camp. Between open guns and secret knives. And sometimes the knives cut deeper.

The first traitors didn't have the face of the enemy. They had the face of brothers. Men who had once sat in a circle, who had hunted with you, laughed with you, shared blood with you. But one day, they laughed a little too much, spoke a little too kindly to the whites, and wore things they shouldn't have.

A man named Spotted Elk. He wasn't cowardly, he wasn't stupid—but he was weak. The traders gave him firewater, gave him shiny metal things, made him feel like he was more than the others. He always grinned when he came back, his hands full of gifts. But the knife he hadn't yet drawn was already stuck in his back.

Crazy Horse saw the grin. He spoke to him, not loudly, not in front of the others. Just one sentence: "Your smile smells of blood." Spotted Elk laughed, pretending he didn't understand. But he understood. Everyone understood.

Then there was another—Little Crow. He went to the fort, ostensibly to get meat and blankets. But he brought back papers, contracts he couldn't read. The officers called him "friend." And he grinned, proud, as if he had won something. But what he had won was only the hatred of his own men.

Crazy Horse rarely spoke, but when he looked at these men, there was more coldness in his eyes than in any winter. He didn't kill them immediately—that wasn't his style. He waited, watched. Because betrayal always revealed itself. Sooner or later, the knife would stick not only in his brothers' backs, but in his own flesh.

And so the traitors continued to laugh, smiling into faces they had long since sold out. The knife hadn't fallen yet. But everyone in the camp knew: It was already hanging in the air.

The worst betrayals didn't happen with bottles or papers. They happened in silence—when someone let the enemy know where the hunters were, where the women were camped, where the children were sleeping.

Once, fifteen men went out to hunt buffalo. They rode far, the land was empty, the sun was burning. But suddenly, soldiers appeared from ambush. This wasn't by chance. No one simply draws the perfect line for a raid in the wilderness. Someone must have spoken.

Three men fell instantly. One took a bullet through the neck before he could turn his horse. Two more lay in the dust, their faces torn to pieces. The others rode for their lives, arrows flying, bullets whistling, horses falling. Of the fifteen, only seven returned—without meat, without loot, only with empty eyes.

There was silence in the camp. Everyone knew this was no coincidence. Someone had told the soldiers where the hunters would be. But no one said the name out loud. Knives in the back don't need words. They cut, and you know immediately who's doing it.

Another time, the whites burned an entire village. They came in the middle of the night, with torches and cannons, as if they'd been invited. Women screamed, children ran, tents collapsed. When the smoke cleared, not only was a camp missing. Trust was lacking. Everyone looked at each other and wondered:*Was it you?*

Crazy Horse knew this kind of warfare was worse than pitched battles. A warrior could fall to the dust, proud, weapon in hand. But a betrayal made everyone bow down, even the living. He didn't talk much about it, but his eyes burned when he looked into the faces of those who laughed too much.

"A knife in the front kills you," he once said. "A knife in the back kills everyone."

And he was right. From then on, no one was safe—not from the whites, and not from the brothers.

Crazy Horse was no judge, no preacher. He gave no speeches, he wrote no laws. But when he smelled treason, his silence was more deadly than any judgment.

Once, a sack of powder disappeared without a trace. The soldiers attacked the next morning—as if they had known the warriors weren't fully loaded. It was too clear, too close. It must have been someone from the camp.

Crazy Horse said nothing. He looked into the men's faces, one by one. Then his gaze settled on one. A grin, too long, too casual. A smile that revealed more than it should.

He walked over, slowly, like a hunting animal. No threats, no words. Just that look that cut deeper than any blade. He didn't grab the man by the throat, nor by the arm—he simply took the knife from his belt. He turned it in his hand. He looked at the blade. Then he pressed it back into the man's hand.

"Use it," he said. Just two words. But everyone understood. The man died that same night. Not at Crazy Horse's hands—at his own. No one wanted to sleep with a traitor, no one wanted to hunt with him, no one wanted to breathe next to him.

This is how Crazy Horse dealt with treason: not with spectacle, but with silence. He spoke little, but when he did, it was like a judgment. The men knew: if his gaze met yours, your time was up.

Another time he is said to have said: “A smile can be sharper than a blade.” After that, hardly anyone smiled too often.

Crazy Horse led not with words, but with fear—not fear of punishment, but fear of the truth. For his truth was painful: Betrayal consumes the people faster than iron, faster than guns, faster than hunger.

And he cut him out like rotten meat. Without pity. Without noise.

Betrayal never came alone. It didn't just come with one man. It dragged entire families down with it. If someone went to the whites, if someone took their bottles or their coins, then their eyes fell on his tent, on his wife, on his children. Guilt rubbed off like blood on fabric—you can never get the stain out.

There was a woman whose husband spoke to the traders. She swore she knew nothing, and she begged him to stop. But it didn't help. Her tent was shunned, her children were no longer called to play, and they received no meat if the hunt was successful. She was innocent, but she carried his knife in her back.

Another time, it was a boy. His father had sold horses for whiskey, and the men spit before him. He was twelve, still without weapons, but already with the mark of betrayal on his forehead. No one wanted to stand beside him. No one wanted to teach him anything. Betrayal was like a brand that wouldn't fade, no matter who had originally placed it.

Crazy Horse saw this. He knew that the tribe was tearing itself apart by treating traitors like weeds. But he did nothing to stop it. Perhaps because he knew that a people weak enough to harbor treason must also be tough enough to spit it out with their bare teeth.

He spoke about it aloud only once. "Treason isn't just a man. It's a shadow, and it falls on everyone around him." After that, everyone knew: whoever gets too close to the white man takes the shadow home with them.

The worst knives weren't those made of steel. They were those honed at night with words. A smile, a promise, a secret meeting. No blood was shed immediately – but days later, men lay dead, villages burned, children disappeared.

And again and again that grin, pretending to be innocent. A knife in the back, a smile on the face. This was worse than any open battle.

Betrayal crept slowly. It didn't come like an attack, loud and visible. It came like a poison that you can't taste until it's too late. And even Crazy Horse, as sharply as he smelled the wind, as coldly as he read faces, eventually sensed the poison close to him.

The whites weren't stupid. They knew they couldn't break Crazy Horse with bullets alone. He was too fast, too unpredictable, too feared. So they needed knives from within their own ranks. Knives that smiled.

They whispered in the ears of men who were already wavering. They offered food, land, security. They said, "With Crazy Horse, there is only blood. With us, there is peace." And some listened. Not out of courage, not out of conviction—but out of weariness. A man who fights too long begins to taste the peace of the enemy.

Crazy Horse felt the cold in the camp. He noticed that some eyes lingered on him, that some voices faded as he passed. He saw smiles that didn't reach the eyes. Smiles that looked like drawn knives.

I remember a meeting. A chief spoke of treaties, of peace camps, of "living together." Crazy Horse remained silent, but his gaze was like a blow. He knew that the words didn't come from this man's heart. They came from the forts, from the mouths of the officers who wrote the poison on paper.

The intrigues grew like thorns. Everyone wanted to save themselves, everyone looked for a place where the knife wouldn't hit them. But that was precisely

what tightened the grip. And Crazy Horse stood ever more isolated, more like a rock that even brothers tried to avoid.

The greatest betrayal hadn't happened yet. But everyone in the camp knew it was in the air. It was as certain as a storm already rumbling on the horizon.

And Crazy Horse, the man without a smile, sensed it: The knife was on its way. And it wouldn't come from the front.

The night was quiet, too quiet. No dog barked, no horse snorted. The wind carried only the scent of smoke and iron, and Crazy Horse knew something was wrong.

Betrayal is never loud. It creeps. It hides in the shadows, in conversations that break off as soon as you approach. And that night, it crept through the camp like a snake. Men whispered, not looking each other in the eye. Women pulled their children into the tents, as if they knew something dark hung in the air.

Crazy Horse walked through the ranks. His footsteps were quiet, but his presence heavy. He saw the faces, the flickering fire in their eyes. Some were smiling. But they weren't smiles of joy. They were knives that shimmered before they stabbed.

The whites had done their work. They had spread the poison, and now it was growing from within. Men who had once ridden with him sat there, their eyes downcast, their hands playing with knives. They hadn't defeated him with guns. They had taken his brothers; they had driven doubt into his flesh.

I remember a tent where the voices grew louder. A name was mentioned: Crazy Horse. Then silence. Then more laughter. Laughter that sounded like a cleaver. They were no longer talking about the enemy outside. They were talking about the enemy within.

Crazy Horse knew the day would come. Not with an open attack, not in battle. But quietly, in a night, with a grip from behind, a cold steel, a swift cut.

A knife in his back, a smile on his face. That's how they would betray him. Not the soldiers, not the priests, not the traders. But men who knew his blood, had heard his voice, felt his footsteps beside them.

And perhaps that was the worst part: not that the enemy was stronger, but that their own knives cut deeper than any bullets.

Bones crack in the campfire light

The campfire was more than just warmth. It was the heart of the tribe. Stories were told there, plans were made there, and children were lulled to sleep there. But at some point, the fire became nothing more than a stage for hunger, for brutality, for the cracking of bones that was louder than any song.

The hunts yielded less. Buffalo were gone, deer rare, hares thin. Hunger crept through the tents, making the children weak, the women silent, the men hard and bitter. Around the fire, all that remained was what one had: a piece of meat, sometimes too small, sometimes already stinking. And when one chewed, one heard the cracking—teeth on bone, bone in the fire, bones splintering as one desperately sucked every last bit out of them.

I remember one night. Men sat in a circle, their faces emaciated, their eyes sunk deep into their skulls. A bone was passed around, already gnawed, but one of them broke it anyway, put the splinters in his mouth, and sucked out the marrow as if it were gold. Children stared, wide-eyed, drooling, but getting nothing. Women pulled them back, not saying a word.

The fire flickered, and every crack echoed. No song, no drum, just bones breaking. Sometimes it was hard to tell whether it was the bones in the fire—or the ones in the bodies of the men fighting because one had taken the brunt of the blow.

Crazy Horse sat there, ate little, spoke even less. He saw hunger chewing away at his people, harder than any enemy. A warrior can fight against guns. But against an empty stomach? Against the gaze of his children crying in the night? This was war without battles. War that was slower, crueler, more dishonorable.

The crackling of bones in the fire became the song of those nights. Not a proud sound, not a call for spirits. Only a sound that said: We are no longer warriors. We are merely hungry animals in the dust.

Hunger turned men into animals. In the past, they had shared. One buffalo killed was enough for everyone, a fire for an entire village. But now, without herds, without hunting, without meat, every morsel was a reason for a fight.

I remember one evening. A bone was being passed around—only a piece of marrow left in it. A child grabbed it, his fingers thin as twigs. But a man swatted the hand away, took the bone himself, bit into it, and sucked until his lips were

red from his own gums. The child screamed, the mother held it tight, but no one intervened. No one had enough to be fair.

Teeth crunched around the fire, splinters broke, knives scraped across tendons. Men sucked bones until they splintered and tore open the roofs of their mouths. Women gathered small splinters from the ashes and gave them to the children, who chewed them like candy. No song, no laughter—just the cracking. Again and again.

Crazy Horse watched. He barely ate, giving his share to the children. He didn't talk about it, but his eyes were dark. He knew: hunger doesn't just make you weak. Hunger also robs you of your dignity. When a warrior tears the marrow from a child's mouth, he's no longer a warrior. He's just a dog that bites the dust.

And yet it was so. Men who once rode proudly into battle now lay by the fire, salivating over bones, fighting with bared teeth like wolves. Some fought over nothing more than a piece of skin still hanging from a bone. Sometimes the fight ended in blood, and then the cracking sound was twice as loud—bone in the fire, bone in the face.

Hunger was the silent enemy. No screams, no gunshots, no drumming. Only the quiet breaking of bones, night after night, until you no longer knew if you were still human.

Hunger consumed more than just flesh. It consumed morale, pride, the last vestiges of dignity. A warrior who once rode with his head held high now sat by the fire with his eyes downcast, his fingers in the dust, groping for anything edible—even ash.

The women became tough. They spoke less, gave the children what they could—and sometimes that was nothing. A child with an empty stomach cries more quietly than a healthy one. At some point, it stops crying altogether. Then you know the end is closer than morning. Many children stopped crying.

Men began to look for blame. One pointed at the other: "You took too much." "Your wife hid meat." "Your children ate more than mine." And so the camp split—not into warriors and women, not into young and old, but into the hungry and the even hungrier.

I remember a fight over a burnt bone. Two men wrestled in the dust, punching each other with their fists, blood spurting, teeth flying. In the end, neither had

the bone—it lay in the fire, blackened and unusable. But both men grinned, bloody, like animals who know nothing but anger.

Crazy Horse sat silently at the edge. His gaze was deeper than the fire. He didn't speak, but something else burned within him—not a hunger for meat, but for battle. Not against brothers, but against those who had brought this hunger. He knew that a people destroyed by their own fire cannot last much longer.

But he also knew: Anyone who falls so far, who tears their bones from the flames, has nothing left to lose. And sometimes that's precisely the last resort.

The cracking of bones in the campfire was like a drum. Not a sacred one, not a beautiful one, but a drum. And Crazy Horse heard it—as a call to the final war.

At some point, bones became currency. Meat was scarce, but a bone—even dry, even boiled three times—was something you could trade. One bone for a blanket. Two bones for a drink of firewater. Sometimes a bone for a woman for a night.

I remember one scene: An old man was clutching a bone he had stolen from a dog. A boy came to him, his ribs like a cage, his eyes wide. "Please," he simply said. The old man laughed, bit the bone until it splintered, and spat the splinters at the boy's feet. The boy picked it up and sucked on it until blood came into his mouth. No one intervened.

Children died like candles extinguished in the wind. Quietly, without screams, without fuss. Sometimes the bodies were placed next to the fire, not to honor them, but to take advantage of the warmth while it lasted. And when the bones of the dead crackled, they sounded just like those in the fire.

Men began trading in the shadows. Those who had a piece of bone kept it hidden, sleeping with their arm around it like a lover. If someone had too much, another would come at night with a knife. In the morning, there was blood in the dust, but the bone changed hands.

Crazy Horse saw it. He didn't speak. But his eyes were cold, harder than stone. He knew: A people who treat bones like gold has lost their soul. But that was precisely what made him more dangerous. For he understood: If even bones are a weapon, then everything is a weapon.

The fire crackled, the bones creaked. It wasn't a song, not a prayer. It was just a sound that said: We're finished. But Crazy Horse heard something else in it. To him, it was the echo of drums, of footsteps, of war.

Bones in the fire. Bones in the dust. Bones in the mouth. Everything sounded the same. Everything sounded like the final battle.

If hunger devours long enough, the boundaries blur. First, you take the meat from the animals. Then you scrape off the bones. Then you boil them until the water turns gray. And at some point, the only question that remains is:*What if there are no bones left?*

I remember one night when a body lay by the fire. An old man had died, quietly, without a fuss. The women didn't wrap him, didn't sing a song. They placed him by the fire, and the cracking of his bones mingled with that of the buffalo remains. Some said it was just for warmth. Others looked away, while children's eyes were wide with wonder. No one spoke. But everyone thought it.

Once, two men were fighting over a piece of meat barely larger than a fist. They tore it apart, both stuffing their raw halves into their mouths, while blood ran down their chins. One of them laughed, his teeth red, as if he'd long since gone mad. The women weren't looking. Neither were the children. But Crazy Horse saw. He didn't turn away.

Hunger cast shadows in their minds. Some began to hear voices as they sat by the fire. They said the spirits whispered. But it wasn't the whisper of the spirits. It was the belly screaming until the mind broke.

Crazy Horse didn't speak. But his silence held a judgment: A people who hear the bones of their dead around their own fire is no longer the same. Yet he didn't consider himself defeated. For him, it was just another kind of test.

He looked into the flames, and where others saw only bones, he heard drums. War drums, not prayers. For some, the crackling was a sign of madness. For Crazy Horse, it was a cry: If even fire consumes you, then it will consume the enemy too.

So they sat there—men, women, children, holding bones in the dust like treasures. And Crazy Horse, who didn't deny the madness, but quietly transformed it into rage.

Hunger didn't just make people weak. It made them violent. A tribe that once fought shoulder to shoulder now stood knife to knife—not against soldiers, but against each other.

I remember one evening when two brothers attacked each other by the fire. One had hidden a bone, barely any flesh left on it, but the other had seen it.

They plunged into the embers, the fire spitting sparks, and wrestled until the bone shattered into the dust. In the end, one lay bleeding, his stomach ripped open, while the other licked the ashes like a dog, still clinging to the remains.

The children didn't scream. They stared. For them, it had become normal—bones, blood, fire. A daily spectacle. Some even laughed, but it wasn't laughter of joy. It was that shrill, broken laughter that only comes from madness.

Women tried to tend the fire, but even they began to show their teeth if anyone came too close. One mother would beat another with a burning branch simply because the other had thrown her child a bone. Hunger turned gifts into theft and help into betrayal.

Crazy Horse sat on the sidelines again. He didn't intervene. Not because he didn't care, but because he knew he couldn't fight hunger. No knife, no horse, no trickery could defeat this enemy. He could only endure it.

But the longer he watched, the quieter he became. Still as stone, still as the shadows behind the fire. Something burned in his eyes that didn't come from hunger—it was anger. Not at his own people, but at those who had forced them to do this. The trains, the soldiers, the iron, the land that had stolen them.

The cracking of bones in the fire was like a drumming that drove the men mad. But for Crazy Horse, it was the omen. Every broken bone, every fight that ended in blood, was a blow that made him harder.

The fire consumed everything. Bones, flesh, brothers. And Crazy Horse swore to himself: He would carry this fire back to the forts someday.

The nights had become quieter. Not because the hunger had disappeared, but because it had swallowed all voices. No one sang anymore. No one told stories. Only the fire spoke—and it spoke in the cracking of bones.

Sometimes it was hard to tell whether the bones breaking in the fire were animal or human. The sound was the same: a sharp splintering, followed by a dull crack that echoed in the stomachs of those listening. Some didn't even flinch when they heard it anymore. They were used to it, just as one becomes accustomed to the stench of decay when it lingers in the air long enough.

The children no longer played. They sat by the fire, sucking on bones like toys, without laughing, without speaking. Women were like shadows, men like

empty shells. Hunger had broken them, and the fire mercilessly illuminated their misery.

But Crazy Horse stood his ground. He didn't put a bone in his mouth, he didn't take a single bite that children were missing. He wore hunger like a second skin, silent, immovable. And therein lay his power. While the others broke, he grew harder. As bones cracked in the fire, he swore that he would turn that cracking into battle cries.

For when a people have nothing left, not even meat, not even hope—then only anger remains. And anger is stronger than hunger.

The bones continued to crack, night after night. For some, it was the sound of doom. For Crazy Horse, it was the echo of war, the drumming of the dead, the song of the last remaining survivors.

The fire ate the bones, and the bones ate the hearts. But Crazy Horse didn't see this as defeat. He saw it only as a reminder that there was nothing left to lose.

And those who have nothing left to lose are more dangerous than any enemy.

The dream of flat land

The flat land was more than just earth. It was freedom. No fence, no boundary stone, no paper with seals. Only sky, grass, buffalo, and the wind that connected everything. For the Lakota, the flat land was not a dream—it was their heartbeat.

But the more white people came, the more the heartbeat became an echo. The land was measured, divided, and sold, as if the sky and wind could be cut into pieces. For Crazy Horse, this was the ultimate mockery. How can you own something that everyone breathes? How can you buy the wind?

I remember one night when an old man spoke. He said, "The land is flat so we can walk freely. If the Whites put up fences, they'll make the land sick." Everyone nodded. And yet they knew the fences had already been put up, mile after mile. Iron bars in the ground, like nails in a coffin.

Crazy Horse dreamed of a land where children could walk again without seeing soldiers. A land where horses ran free, uncounted, unsold. A land where no smoke from forts hung over the hills. But he knew it was only a dream.

The women spoke of it quietly as they sat by the fire: "Perhaps there is another valley, far to the north, where there are no white people." But no one believed it. Even the children, who had never seen the vastness, sensed that the dream was growing thinner, like a sheet washed over and over again until it rips.

The flat land was no longer there. It was a memory. An image that lived only in the minds of the old and the angry ones who refused to stop fighting.

But Crazy Horse held on to this image. Not because he believed he could bring it back. But because he knew: A man without a dream is already dead.

And his dream was the flat land – endless, free, wild.

The dream of flat land bounced off the reality of the reservations like a bird against a wall of glass. From the outside, it still looked like freedom, like sky and wind. But as soon as you walked into it, you realized it was a cage.

The whites called it "peace." They said, "Here is your land, your own. No one will disturb you." But the boundaries had been drawn, fences erected, sentries posted. Freedom was written on a piece of paper that none of the Lakota could read—and that had already been torn before the ink was dry.

Crazy Horse saw it. He rode across the reservation land, and it was no longer the land he knew. No more buffalo trains, no more endless plains. Instead, small fields, divided and measured. One man could dig here, another there—as if the earth were a coin to be divided and exchanged.

I remember a boy who asked, "Where does our land end?" His mother pointed at a fence. He stared, not understanding. For him, the land was endless, like the sky. But there was a piece of iron, and behind it, it no longer belonged to him. The boy's gaze became dull, and one could see how something was taken from him that could never be returned.

There was no more hunting on the reservations, only rations. Flour, salt, sometimes rancid meat—if anything. Men stood in lines like beggars, holding out their hands for bread that tasted of dust. Women wept silently when children got diarrhea from the poisoned food.

The dream of the flat land was big, wide, and full of wind. The reality was cramped, stinking, and full of hunger. And the worst part wasn't the lack—it was the humiliation. A warrior who once hunted a hundred buffalo now had to wait until a white officer pressed a piece of bread into his hand.

Crazy Horse rarely spoke. But when he saw this, his fists clenched. Because it was worse than dying in battle: living like a dog in a cage.

For many, the dream was already dead. They saw the fences, they saw the soldiers, they saw the rations. They heard the crackling of bones in the fire and knew: The flat land was not coming back. Not for them, not for their children.

Some gave up. They took the white people's blankets, drank the whiskey poison, grumbled, but stayed. Their eyes were dull, their shoulders broken. When they spoke of the past, it sounded like a fairy tale, not a memory.

But Crazy Horse carried the dream further. Not as an illusion, not as hope, but as a weapon. In his mind, the land was still vast, still free, still full of buffalo. And this thought made him more dangerous than any soldier with a rifle. For whoever keeps an image in his heart can die without kneeling.

I remember one night when he sat quietly by the fire. An old man spoke of the plains, of days when the sky was bigger than anything else. Many didn't listen. They slept, they were silent. But Crazy Horse listened. His eyes didn't shine, but they burned. He didn't speak, but his silence was louder than any words:*The land still belongs to us. Even if we die, it still belongs to us.*

The women looked at him, some with hope, others with fear. They knew: whoever carries the dream for too long will burn with it. But they also knew: without men like him, nothing would remain but dust.

Children crept closer to the fire, listening to stories of the land that was flat and free. They could hardly imagine it, but they clung to the words. And in their eyes, a small light glimmered—a remnant of the dream the adults had already lost.

Crazy Horse wasn't a man of grand speeches. But in his bearing, in his silence, in his eyes—there lay the flat land. And as long as he lived, so did the dream.

For Crazy Horse, the dream of the flatlands wasn't a fairy tale. It was a commitment. Every breath, every beat of his heart, was tied to it. Not because he believed he would ever see the plains as free as they once were—that was

over. But because he knew: A warrior doesn't die for bread, not for rations, not for whiskey. A warrior dies for land.

When he rode, he saw no fences. He saw the sky, the vastness, the grass. Even when there was dust beneath his hooves, even when soldiers lurked beyond the hills—in his mind there was always the flat land, undivided, unbroken.

The other warriors sometimes wondered where he got his toughness from. They saw the children starving, they heard the women crying, they felt the hunger in their own stomachs. But Crazy Horse seemed to be made of something else. He could starve, he could remain silent, he could see blood without trembling. Dreams were his nourishment.

I remember a small battle, somewhere on the edge of the hills. The soldiers advanced, bullets flew, men fell. Many fled, some died, but Crazy Horse rode right into the thick of it, as if death were only a shadow. Later, when he returned, bleeding, someone asked him, "Why didn't you turn back?" His answer was succinct: "Because the land won't turn back."

He knew he wouldn't live forever. He knew the fences would close, that the reservations would suffocate everything. But as long as he breathed, the dream was bigger than the borders.

For others, the dream was a shadow that tormented them. For Crazy Horse, it was a fire that sustained him. And he knew: If he fell, it would be in the dust of this land, not in a cage.

The flat land was no longer a reality. But it was the reason he fought. And the reason he could die without bowing his head.

The flat land began to become a myth. The old people spoke of it as if it were a dream visited in their sleep. The young people listened, but they knew only the confines of the camps, the fences, the soldiers. For them, the land was already a legend, like stories of animals that no longer existed.

But myths are dangerous. They last longer than flesh, longer than blood. They can live on in minds long after bodies are dead. And so the flat land became the last thing left for the Lakota.

I remember a woman who let her daughter starve to death at her breast because there was no more milk. She sang her soft songs about the land where buffalo roamed, where the grass stood tall, where children were never hungry. The child died with a faint smile on her lips, as if she had truly seen that land.

The men, themselves starving, talked around the fire at night: "If we die, we'll go back to the land. Flat, free, full of buffalo." It was no longer a place to be found. It was a place after death.

Crazy Horse knew he was fueling the myth, whether he wanted to or not. He rarely spoke of the land, but his silence was enough. The others saw in him proof: as long as he fought, the land still existed. As long as he stood, it wasn't lost.

But Crazy Horse carried the myth like a burden. He knew that every glance at him, every whisper across the flat land, made him heavier. He couldn't fall like an ordinary warrior. If he fell, the dream would fall with him.

And so he rode on, fought on, and remained silent – not for himself, but for a myth that already had more weight than any piece of earth.

The flat land was no longer a reality. It was a ghost. But it was a ghost that drove them stronger than hunger, stronger than iron, stronger than betrayal.

And Crazy Horse was the last to carry that spirit.

The dream of a flat land was a double-edged sword. For some, it was hope; for others, it was madness.

The children heard the stories, but all they saw was dust, soldiers, and fences. Some even laughed when the elders told of buffaloes shaking the ground. For them, it was just a fairy tale—as distant as the stars. Their eyes no longer knew the vastness, only walls.

The women clung to the stories, but they knew they were poison. A dream that doesn't come true is worse than no dream at all. Sometimes you could hear them whispering, "Stop it. Let's forget the land." But no one could forget. Even in the confines, even in hunger, the land was still there, like a ghost choking you in your sleep.

The men—they wavered between hope and madness. Some rode out, seeking plains long gone. They never returned. Others stayed, telling of battles yet to come, even though they themselves could barely stand. The dream drove them on—or broke them for good.

Crazy Horse wore the dream like armor. He didn't speak of buffalo, or of green plains. But when he rode in the distance, he saw no fences. He saw only what

once was. And this image made him unyielding. To some, that was strength; to others, madness.

I remember a woman saying, "He sees land that is no longer there." A man replied, "That's exactly why you follow him."

The flat land was no longer a reality, but it remained a final spark. For some, it burned like a torch. For others, it burned them from within.

And Crazy Horse, the man without a pose, carried that spark further, even though he knew: fire can warm. But it can also burn.

In the end, the flat land didn't remain beneath their feet—it remained in their minds. It was no longer a place one could reach. It was a legacy.

The children who survived the famine would hear of a land they had never seen. They would hear of buffalo shaking the ground, of plains stretching to the horizon, of rivers flowing freely. And they would know: Once upon a time. A fairy tale, yes—but a fairy tale that made their blood run cold.

The elderly died with this image in their eyes. They whispered about it as if it were a door opening behind them. Women sang it in songs, even when their voices were rough and broken. Men carried it like a final knife, even when their hands were already trembling.

But Crazy Horse made it his legacy. He knew he couldn't take the land back. But he could die without betraying it. And that was enough. Because when a people loses, all that remains is what they didn't sell.

I remember one night when he stood by the fire. He didn't say much—he was never a man of many words. But someone asked him, "Why fight when the country is already lost?" Crazy Horse looked into the flames and replied, "So it won't be forgotten."

That was the dream of the flat land. No victory, no return. Only memories that never die. And memories can be sharper than any knife, more powerful than any rifle.

The flat land no longer existed in reality. But it lived in Crazy Horse's gaze. And as long as he breathed, the dream was immortal.

Flies on the carcass

Death always has spectators. And when no humans remain, the flies come. They are more punctual than any vulture, faster than any wolf. Where there is blood, there are flies. Where there is decay, there is a humming sound like a song no one wants to hear.

Flies were everywhere in the camp. They settled on open wounds, on the lips of children too weak to wipe them away. They lay on the remains of meat that already smelled of bile, on bones lying in the dust. Even in sleep, you could hear their buzzing—an endless humming that announced death before it came.

I remember a tent in which an old warrior died. He was breathing heavily, his face gray, his eyes half-closed. Even before his heart stopped beating, flies were already sitting on his eyelids. They didn't wait until he was cold. They were always faster.

Crazy Horse saw them, those black spots that accompanied suffering like shadows. He didn't hate them—they were honest. Flies did what they did. They ate what was dead. It was simpler, more honest, than what the white people did.

But for the people, the flies were worse than any gunshot. Their buzzing reminded them how close death was. Every hour, every day. And there was no fire, no smoke to keep them away for long. They always came back.

The carcass they were sitting on wasn't just meat. It was the people themselves. The Lakota were rotting, falling apart. And the flies were just the honest witnesses.

Crazy Horse felt it. Every buzzing sound was like a warning: "Your end is already rotting."

The flies made no distinction. They settled on the corpses of warriors, on the faces of children, on the breasts of women lying in the dust. They crawled into nostrils, into open mouths, and laid eggs in wounds that never healed.

The buzzing was always there. A background noise like the crackling of bones in a fire. At first, people tried to scare it away, with their hands, with smoke, with cloths. But eventually, it stopped. You can't wave death away.

I remember a mother holding her dead child in her arms. Flies were sitting on its eyes, crawling over its lips, which would never drink milk again. She didn't

even blink, she didn't smack them away. She held the child as if it were still warm and stared into the void. The flies buzzed, and no one bothered her.

Warriors who returned wounded watched as the flies ate their wounds long before healing was possible. Some cut with knives to remove the maggots. Some simply let it happen, staring up at the sky as their flesh was slowly eaten alive.

Crazy Horse watched these scenes and remained silent. He hated no animal, no insect. But the buzzing of the flies was worse than any war horn. For it said: "You are already carrion. You are already corpses."

The Lakota heard it. But eventually, they became numb. Women cooked with flies in their pots. Men slept with flies in their hair. Children played in the dust where the corpses lay, and the flies hovered over both—over the dead and the living.

The humming was the song of doom. And no one could drown it out.

The flies were honest—they ate what was dead. But worse were the men who lived like flies and fed on the suffering of others.

The whites came into the camps like scavengers. Traders, preachers, officers—each humming their own tune, but all squatting on the carcasses of the people. They offered blankets that smelled of disease. Whiskey, which killed more than any bullet. Papers they called "treaties," but which were nothing more than maggots in the wounds.

I remember an officer who came into a starving village with a grin. He had bread in his cart, hard and moldy. He held it up, let the children see it, made them drool. Then he said, "Give me your guns." The mothers cried, the men cursed. In the end, they gave up their weapons. By evening, the children still lay in the dust, their stomachs empty, the bread scattered, barely enough for a bite. The flies were the only ones who were truly fed.

The whites were like swarms: everywhere, loud, insatiable. They sucked blood wherever it still flowed. They gnawed at the skin, at the pride, at the last vestige of dignity.

Crazy Horse recognized this. "They're like flies," he once said quietly to the flames. "They eat what we lose. And they won't stop until there's nothing left."

But the difference was clear: flies ate because they had to. Whites ate because they wanted to.

And sometimes it was hard to say what was worse - the buzzing of flies over the dead or the smiles of men who treated living people like carrion.

At some point, the Lakota themselves began to look like flies. Not because they wanted to—but because hunger drove them there.

They pounced on every carcass, whether buffalo, horse, or dog. Even the remains left lying in the dust by the whites were collected, cooked, and scraped out. Flies and humans shared the same meals, side by side. Sometimes maggots were already crawling in the meat, and it still went into the pot.

I remember a woman who found a dead horse. It was already half-rotted, its skin black, its bones visible. She cut out pieces while the flies lay over it like a black veil. She didn't swatted them away. She ate the meat like that, with trembling hands, her face blank, her lips dirty.

Men wrestled with dogs over carcasses. Children collected bones with only scraps of skin hanging from them. The flies were everywhere, and they no longer bothered anyone. They were part of the meal, part of life.

Crazy Horse saw this, and there was something in his gaze that wasn't hunger. It was shame. Not shame for those who ate—but for the fact that they were forced to live this way. He knew: a people who eat carrion are no longer seen as warriors. But that was precisely what made him angry. Because he understood that they were made that way—deliberately, coldly, calculatingly.

The buzzing of the flies was the song of a people forced to humiliate themselves just to survive. And yet, in this survival, there was also defiance. For as long as someone was still chewing, as long as someone was still breathing, the end was not complete.

But the image remained: flies on the carcass. And sometimes it was hard to tell which carcass was—the dead animal in the dust or the people themselves.

The line between the living and the dead had become thin. So thin that sometimes even flies could no longer distinguish them.

They sat on the corpses lying in the dust, bloated, gray, their eyes long since gouged out. But they sat just as much on the living—on wounded men too

weak to beat them away, on children with open wounds, on women lying motionless with exhaustion.

I remember a battlefield. Men lay scattered, some dead, others half-alive. Flies buzzed over them all, crawling from open mouths to open stomachs. A young warrior was still wheezing, the blood fresh on his chest—but the flies had already chosen him. To them, he was already a carcass.

And that was the worst part: when even the flies thought you were dead, even though you were still breathing.

The children played among the corpses because they no longer knew the difference. Once I saw a girl swatting at the flies circling above a dead man with a stick. She laughed shrilly, as if they were just sparks in a fire. She didn't know it was her uncle whose face the flies were dancing over.

Crazy Horse often stood still when he saw this. His eyes cold, his lips firm. He didn't speak, but in his silence lay a cry. A cry against a fate that had turned his people into carrion, both living and dead.

The buzzing of the flies became a choir that sang every night. No prayer, no drum, no voice was louder. It was the song of decay, and everyone heard it—whether they wanted to or not.

The flies were more honest than humans. They knew that everything would eventually become a carcass. And the Lakota sensed that for them, that someday was already here.

For Crazy Horse, the flies were more than just insects. They were an omen. They didn't just show where meat was rotting—they showed where the people themselves were beginning to rot.

He watched them, sitting on wounds, buzzing over the dead. And he understood: betrayal, fatigue, resignation—these were the same maggots, only in the heart. The flies were merely the visible messengers of an invisible decay.

I remember one night he was sitting by the fire. A whole swarm of them was buzzing over the pot where bones were being boiled. A man cursed and swatted them away, but Crazy Horse didn't move. He watched as they kept coming back, unstoppable. Then he said quietly, "That's the way white people are. They don't leave if you swatt them away. They keep coming back until there's nothing left."

The men sitting next to him were silent. Some nodded, others stared into the fire. Everyone understood that he wasn't talking about the flies.

But Crazy Horse went even further. For him, the flies were also mirrors. They did what humans did: They lived off the carcasses of others. And there were more than enough in the camp who did the same thing—men who sold their brothers, women who went to the soldiers for rations, children who stole from their own people.

The flies reminded him: Not every carcass is dead. Some are still running around.

And that was perhaps the worst omen of all.

In the end, the flies were everywhere. There was no fire, no smoke, no cloth that could keep them away for long. They came as soon as the flesh became warm, as soon as the blood flowed, as soon as a body was too weak to defend itself.

For many, they became invisible. You heard the buzzing, you felt the cold, you saw them on people's faces—and you no longer flinched. They had become a part of everyday life, as normal as the dust, as omnipresent as hunger.

But Crazy Horse never let them disappear. For him, flies were the final warning signal. He saw them on corpses, he saw them on children's lips, he saw them in open wounds. And he knew: whoever accepts them accepts the end.

Once, as the men sat around the fire, a swarm buzzed over a piece of meat. Everyone swatted at it, cursing. Crazy Horse took the piece, threw it into the fire, and said, "I won't be carrion. Not for flies, not for the white people."

The words fell hard, heavy, and they burned deeper than flesh in the fire. For everyone understood what he meant. He would die before he allowed himself to be consumed.

The flies were the song of decay, constantly buzzing in his ears. But Crazy Horse swore they wouldn't eat away at him. Not as long as he breathed, not as long as he could fight.

The people might already be carcasses. But he—he remained a warrior. And warriors aren't scavengers. They are fire.

False friends, cheap promises

Friends had become rare. Real friends even rarer. Most of those who called themselves friends came with empty hands and full mouths. They spoke of peace, of security, of "a better future." But their eyes betrayed it—they wanted something. Always.

The white people were masters at it. They brought gifts: blankets, mirrors, knives, whiskey. Everyone knew that every gift had a catch, and yet the people took it. Hunger blinds, and thirst deafens. "Take it, and trust me," they said. And many took it.

I remember a meeting with an officer. He stood there, clean, his boots shining, his face smooth as paper. His words were even smoother. "We only want peace," he said. "Give us your weapons, and we will give you protection." The men were silent, the women stared. Everyone knew: This wasn't protection. This was a noose you put around your own neck. But still, there were some who nodded.

And worse still, there were false friends among their own ranks. Men who had once ridden alongside Crazy Horse, who had bled beside him, suddenly began to speak softly, demand compromises, and repeat the tongue of the white man. They said, "Perhaps it's better this way. Perhaps peace is wiser." But their eyes betrayed that it wasn't peace they were seeking—but comfort.

Cheap promises hung over everything like smoke. Land. Bread. Security. No more bullets. No more deaths. Everything sounded sweet, everything sounded like salvation. But everyone knew: every promise was only worth something until the ink on the paper was dry. After that, it was worth less than the dust beneath one's feet.

Crazy Horse heard the words, saw the gifts, watched the men soften. He didn't speak much, but he thought, "False friends are worse than open enemies."

And he was right.

The false friends were the most dangerous. They sat with you by the fire, drank from the same cup, ate the same meat—and while you chewed, they were already thinking about how deep they could drive the knife into your back.

You couldn't recognize them at first glance. They laughed, they swore loyalty, they told the same stories as everyone else. But when the night grew quiet and the fire burned down, you could hear them whispering. Some talked to the

white men, some to other men who had already softened. Their voices were quieter than the buzzing of flies, but Crazy Horse heard them nonetheless.

I remember a man who swore at sunrise: "Crazy Horse, I'll stand by your side until death." That same evening, he was seen talking to an officer, a piece of paper in his hand, a flask in his belt. The next morning, he acted as if nothing had happened.

Cheap promises, spoken as fast as they could spit. Men who said, "We'll fight tomorrow." But when the bullets whistled, they were gone. Men who said, "We'll share the meat." But they hid it under their blankets.

Crazy Horse saw them and remained silent. But his silence was harsher than any threat. The men who knew him knew: whoever met his gaze was already lost. But the false ones, drugged by whiskey and lulled by the promises of the white man, didn't sense it. They believed they could speak with a double tongue and get away with it.

The sad thing was: Sometimes they succeeded. Some survived, some received land, bread, and protection—while others died. Treason was rarely punished, and that only made it more common.

Crazy Horse knew: An enemy you see, you can kill. But a friend who has already sold himself – he'll eat you from the inside.

And that was precisely what was consuming the people. Not bullets, not hunger, but false friends with cheap promises.

Crazy Horse wasn't a man who gave long speeches. He didn't publicly humiliate anyone, he didn't shout, he didn't make accusations. He didn't need to. His silence was heavier than any judgment, and his gaze cut deeper than any knife.

When he sat by the fire, the flames dancing in his eyes, and looked at someone for too long, that person knew: The hour was running out. Not a word, not a gesture—only this silence, which spoke louder than a thousand threats.

I remember a man who got too involved with the whites. He came back to camp, bringing whiskey, bringing stories of "peace" and "land." He talked loudly, he laughed, he swore he was only interested in trade. Crazy Horse listened—silently. Not a word. Not a nod. Just that look. The man continued to laugh, but his voice trembled. A week later, he was found in the dust. Without a throat. No one asked who it was. No one needed to ask.

That's how it often was. Crazy Horse himself didn't have to strike. It was enough for him to see. The camp took care of the rest. Men who danced too close to betrayal eventually stumbled—and never got up again.

But there were also those who were tougher. Men who believed they could move between worlds: warriors by day, spies by night. These lasted longer because they wore their masks better. But Crazy Horse had time. He didn't speak. He waited. And sooner or later, they betrayed themselves—with a fake smile, with a too-quick grab for a gift, with an inappropriate gesture.

For Crazy Horse, every false friend was like a fly on a carcass. He didn't chase them away immediately. He let them buzz, he let them sit. But he knew: flies don't live long.

His silence was the net that trapped them. And that made him dangerous—not only to his enemies, but also to those who pretended to be his friends.

The white people had many faces—soldiers with shiny boots, traders with greedy eyes, missionaries with Bibles heavier than their hearts. But no matter what face they wore, their tongues were the same: smooth, sweet, deceitful.

They spoke of "peace." Of "new life." Of "security for families." Words that tasted like honey, but felt like poison in the stomach.

A trader came into the camp, bringing sugar, flour, and tobacco. He spoke of "friendship," he gave children colorful glass beads, and the women smiled faintly. But in the shadows, he pulled out lists stating what he really wanted: horses, rifles, land. All in exchange for ridiculous promises that vanished into the dust as soon as he turned his back.

The missionaries were even worse. They held up crosses and talked about "salvation." They said, "Your God has abandoned you. Our God is stronger." And while they spoke, the soldiers built new forts. Salvation in their mouths, iron in their hands.

Crazy Horse heard them, and he remained silent. But anger burned in his eyes. Not because he believed their words—he didn't believe anything they said. But because he saw his own men wavering. Hunger softened them, cold made them susceptible. A bag of flour could weigh more than an oath.

I remember a meeting. An officer stood there, clean, smooth, with a piece of paper in his hand. He spoke of land that would belong to the Lakota "forever," "as long as the sun shines and the grass grows." Everyone nodded, some cried.

But Crazy Horse just stared at him. He knew: The sun shines, the grass grows—and the lie grows right along with it.

Cheap promises were the real poison. Not the bullets, not the guns. Bullets kill the body. Promises kill the will.

And Crazy Horse knew: the second death is worse than the first.

The promises didn't work immediately. They seeped in slowly, like rain on dry soil. At first, you just heard them. Then you thought about them. And eventually, you believed them, even though you knew they were lies.

In the camp, the cracks were growing. Men who once rode side by side now sat on opposite sides of the fire. Some said, "Perhaps we should accept what they give. A little is better than nothing." Others spat in the dust and said, "Better to starve than to kiss the white man's mouth."

The women were divided. Some begged their men to make peace—not out of weakness, but out of love for the children lying in the dust. Others hated the whites more than any warrior, because they knew no promise would ever ease the pain they had already suffered.

I remember a mother who said, "If they give me flour, I'll take it. But I'll never give them my heart." Her husband beat her for it, drunk on the whiskey he had taken from those same whites.

So the cheap promises gnawed deeper than hunger. Hunger could be shared; it made everyone equal. But a promise that one believed and another despised – that divided.

Crazy Horse saw the fire in the camp go out. Not the real fire, but the one inside. He knew the white man's bullets were dangerous, but their words were deadlier. A bullet war ends in death. A war of words ends in traitors.

And betrayal, he knew, stinks worse than any corpse in the dust.

It didn't take long for false words to become false actions. Promises were merely the bait—the real catch came afterward.

Men who had previously sworn never to speak to the whites disappeared into their forts at night. They returned with bread or tobacco, blankets or whiskey. When asked, they said: "It was nothing. Just a deal." But the fire in their eyes had gone out, and everyone knew: A deal was never just a deal.

I remember a warrior who returned from the whites, his pockets full. He distributed gifts, talked loudly, laughed, as if he wanted to prove he was still the same man. But the next morning, when the soldiers knew exactly where the camp was, everyone knew that he was the shadow that had betrayed them.

Cheap promises became hard currency. A piece of land here, a few rations there. Some gave information, some gave horses, some gave up entire brothers—all to live a little longer, eat a little more, sleep a little warmer.

Crazy Horse saw it and remained silent, but his gaze darkened. For him, the enemy wasn't just in the forts—he was now also sitting by his own fire. He knew: the bullets that would one day strike his people had long since been fired by words.

And that was the most bitter part: Death no longer came with noise and thunder. It came with smiles, with promises, with an outstretched hand.

The knife in the back now had many names. And each of these names sounded familiar.

In the end, it wasn't hunger, not the bullets, not the white man's iron that wounded Crazy Horse most deeply. It was the faces he knew. The voices that once cried out beside him. The hands that had shed blood with him—and that now quietly reached for the white man's gifts.

False friends. Men who laughed while they had already signed in their hearts. Men who said, "Brother," while secretly carrying contracts. Men who nodded while whispering in the shadows.

Crazy Horse knew you could fight guns. You could hunt buffalo, even when they disappeared. You could endure hunger, suck bones, and carry an empty stomach. But against betrayal? Against cheap promises that ate into hearts like maggots? There was no weapon against that.

I remember one night when he uttered only one sentence. He sat by the fire, the flames reflected in his eyes, and he spoke softly, barely audibly: "The whites kill us with iron. But the false ones kill us with their tongues."

Everyone remained silent. Because everyone knew he was right. And everyone knew that this very tongue, this cheap promise, would one day be turned against him.

Crazy Horse saw it coming. He knew the knife wasn't coming from the front. Not from the soldier with the rifle. Not from the officer with the paper. It was coming from the side, from behind, from a face he knew.

False friends are worse than open enemies. And Crazy Horse wore this knowledge like an open wound. Always burning. Always ready to be cut deeper.

Black smoke over the hills

Black smoke was the sign no one could miss. White smoke meant peace, meant fires, meant everyday life. But black smoke – that was war. That was death. That was a cry that rose higher than any prayer.

The hills, once silent, suddenly bore this dark mark. When soldiers burned a village, it rose. When a buffalo train was senselessly slaughtered, it rose. When a camp was ambushed at dawn, it rose. Smoke was the messenger that traveled faster than horses. Everyone knew: Where there is black smoke, there is blood in the dust.

I remember one night when the warriors were sitting by the fire. Suddenly, they stared west. Above the hills stood a black tower, thick, fat, heavy. No one spoke, no one asked. Everyone knew: Over there, women are screaming. Over there, men are falling. Over there, children are dying.

Crazy Horse said nothing. But his expression was dark. Black smoke didn't just mean death—it also meant being late again. You were always late. The smoke was always faster than the riders, something was always burning down while you were still pulling the saddle.

The white people knew the language of smoke. They knew it frightened people, that it made their hearts race. That's why they didn't just burn houses; they burned entire villages, even when no one was left living there. The smoke was meant to be visible, so the people would understand: We are everywhere, we can reach you at any time.

The sky above the hills turned black. Not from rain, not from storms—but from the smoke of destruction. And the Lakota knew: as long as this smoke rose, there would be no peace.

Black smoke over the hills was no longer a sign. It was a permanent condition.

The smoke didn't kill directly. It didn't fire bullets, it didn't cut throats. But it ate into people's minds, their dreams, their bones.

Men who once rode fearlessly saw the black smoke and fell silent. They knew: Wherever it rose, there were no survivors, only ash. Women saw it and held their children tighter, as if they could protect them from the unseen. Even the children, who didn't understand what it meant, heard the trembling in their voices and wept when the sky turned black.

I remember an old woman once saying, "Black smoke smells worse than blood." And she was right. Blood was life running out. Smoke was a memory that never disappeared. It settled in the hair, in the clothes, it moved into the tents. You couldn't shake it off. It was like a curse.

The soldiers knew this. They used the smoke like a weapon. They burned, even when they had no reason to. They set huts ablaze, supplies ablaze, even the bones of the dead. All so the sky would turn black and the hills would sing the song of destruction.

Crazy Horse understood: The smoke wasn't an accident. It was a message. It said, "Your land is no longer yours." It said, "You are not safe." It said, "We'll even take your air away."

And so the fight became not just one against bullets, not just one against hunger—it became a fight against fear. Against the dark cloud on the horizon that weighed heavier on their hearts than any chain.

Black smoke over the hills – that was war without a single shot being fired.

The smoke wasn't a moment, it was a state. Sometimes it hung over the hills for days, so thick that even the sun shimmered behind it like a rotten, red ball. The air tasted of burnt flesh, of charred wood, of death.

Men who rode out returned with black faces because the smoke ate into every pore. Women coughed, children developed fevers, their lungs smaller than the flames that destroyed them. It was as if the smoke itself crept into the body, as if it wanted not only to drive the people away, but to suffocate them from within.

I remember one day when the sky remained black, from morning to night. The Whites' fire had destroyed an entire village. When we arrived, only the

skeletons of huts remained, blackened, charred trunks rising into the sky like the bones of a dead giant. Flies everywhere, ash everywhere. The smoke still hung, thick, heavy, as if it wouldn't go away.

Crazy Horse rode among the rubble. His face was stone, his eyes dark. He didn't speak, but you could see him inhaling the smoke, wearing it as if it were a sign. For others, it was just the stench of defeat. For him, it was the reminder that drove him on: As long as smoke hangs over the hills, there will be no peace.

The smoke dulled the people's spirits. At night, they could be seen sitting in their tents, silent, without song or prayer. Even the drums were silent. For what good is drumming when the sky is black?

And yet, Crazy Horse didn't just see the smoke as an end. For him, it was also a beginning. A sign that the fight was still there. That the white people had to strive to keep burning, to keep destroying. An enemy who starts fire is afraid.

The black smoke over the hills was both a song of death and a drum of war. And Crazy Horse swore that he would not fall silent as long as he still breathed.

The smoke never came alone. Whenever the whites spoke of "peace," black smoke rose from somewhere. It was like a damned reflex—a treaty on the table, and in the background, a village was already burning.

The officers stood there in their neat uniforms, with papers, seals, and greasy smiles. "We only want your friendship. We only want peace." And as they said this, one could see the sky darkening over the hills, one could see the birds fleeing, one could already smell the burning.

I remember a meeting where an officer said, "This is our final offer. After this, there will be peace." At that very moment, women came running into the camp, screaming, their clothes blackened by smoke. Their villages were already ashes. Peace with the mouth, fire with the hand.

Crazy Horse saw through it. He knew that smoke was worth more than words. Words could lie, smoke couldn't. Where there was smoke, there was destruction. No matter what the white people said.

And worse still, some men in their own camp were still blinded. They heard the words, not the smoke. They saw the paper peace, not the black sky. "Maybe they mean it this time," they said. And as they said this, their children coughed at the smoke that was already drifting through the tents.

Crazy Horse spoke little, but when he did, it was like a blow: "Anyone who sees smoke and still believes in peace is already dead."

The hills told the truth. The sky told the truth. And the truth stank of burnt flesh and iron.

The black smoke became a permanent part of life. Like dust, like hunger, like flies. It was no longer just a sign; it was a constant reminder.

People saw it in the morning when they stepped out of their tents. They saw it in the evening when they put the children to bed. Sometimes it was so far away that it hung like a black line on the horizon. Sometimes it was so close that the air burned, that their eyes watered, that they could taste the smoke in their throats.

I remember a girl who asked her mother, "When will the smoke stop?" Her mother remained silent, just stroked her head. What was she supposed to answer? The smoke never stopped. It just changed location.

Even the old men, who had seen much, grew quieter. They no longer spoke of the old hunts, no longer of the freedom of the plains. They stared at the sky and said, "It used to be blue." Only that. No stories, no songs. The smoke had obscured even their memories.

But Crazy Horse didn't let the smoke be the end of it. For him, it was a signal that the fight was still burning. He said, "As long as smoke rises, we are not defeated. For they burn because they are afraid." Some thought he was crazy, some believed him. But everyone knew: The smoke was there. And it remained.

There was no escape. No turning back. No forgetting. The hills were filled with dark towers, like black fingers pointing to the sky. And everyone knew what they said:
Your country is dying. Your people are dying.

The black smoke was like a mirror: it showed everyone what they wanted to see. For some, it was the end—the sign that all was lost, that there was no tomorrow. For others, it was fuel—a reason to grit their teeth, saddle their horse, and sharpen their knives.

Crazy Horse belonged to the latter category. He saw the smoke not as a defeat, but as a challenge. "When they burn, they show their fear," he once said. "An enemy who is truly confident doesn't need to burn anything down."

And yet, even he couldn't deny the stench. The smoke carried the scent of burnt flesh, of dead horses, of decaying memories. It seeped into skin and hair, and when you slept at night, it was still there, like an invisible enemy taking your breath away.

I remember one night when the smoke was so thick that you could no longer see the stars. Men sat there, silent, and all you could hear was coughing. One whispered, "The sky is dead." No one objected. Because no one could deny the stars disappearing behind the smoke.

Crazy Horse was silent, but he thought:*The sky is not dead. It is just hidden.* And that became precisely his attitude. He didn't let the smoke suffocate him. For him, every black tower was proof that the whites still had to fight, that they weren't safe, that they could only hold the land with fire—not with right, not with soul.

Thus, the black smoke over the hills became two things: the sign of doom and at the same time the final proof that the battle was not yet over.

For many, it was the end. For Crazy Horse, it was the final reason not to give up.

In the end, the black smoke was more than just smoke. It was fate. It was the sky that settled over the people like a shroud. No one could ignore it, no one could wipe it away. It was there, day after day, night after night.

The children no longer knew what a blue sky was. For them, the sky was gray or black, always heavy, always strange. When one of the elders told them that it used to be clear and endless, they didn't laugh—they simply didn't believe it. For them, the smoke was the only truth.

The women no longer cried when they saw the smoke. They had no tears left. They looked at it, cold, empty, as if it were just another piece of misery they had grown accustomed to.

The men? Some drank, some prayed, some remained silent. But everyone saw that the smoke was bigger than them. It wasn't just fire. It was the message that a people was slowly burning away.

Only Crazy Horse thought differently. For him, the black smoke was not the end. He said, "They can blacken the sky, but they cannot own it." It was his vow. He would not die under the smoke, suffocated, like a dog in a cage. If he

had to fall, it would be under the open sky, with the wind in his face, with the stars above him. Not under the black cloth the whites pulled across the sky.

The smoke over the hills was a sign of doom. But Crazy Horse turned it into a promise: As long as he lived, he would fight so that at least some of the people could see the sky blue once more.

And if not, he would die before the smoke swallowed him.

The Song of the Vultures

The vultures always arrived last—but they came safely. When the dust settled, when the screaming had died down, when the flies had already had their fill, then they appeared, high above in a circle, with wings that moved like shadows across the land.

Their song wasn't a song in the true sense of the word. It was a croak, a dry, malicious cry that went right through your bones. Sometimes you heard it even before you saw the wings in the sky. Then everyone knew: Somewhere lies a corpse, somewhere the flesh is soft enough.

The vultures were neither enemies nor friends. They were witnesses. They flew over the war like judges, casting the final word. People were dying, people were crying, people were fighting – the vultures didn't care. They just waited. Patiently, mercilessly, certain that sooner or later, the world would serve them everything they needed.

I remember a battlefield. Men lay scattered, horses still gasping, children screaming. And above it all, vultures circled, large, black, silent. Their shadows fell over the bodies, and it seemed as if they were plucking the very souls from the flesh.

Crazy Horse saw them often. He didn't despise them—quite the opposite. For him, the vultures were more honest than humans. They ate what was left over and made no secret of it. They didn't lie, they didn't promise anything, they simply took.

But their song—that dry croak—reminded him that the people were closer to carrion than to life. That it was only a matter of time before the vultures no longer had to wait.

The song of the vultures wasn't a song. It was the echo of doom.

The vultures were more than birds. They were mirrors. Mirrors for the whites, who circled just as patiently, waiting, lurking, certain that the people were growing weaker, certain that they would soon be nothing but bones in the dust.

The officers in their forts, the traders with their lists, the missionaries with their Bibles—they were like vultures in human form. They didn't attack immediately. They waited until hunger, disease, and smoke had softened the bodies. Then they descended, with treaties, with whiskey, with false gifts.

I remember a trader who said, "You need us. You can't survive without us." His voice wasn't a scream, but a croak. Just like the song of the vultures. Calm, confident, disgusting. He knew the people were down. He just had to wait until they stopped struggling.

Crazy Horse recognized the game. "White men are like vultures," he once said. "They don't kill with their talons, but with patience." And he was right. Vultures don't swoop like hawks. They circle, they observe, they make life itself vanish until only carrion remains.

The song of the vultures was thus more than just an animal sound. It was the music of a system that took its time, that didn't rush, that knew: Death would do the work itself.

The Lakota heard this song every day, even when there were no birds circling in the sky. They heard it in the words of white people, in the lies of false friends, in the buzzing of flies. It was everywhere, a chorus of perseverance.

And that's what made it so unbearable. Because you can fight an attack. But how do you fight the waiting?

The battlefields were the stage for the vultures. They didn't wait long. No sooner had the echo of the gunfire faded, no sooner had the dust settled heavily on the ground, than they circled. Large, black, majestic, yet hideous.

The bodies lay still warm, some still wheezing, as the shadows of the vultures passed over them. It was as if the birds had run out of patience, as if they knew that the line between life and death was thin enough to cross.

I remember a young warrior lying in the dust with his chest ripped open. He was still moving his fingers, his eyes searching for water, for something. A flock of vultures was already circling above him, their croaking dry and mocking. He was still alive, but for the vultures, he had long since become carrion.

And that was the worst part: when even heaven declared you dead, even though you were still breathing.

The children who survived grew up with this image. For them, vultures were as much a part of battle as blood and dust. Some even played "vultures and warriors"—some threw themselves to the ground, others circled above them with outstretched arms. A gruesome game that contained more truth than they realized.

Crazy Horse saw the vultures, and he remained silent. He didn't hate them. He understood them. They were only doing what was in their nature. But the song they sang gnawed at him. It was a song that spoke not only of the flesh, but of the entire people. A song that said, "You're already dead. We're just waiting."

The battlefields belonged to the vultures. The living moved on. But the sky remained. And the sky always sang the same song.

For Crazy Horse, the song of the vultures was more than a caw in the sky. It was a warning. A doomed omen. Not only did the bodies lie in the dust, not only did the flesh lie soft to the beaks. The spirit of the people was also in danger of being devoured—piece by piece, silently, inexorably.

He saw how men grew weaker, not by bullets, but by doubt. How women resigned themselves, not because they were hungry, but because they had lost faith. He saw how children grew up without knowing the freedom of the plains, without the buffalo, without the sun—they knew only smoke, dust, and hunger. For them, the song of the vultures was normal, like a song that had always been there.

I remember one night when Crazy Horse sat by the fire. Birds circled above us, their shadows falling into the light. One of the men spat and said, "The vultures are waiting." Crazy Horse replied, "They're not waiting for meat. They're waiting for our souls."

That hit home. Because it was true. The enemy could kill bodies, burn villages, let children starve. But the song of the vultures reminded us that true victory lay not in death—but in the people themselves ceasing to fight, lying down like carrion, ready to be devoured.

So the cawing in the sky wasn't just the sound of birds. It was the voice of doom saying, "Give up. You belong to us."

And that's precisely why Crazy Horse didn't remain silent. He rarely spoke, but when he did, his voice sounded like a counter-song. A song that said, "We're not dead yet."

But everyone knew: The vultures had patience. And patience was a weapon sharper than any knife.

Over time, the vultures were no longer just birds in the sky. They became ghosts, voices that could be heard even when no wings could be seen above the hills.

Some said they heard their croaking in their sleep. A song that cut through dreams, that smelled of carrion even in dreams. Men woke up drenched in sweat, their throats dry, their eyes wide. Women screamed in the night because they had dreamed of the birds' shadows over their children's faces.

I remember an old man who said, "Vultures are not birds. They are the souls of our enemies, laughing at us." No one contradicted him. Because it felt true.

But Crazy Horse remained sober. For him, the vultures were neither gods nor demons. They were signs. They reminded him that death was always near, that it circled, that it waited. And he knew: whoever listens to the song for too long begins to think like carrion himself.

So he tried to drown out the song. Not with words—words no longer mattered. But with actions. With every cavalry charge, with every raid, with every cry in battle, he sang his own song. A song that defied the heavens. A song that said, "Not today. Not as long as I breathe."

But the vultures had time. Their voices were patient, their song unstoppable. For every blow Crazy Horse struck, for every victory he won, they rose again the next day, high above the hills, their cawing dry, their circle endless.

It was a contest between the song of the living and the song of the vultures. And everyone knew: the vultures have the longer breath.

The song of the vultures wasn't just over the battlefields. It was over the hearts. You heard it in the voices of the men who said, "Perhaps peace is better." You heard it in the eyes of the women who no longer wept. You heard it in the children who didn't ask when the buffalo would return, because they didn't even know they had once existed.

The sky croaked, but the earth answered. Everyone who gave up was an echo of the song. Everyone who remained silent while a brother died hummed along. Everyone who signed a contract knowing it was a lie sang along with the chorus of vultures.

I remember a warrior who used to be fierce, loud, fearless. One day I saw him sitting, his shoulders hunched, his eyes empty. The vultures circled above us, and he murmured, "Perhaps they're right. Perhaps we're already dead." Then I knew: The sky had already devoured him before its beak had even touched him.

Crazy Horse sensed it. He knew that the real battle wasn't just on the plains. The real battle raged in the minds, in the hearts, in the souls. As long as the song of the vultures was outside, one could ride, one could fight. But when it began to sound inside, the war was already lost.

That's why he fought not only with bow and arrow, not only with knife and rifle. He fought with looks, with silence, with the firmness of his stance. He was the counter-song, the one sound that drowned out the croaking, if only for a moment.

But he also knew: vultures don't give up. They wait. Always. And sometimes, in the quiet hours, you could hear in his voice how close the song was.

In the end, the song of the vultures was inescapable. It hung in the air like smoke, it crept into dreams, it settled on hearts. No one could truly ignore it. Everyone knew: sooner or later, it would sing for you.

Children grew up with this song as if it were a lullaby. Elderly people died with it ringing in their ears as if it were their last prayer. Women lived with it as if it were their constant companion throughout their days.
And the men fought against it, with weapons, with whiskey, with silence. But the song persisted, relentless, patient, certain that in the end, it would always be right.

Crazy Horse heard it louder than anyone else. But he didn't let it determine his fate. "The vultures caw for the dead," he said, "and I won't die as carrion."

It was his vow. He knew he would fall, perhaps soon, perhaps tomorrow. But if he fell, it would not be in the dust like a carcass, not torn apart by beaks, not circled like a piece of meat. He would fall like a warrior—with his eyes open, his face to the sky, his breath filled with wind, not with croaks.

For the people, the vultures were the end. For Crazy Horse, they were merely witnesses. Witnesses who needed to see that he wasn't soft, not lazy, not dead inside.

The Song of the Vultures might be the last song. But Crazy Horse swore that his death would be a separate note within it—raw, hard, unbroken.

And when the vultures circled above him, they should know: They weren't eating a carcass. They were eating a warrior.

No place for heroes

Heroes were for stories, not for the hills, not for the camps, not for the dust that clung to every breath. In real life, "hero" just meant that you died first, and the others used your corpse to place their children on so they could cross the river.

The elders sometimes still told stories of heroes, of men who fought alone against ten, who were invulnerable, who saved the people. But these stories tasted like old meat—tough, dry, hard to swallow. The children didn't believe them, the women barely listened, the men spat in the dust.

Because everyone saw how it really was: Those who were brave fell quickly. Those who were loud were shot first. Those who stood upright were the first to receive the blow to the face. And those who survived? Those weren't the heroes. Those were the silent ones, the cunning ones, those who recognized the false friends and kept themselves small until it was time to strike.

I remember a man who always boasted in the camp. "I'm the hero, I'm the one they fear." He rode ahead, he shouted loudly, he laughed in the middle of the fire. Three days later, he was found headless, and the flies ate the rest. The women looked away, the men said nothing. A hero, yes—but only for a moment. After that, he was nothing but carrion.

Crazy Horse knew the world had no place for heroes. He never wanted to be one himself. He sought no stage, no fame, no songs. He sought only truth. Truth made of blood, dust, and silence.

“There are no heroes,” he once said quietly, “there are only men who stand longer than others.”

And that's exactly what made him different. Not a hero. Just a man who knew that heroes die faster than flies.

The camp had its own rules. And one of them was clear: whoever stood out too much was the first to fall.

The men who spoke loudly about courage, who sat in the middle, who painted their chests and arms like walking statues—they got the looks, yes. But they also got the bullets. Heroes shone briefly like fire in the darkness, but just as quickly they were extinguished.

The women knew. They didn't cling to heroes. They clung to men who came back. Quiet, inconspicuous, with dust in their hair and scars on their bodies. Men who promised nothing except that they would still be alive tomorrow.

I remember a girl who was brought to a village that the soldiers had burned down. Among the dead lay a man, with colorful feathers and war paint, who had looked like a god when he went into battle. Now he was just a charred body. The girl asked, "Was he a hero?" Her mother replied, "No. He was a fool."

In the camp, the hero was no longer the one who shouted the loudest. The hero was the one who shared the last bite of meat with the children, the one who brought back the horse even though he could barely stand. The hero was the one who remained silent when others bragged about selling themselves.

Crazy Horse understood this. He knew that fame was poison. Fame lured bullets, fame lured traitors, fame lured vultures. That's why he kept to himself, why he spoke little, why he didn't allow any songs to be sung about him. For him, survival was the only glory that mattered.

The camp despised heroes. It needed men. Men who got their hands dirty, who sought not glory, but truth.

And truth was never beautiful.

Crazy Horse never wanted to be a hero. He knew that heroes didn't live, they died—and faster than anyone else. Heroes belonged in the stories of the old, in the songs around the fire, in the mouths of drunks. But not in the dust, not in the cold, not in the smoke.

He didn't despise courage, no—he despised posturing. He viewed men who made themselves heroes like puffed-up fish waiting for the first prick. "Anyone who calls themselves a hero is already half dead," he once said.

I remember a warrior who rode with colorful paint, feathers, and jewelry. He roared his name as if he wanted to tear it into the sky. When the bullets fell, he was the first to fall. The vultures didn't even have patience with him—they came immediately, as if they knew: Here is someone who died for glory, not for the people.

Crazy Horse, on the other hand, remained quiet and inconspicuous. He took the most dangerous paths, but without words and without posturing. He didn't shout, he didn't paint himself in a colorful way, he didn't sing a song about himself. He knew: the less you're seen, the longer you can strike.

And that's exactly what made him dangerous. The men who wanted to appear like heroes died. The one who never wanted to be one survived.

But in the camp, this made everything more complicated. Some saw Crazy Horse as a hero himself—precisely because he didn't want to be one. They began to exalt him, saying he was invincible, that he was protected by spirits. That was the last thing he wanted. Because he knew: heroes always end the same way.

“There is no place for heroes,” he said, “not in this world.”

But he couldn't stop others from seeing him as exactly that. And therein lay the greatest danger.

The people wanted heroes—even if there was no room for them. In a world of dust, hunger, and smoke, people needed something that shone. Something stronger than they were, something that gave their children hope. And when reality offered them nothing, they created their own heroes.

Thus, Crazy Horse became more and more of a myth. Not because he wanted it, but because they needed it. They told stories about how he dodged bullets like a shadow, how he was guided by spirits in his dreams, how no lead could hit him. The more he remained silent, the more they filled his silence with fairy tales.

I remember a woman saying to her child, "Look at him—he's immortal." Crazy Horse heard it, and his gaze hardened. He knew that immortality was a lie. Everyone fell. Everyone.

The problem was: With every fairy tale spun around him, he moved closer to danger. Heroes weren't just a mirage for their own people—they were also a

target for their enemies. A hero was a trophy. Whoever broke him, broke the people.

Crazy Horse felt the net closing in around him. He just wanted to be a warrior, just a man who did what needed to be done. But the people made him a symbol, and symbols don't last long.

"I don't want to be a hero," he once said quietly. "Heroes die first. And we don't need any dead people."

But that's exactly what made him one in the eyes of many. The man who didn't want to be a hero was the only one they considered one.

A hero wasn't just a hope—he was also a thorn in their side. The more people made Crazy Horse a symbol, the more envy grew within his own camp. Men who considered themselves strong felt small next to him. Men who craved glory hated him because, without glory, he was greater than they were with all their bluster.

Thus, the hero the people needed simultaneously became the thorn they could not bear. In the shadow of admiration, betrayal grew.

I remember a conversation between two men. They thought no one was listening. One said, "As long as he's alive, they won't listen to us." The other nodded and whispered, "Then let him die." It was that simple. No thunder, no storm. Just a sentence in the darkness.

Crazy Horse knew it. He felt the looks that were no longer brotherly. He felt the tongues that fell silent as soon as he entered the fire. A hero was a target, not only for the enemies outside, but also for the brothers inside.

The whites didn't even have to do much. A people that created its own heroes simultaneously created its own traitors. For a hero didn't fit into the cramped tents, nor into the hunger, nor into the fear. He stood out. And those who stand out are the first to be cut down.

"No room for heroes," thought Crazy Horse. "No room for me."

And that was exactly the truth that hung over him like a knife.

Crazy Horse realized it more clearly with each passing day: the image others had of him was deadlier than any bullet. It wasn't the soldiers with their rifles

that posed the greatest threat. Not the officers with their contracts. It was the voices within his own camp that declared him a hero—against his will.

A hero was a target. A hero was a myth that had to be disproven sooner or later. And the people hungered for validation—either that he would save them or that he would fall. Either meant he would die.

I remember one night when he was sitting alone, away from the fire. One of the boys came up to him and said, "They say you're immortal." Crazy Horse looked at him for a long time, then replied, "They say a lot when your stomach is empty."
The boy didn't understand. But Crazy Horse knew: words were knives. And that knife was already hanging on his neck.

He could feel it—the looks that expected him to perform miracles. The others that hoped he would stumble. Both were deadly. Heroes have no place. Heroes don't fit in a world of dust, smoke, and hunger.

"A hero dies twice," he thought. "First in the mouths of those who praise him. Then in the dust he cannot avoid."

He knew: sooner or later, this image would kill him. And worse still, it wouldn't be by a bullet. It would be at the hands of those who called him "brother."

In the end, Crazy Horse knew there was no escape. He could make himself small, keep silent, stay in the shadows—but the more he did that, the bigger the others made him. The more he denied being a hero, the more they wanted to see him.

The people needed something to believe in. They needed a name, a face, a myth. And because he was the only one who never sought fame, they gave him everything he didn't want. They made him a hero.

He himself felt the weight like an invisible burden. "No room for heroes," he often murmured. But no one listened to him. They only heard what they wanted to hear.

I remember a moment when he said, "A hero dies for others. I want to live to die with them." But even those words only made him greater in people's eyes. A man who spoke like that had to be a hero.

And so the circle was closed: The people created the hero they needed—and in the same breath, the betrayal that would kill him. For a hero is always a threat

to those who seek power, to those who must remain small in order to appear great.

Crazy Horse knew it. He felt it like the breath on his neck. He wouldn't fall like a hero. He wanted to fall like a man, like a warrior, without posturing, without songs, without false glory.

But he suspected: This was precisely his destiny. Not because he wanted it. But because others needed it.

And so he continued, step by step, knowing: No place for heroes. No place for him.

Saliva, blood and sweat

War was not a song, not a prayer, not a story around the fire. War was saliva, blood, and sweat. The first came from the mouth—curses, screams, commands, teeth that bit into lips when bullets struck too close. The second came from the bodies—warm, sticky, heavy, always too much, and always in the wrong places. The third came from the muscles—from men who ran, rode, fought until their legs trembled and their hands could barely hold their knives.

I remember a battle that began at dusk. The soldiers shot in the fog, the Lakota rode through the smoke. Nothing could be heard more clearly than the horses' panting, the men's coughing, the splintering of bones as a blow landed. Everything was raw, everything was close. No room for heroics, only room for teeth grinding together and bodies twitching in the dust.

Saliva spurted as men screamed in each other's faces, so close that death lay between two breaths. Blood spurted when an arrow or a knife struck. And sweat ran down everyone, even those who lay in the dust at the end—cold and futile.

Crazy Horse knew this mixture. For him, this was the real war. Not the songs afterward, not the stories around the fire, but the raw soup of bodily fluids that always smelled the same: of iron, of salt, of dirt.

"This is what truth smells like," he once said. "Not like songs. Like saliva, blood, and sweat."

And no one objected. Because everyone who had fought knew that stench.

The war didn't smell of glory. It smelled of stables. Of horse shit, of wet hides, of the sweet stench of blood curdling in the sun. The war was sticky, wet, stinking—and it clung to anyone who came too close.

In close combat, there was no distance. There was no room for proud speeches, only room for the panting of men, the gnashing of teeth, the wheezing of those wounded. There was saliva that flew in your face when someone screamed at the top of their lungs. There was sweat that made your hands slippery, the knife almost slipped from your fingers. There was blood that spurted, that stuck, that ran into your mouth when you lay on the ground and someone else's face dripped onto you.

I remember a man strangling a soldier with his bare hands. They wrestled in the dust, both covered in sweat and dirt. The Lakota bit a piece of flesh from his cheek, spat it out like a bone, and continued to press. When the soldier finally fell silent, the warrior spat on him again—saliva, blood, and sweat mingled together. This wasn't heroism. This was just raw survival.

Crazy Horse saw such scenes and knew: This was precisely the truth of war. No song could make it beautiful, no prayer could purify it. War was body against body, breath against breath, liquid against liquid. It was the moment in which you didn't just kill the other—you smelled them, tasted them, and felt them.

And afterwards, when the dust settled, when the dead lay still, the smell remained. Always. It clung to the hair, the clothes, the memories.

Saliva, blood, and sweat—that was the true banner of war. Not flags. Not trumpets.

War didn't just consume bodies. It also consumed minds. Saliva, blood, and sweat weren't just fluids—they were memories that wouldn't go away. They clung to the nose, the throat, the skin. Even if you washed, even if you jumped into the water, the stench remained. It clung like guilt.

Men who fought never returned the same. They didn't talk about heroism, they didn't talk about honor. They remained silent. Because they knew the truth stank. Some spat incessantly, as if trying to rid their mouths of the taste of blood. Others rubbed their hands raw, as if they could wash away the sweat that had betrayed their grip. Some even cut their hair because the smell wouldn't go away.

I remember a young warrior who licked the ground for weeks after a battle. He said, "The blood is still there." No one understood him, but everyone knew what he meant.

But Crazy Horse never spoke of purification. For him, it was all part of the truth. "A warrior doesn't wash himself clean of blood," he said. "He carries it until he loses it himself."

His silence was acceptance. He wasn't fleeing the stench, he wasn't fleeing the memory. For him, war wasn't an exceptional situation—it was the only reality that remained.

Saliva, blood, and sweat were not shame. They were the seal that reminded you that you were still alive.

And Crazy Horse wore it like it was the only currency that still had value.

When men tangled up in the heat of battle, the ground itself became the enemy. Blood dripped, sweat ran, dust clung—and in the end, there was a muddy mess in which every step was slippery, in which men stumbled like cattle in a slaughterhouse.

I remember a battle in which the sun burned mercilessly. Men jumped against each other, screamed, bit, and stabbed. The ground turned to red mud. One man slipped and fell on his back, his face buried in the dirt. Before he could get back up, the knife was in his throat. No hero, no scream—just a gurgling sound in the mire of blood and sweat.

The stench was so thick that horses shied. They smelled what we all smelled: iron, salt, death. They reared up, like animals who sensed they were standing in the midst of a hell that no longer had anything to do with hunting or fighting.

The men spat, gasped, and screamed. Saliva flew from lips, blood from hands, sweat dripped from foreheads. There was no longer any distinction between body and ground. Everything was one. Everything was filth.

Crazy Horse moved through it like someone who already knew the truth. He didn't slip, he didn't stumble. He knew that dignity had no place in this mess. "In the mud, everyone is equal," he said. "Only the one who lasts longer gets back up."

And that's exactly what war was. No room for heroes. No room for beauty. Only mud that swallowed you up—blood, sweat, saliva.

And if you were lucky, you were the one still standing at the end.

The dirt broke men faster than arrows. It wasn't always the bullets that struck you down. It was the weight of sweat, blood, and dust that settled on your muscles until they trembled like leaves in the wind.

The strong ones who boasted about their puffed-up shoulders in the camp were often the first to break. In the fray, strength was nothing if your hands were so slippery you couldn't hold a knife. One of those mountains of muscle once simply fell to his knees, unhit, unhurt—just empty. Sweat dripped from his chin, and he gave up. One blow ended him. No hero, no victim. Just a tired body.

Crazy Horse, on the other hand, was still, firm, and unflappable. He moved as if he knew that dirt wasn't his enemy, but his element. Blood, sweat, saliva—he accepted it as it came, as a part of the world, as naturally as wind or rain.

I remember a battle where the air was so thick with sweat and dust that it was almost impossible to breathe. Men were panting, coughing, vomiting. But Crazy Horse stood still, like a stone in a river. He didn't ride like a hero, he rode like a shadow. He didn't scream, he didn't spit out words. He was simply there, hard, cold, alive.

The others saw this and called it strength. But it wasn't strength. It was acceptance. He didn't fight the stench, the dirt. He knew: Whoever tries to stay clean dies. Whoever cleanses the war loses.

Saliva, blood, and sweat weren't shame. They were proof that you were still there. And Crazy Horse wore them until he himself was nothing but blood, sweat, and dust.

After the fighting, none of this disappeared. Saliva, blood, and sweat remained, even after the bodies had long been cleared away, even after the fire consumed the corpses. They clung to the tents, the hair, the clothes. They crept into the nostrils, the dreams, the flesh of those who had survived.

The women knew best. When the men returned, they smelled of the war. Not of heroic deeds, not of victories—of iron, salt, and dirt. Some women wept, not because their men were injured, but because they couldn't bear the stench. The stench told them: This man was so close to death. And he'll soon go away again.

Children kept their distance. They felt the cold in the bodies of the men, who sweated even when sitting in the shade. They saw the blood on their hands, which remained even after washing, as red shadows in the skin.

I remember a camp that smelled so bad after a battle that even the dogs didn't want to go back in. They howled all night long. The people did the same, only more quietly.

Crazy Horse was there too. He sat, silent, as always. The sweat dried on his skin, the blood on his hands. He didn't wash right away. He knew that war doesn't wash away like dirt. It sticks to you, no matter how deep you step into the river.

"Whoever drinks the water cleanses their throat," he once said. "But their heart remains dirty."

So it was. Saliva, blood, and sweat weren't just in battle. They lingered, gnawed, and devoured more silently than any bullet.

And the camp always smelled of war, even when no screams were heard.

In the end, that was the real war: no glory, no glittering stories, no heroes. Just saliva, blood, and sweat.

Saliva – because men screamed, spat, cursed, because their mouths were full of hate, full of fear, full of rage. Blood – because every blow, every bullet, every blade soaked the ground, because it flowed from bodies like broken hoses, warm and cold at the same time. Sweat – because the fight ate away at the body, because muscles burned, because men fell not because they were hit, but because they collapsed from exhaustion.

That was the truth. A truth no song could ever cleanse. A truth no prayer could ever bear.

I remember a woman who said after a battle, "The men all smell the same—of death, even when they're alive." And she was right. War made no distinction. It made everyone smell the same, the same mixture, the same filth.

Crazy Horse knew it. That's why he didn't give speeches, that's why he didn't paint colorful pictures of heroism. He rarely spoke, but when he did, it was like this: "He who speaks of honor has never been in the mud. He who sings of glory has never tasted blood in his mouth."

Saliva, blood, and sweat were the only banner the war truly carried. And that was the banner under which Crazy Horse lived, rode, fought—and would eventually die.

Not with songs. Not with fame. Just with the naked truth that clung to each of them.

The sky opens, bullets rain down

There were days when the sky was a trap. Blue, peaceful, vast—and then, without warning, it burst open like a burst belly, and the bullets rained down. No thunder, no lightning, just the dry crack of rifles, the howl of projectiles faster than any breath.

The men raised their heads, and before they realized what was happening, bullets tore through flesh and bone. Horses fell, men screamed, children cowered in the dust. The rain was cold, deadly, invisible, and it made no difference.

I remember a battle where the sun still burned, as if the day never wanted to die. Then the gunfire erupted, and suddenly it was as if the sky itself had decided to rain blood. Dust and smoke mingled, the air became heavy, and every breath tasted of iron.

Crazy Horse rode right through the hail of bullets. For him, this was no miracle, no fate, no divine sign. It was war, raw and without masks. "Heaven is no friend," he once said. "It opens when it wants, and it shits bullets on us."

There was nowhere to hide when the sky fell. No heroes, no guardian spirits, no walls. Just naked bodies, naked fear, naked earth.

And whoever stopped knew: the next breath could be the last.

When the bullets rained down, it was as if the sky itself had decided to rip people out of the ground. They came like invisible insects, buzzing, screeching, whistling—and every sound meant flesh being torn, bones breaking.

The sounds were worse than the sight. The cracking as wood or bone splintered. The dull thud as a body fell to the dust. The gasping as the air filled with blood and men tried to utter another word that never came out.

I remember a night attack. It was dark, and all you could hear was the whirring. Then the screams. Men fell like blades of grass when a storm passes over them. No resistance, no pride—just bodies falling.

Horses neighed, screaming almost humanly as the bullets hit them. They reared, trampling their own riders as they died. Children screamed, and their voices mingled with the crack of rifles.

It wasn't rain that could be endured. It was a storm that smashed everything that stood upright. Some ducked, some ran, some stood frozen. In the end, it made no difference.

Crazy Horse moved through this chaos like someone who already knew the song. He didn't duck, he didn't scream. He rode, he punched, he disappeared into the dust. Men later said, "The bullets missed him." But it wasn't magic. It was just that he didn't fear the sky.

“If he makes bullets rain down,” he said, “let him know: we can still dance.”

And some believed it. Others laughed bitterly. But everyone saw: the sky was raining, and the earth was absorbing the blood like thirsty grass.

For the Lakota, the rain of bullets was neither a miracle nor a punishment from the gods. It was a new force of nature—like a storm, like fire, like hunger. Only more cruel because it was directed by humans who were grinning behind the scenes.

Some tried to find a pattern in it. They counted the shots, they listened to the pauses, they thought they heard breathing space between the gunfire, space for running. But mostly they were wrong. A bullet was faster than any prayer, faster than any plan.

Fear in the camp was like a distinct smell. Men felt the twitching in their backs, as if their bones were about to break. Women held their children with hands slippery with sweat. Children looked up, not understanding why the heavens themselves hated them.

I remember a man who stood up in the midst of a hail of bullets, spread his arms, and shouted, "Hit me, damn it!" He wanted to defy the heavens. The next breath, he was lying in the dust, his chest open like a burst hose. No one ran to him. Everyone knew that pride was not armor.

Crazy Horse, on the other hand, didn't play with death. He rode through the hail of bullets as if through deep snow—carefully, resolutely, quietly. No hero, no fool. A man who knew that fear and defiance both led to the grave.

"Bullets rain down on everyone," he said. "The only difference is: some run, others stand still. But no one escapes the sky."

And that's exactly what gnawed at their hearts. For everyone felt: The heaven that once gave life now gave only death.

When the bullets fell close enough, the earth itself became flesh. Bodies burst open like overripe fruit rotting under too much sun. Blood spurted, warm, red, and sticky, mixing with the dust until the ground looked like an open mouth, ready to swallow everything.

I remember a warrior riding beside me. A shot—and his head was simply gone. No scream, no last look. Just a dull thud, a body that remained in the saddle for three more steps, then fell to the ground like a sack. His horse galloped on, its coat spattered, its eyes wild. The sky had devoured him.

The bullets tore off arms, legs, and entire chunks of chests. Men crawled, half alive, half dead, their entrails trailing in the dust like a trail for vultures. Horses collapsed, screaming like children, stamping their feet even as they died, until they, too, lay still.

The rain didn't stop. It was as if the sky had an infinite number of teeth, each one continuing to bite. And every bark of the guns was a new cut in the earth.

Crazy Horse rode right through this inferno. Men later said the bullets hadn't hit him. But the truth was: he rode as if he didn't belong in this world. Not a twitch, not a stumble, not a glance up at the sky. He just looked ahead, as if the bullets were nothing more than annoying insects.

"When the sky rains blood," he said, "the earth drinks it. But we don't belong to the earth. Not yet."

And with every breath he proved it. Not immortal, not invulnerable. Just harder than the rain itself.

After the hail of bullets, there always came a silence that was heavier than the noise that came before. It wasn't peace. It was the echo of death, the hum of blood in the dust, the clang of weapons slipping from lifeless hands.

The survivors stood or lay, panting like animals that had just escaped a slaughterhouse. Some felt their bodies, surprised to see they were still intact. Others stared holes in the sky, as if they couldn't believe that blue bastard had just opened their mouths and poured lead over them.

I remember a man who, in the midst of that silence, began to laugh. He laughed until he cried, then cried until he laughed again. Finally, he simply collapsed, not because he was hurt, but because heaven had taken away his mind.

The worst part was the lost trust. The sky used to be an ally. It brought rain, wind, sun, and stars. Now it was a traitor. Everyone knew that another rainstorm could lurk beyond the blue expanse at any moment. No one could look up anymore without swallowing dryly.

Crazy Horse stood still, his eyes on the horizon, not the sky. He knew: those who stare up will go crazy. "The sky is not our friend," he said. "It's just a ceiling. They tear holes in it, and we fall under it."

The children heard this. And they would never again see heaven the way their fathers had. Not as a promise. Only as a danger.

The hail of bullets never truly ended. Even when the guns fell silent, the buzzing remained in people's heads. Men woke at night, thinking they heard bullets whizzing past their ears. Children cried in their sleep, screaming for the sky to open again. Women heard the wheezing of the wounded long after the earth had drunk their blood.

The war had stolen their sky. Instead of clouds and stars, they saw bullets falling. Even their dreams smelled of smoke and iron.

I remember an old man who remained silent for days after a battle. When he finally spoke, he said, "I still hear them. They fall on me, even when I'm lying down." After that, he fell silent again—and never smiled again.

Crazy Horse wasn't immune. He, too, heard the whistling in the night. But he didn't let it get to him. "The bullets are like flies," he said. "When they buzz, you know they're there. When they stop, you know you're already dead." It was his way of living with the echo: not hoping it would disappear, but accepting it as a companion.

So the people lived with a sky that was always torn in memory. Every step, every sound could be the beginning of a new rain. And no one slept in peace anymore.

In the end, everyone realized: the sky was no longer a friend. It was a traitor, bringing not rain or sun, but lead. Everyone knew that an invisible thunder lurked over every clear day, that the next breath could end in a bullet.

Children no longer looked up; they ducked down. Women only regarded the sky suspiciously, as if it were a dirty stranger. Men spoke not of clouds or stars, but of gunshots. The sky was no longer a roof. It was a trap.

I remember a woman whispering, "The sky has turned against us." And no one contradicted her. Because it felt true.

Only Crazy Horse saw it differently. To him, the sky wasn't evil. It was just torn apart. "They're tearing it open," he said, "but it's not theirs. It was here before they came. It'll be here when they rot."

His vow was clear: He wouldn't die under a roof of lead. If he had to fall, it would be under the real sky—under the sun, under the stars, under the wind. Not under bullets. Not under the fake rain.

Thus, the rain of bullets became a symbol: that even the heavens were against the people. But to Crazy Horse, it was just another enemy. And he swore that he would look it in the face—openly, upright, without cowering.

Not as a hero. Only as a warrior who knew: The sky is tearing open, but he will not break it.

A mouth full of lies

The whites had more lies in their mouths than teeth. Every word tasted of poison, yet they smiled as if they were friends. They spoke of peace while they were already loading their guns. They spoke of land while they were already distributing it on their maps. They spoke of brotherhood while the smoke from their fires still hung on the horizon.

A mouth full of lies was worse than a gun. A gun killed you quickly, a lie slowly. A bullet took your life, a lie took away first your hope, then your faith, then your dignity—until eventually you yourself were dead before your body fell.

I remember a meeting with an officer. He extended his hand, his fingers soft, his gaze cold. "We only want peace," he said. Behind him rode a unit, their horses' hooves still bloody from the last raid. That was peace in the mouths of the whites—sweet as honey, rotten as corpse water.

Crazy Horse saw through the game. He heard the lies, but he didn't absorb them. "A mouth full of lies," he said, "can't even drink water without making it bitter."

But the people were tired, hungry, and exhausted. Some heard the lies and wanted to believe them, because believing was easier than resisting. And that was precisely what made the lies more deadly than lead.

Because a liar doesn't need a bullet. He just needs patience.

The white man's lies were like a slow poison creeping through the camp. Sometimes it didn't even take blood to break a people. Words were enough. Words that flattered, that promised, that felt like warm blankets when the nights were cold.

"We give you land." – and in the same breath, it was already measured. "We give you protection." – and in the same moment, the rifles were pointed at their chests. "We give you peace." – and as they said it, the smoke in the distance was already calling the vultures.

In the camp, these sentences acted like wedges. Men no longer argued about hunting or war, but about words. One believed, the other despised him for it. Brothers suddenly faced each other like strangers because they no longer saw the same truth.

I remember a night when two men faced each other with knives. Not over a woman, not over meat—but over a sentence. One said, "Maybe they're serious." The other laughed in his face: "And maybe you're already dead." In the end, one of them lay bleeding in the dust, and no one knew whose knife had twitched first.

Crazy Horse saw all this. He rarely spoke, but when he did, he spoke harshly: "A mouth full of lies eats more men than a gun." He knew that bullets tore bodies apart. But lies? Lies tore the soul apart. And a torn soul no longer needed a bullet.

The camp became quieter, more suspicious. Everyone listened to every word, no longer to understand, but to find the lie within. And that was exactly what the whites wanted.

For a people that distrusts itself is already half defeated.

The lies were like food. Sweet, warm, tempting—and poisonous. The people were hungry, not just for meat, but for hope. And hope, wrapped in beautiful words, was easier to swallow than the hard meat of truth.

"We'll take care of you," said the white people. "All you have to do is sign." It sounded like honey, dripping golden from their tongues. And the tired, the weak, the exhausted—they licked it as if it were the last drop of life.

But anyone who swallowed these lies soon realized that they weren't nourishing. They made them emptier, weaker, more dependent. It was like firewater that ran warm into the stomach, but left everything destroyed the next morning.

I remember an old warrior who once proclaimed loudly: "The white people will give us peace." He spoke it with such fervor that you could almost believe him. Two weeks later, he was found starving to death by the river, his hands empty, his stomach hollow. The peace he had swallowed had given him nothing—only a grave.

Crazy Horse saw through the game. "A liar feeds you," he said, "so you're full enough not to fight. And when you stop fighting, he takes everything from you."

But the people were tired. And tiredness makes you blind. They accepted the lies, not because they were stupid—but because they had nothing else left.

Thus, the mouth full of lies became the people's pantry. And every bite made it weaker.

The lies weren't just swallowed—they were passed on. Some tribal leaders, tired, hungry, weak, or simply bought, began to speak with their mouths full. They repeated the white people's words as if they were their own.

"There will be peace." "There's enough land for all of us." "Just one more treaty and we'll be safe."

These voices were worse than the white ones. Because they came from brothers. And when a brother speaks with lies, you listen to him longer. You want to believe he isn't lying.

I remember a meeting at which one of these chiefs spoke. His voice was soft, like a father soothing his children. He promised that the next winter would be easier, that the whites would help us. As he spoke, outside, one could hear the cracking of the axes with which those same whites were felling our land. But no one dared to immediately call him a traitor. Most remained silent; others nodded—out of fear or fatigue.

But Crazy Horse didn't remain silent. He spat in the dust and said, "A mouth full of lies stinks, whether it comes from white men or from brothers."

His words burned. Some in the circle murmured, others averted their eyes. For what he said was true—and truth was the sharpest knife.

Thus, the lies became not just a weapon from without. They consumed the people from within. Brothers against brothers, sons against fathers, voices against one another.

And the mouth full of lies laughed, while the people swallowed themselves.

The more the lies spread through the camp, the lonelier Crazy Horse became. He was the last person not to bite into it, the last person not to swallow the sweet taste. And that's precisely why some people began to feel unable to stand it any longer.

A man who doesn't accept lies is like a mirror. He shows you your weakness, your cowardice, your betrayal. And no one likes to look in such a mirror.

I remember one night when an old warrior quietly said, "Maybe Crazy Horse is right." Immediately, three others rushed at him, shouting at him to shut up.

Not because they were convinced—but because the truth was harder to bear than a lie.

The men, who seized on the white man's words, called him stubborn. The women whispered that he was dangerous. Even children heard that he was different and began to avoid him. Not because they hated him—but because he didn't fit the song of lies that everyone else was singing.

Crazy Horse himself didn't react with anger. He just became quieter. He knew: A man who refuses to lie will eventually find himself alone. "A full mouth can't drink water," he said, "but an empty mouth is hungry."

And hunger, he knew, makes you suspicious. Because a hungry person demands. A hungry person fights. A hungry person reminds the satiated that they've been fed nothing but lies.

Thus, Crazy Horse became not only a warrior against the whites—but also a stranger among his own people. The last one to spit when others swallowed.

Over time, the lies burrowed into the skin like thorns. They were no longer just words coming from outside. They became a second language in the camp. Everyone spoke them, everyone repeated them, until they sounded like the truth.

"The Whites want what's best for us." "We'll be safe if we obey." "One more winter, and everything will be better."

These phrases were said so often that they could no longer be distinguished from prayers. Those who didn't join in were conspicuous. Those who remained silent were suspected. Those who contradicted were considered enemies.

I remember a young warrior who had the courage to say at a meeting, "They're lying." The camp fell silent. For a moment, one thought perhaps others would agree with him. But then the voices began to rage—loud, harsh, like a pack of dogs. They shouted him down, called him a child, a nutcase, a traitor. The next morning, he was gone. No one asked where he'd gone.

Crazy Horse watched with cold eyes. He understood: A mouth full of lies doesn't just fill you up—it's addictive. And addicts hate those who hold up a mirror to them.

"They don't fear the lie," he said. "They fear the emptiness that comes when they no longer have it."

The camp was now divided. No longer between men and women, old and young, strong and weak. But between those who ate the lies – and those who still spat them out.

And that was the deadliest split of all.

In the end, a mouth full of lies was deadlier than any rifle. For bullets came from outside; you could see them, hear them, feel them. But lies came from within. They crept through the tents, through the fires, through the voices of brothers and mothers. They sounded like comfort, like hope—and that's precisely why they gnawed deeper.

The people began to poison themselves. One person repeated what the other had said. A song of false words that everyone hummed until no one could remember who had sung it first. And anyone who didn't sing along suddenly became a noise.

I remember a woman once saying, "We don't die from bullets. We die from our own voices." She was crying, quietly, and no one was listening.

Crazy Horse knew this for a long time. It was clear to him: the war wasn't just against soldiers, against officers, against forts. The real war was against the hunger for sweet words, against the desire to be lied to because the truth was too bitter.

"A mouth full of lies," he said, "is a grave that speaks." He knew: The people could not be defeated solely from the outside. They could swallow themselves.

So he stood there, alone, with a mouth that remained empty while everyone else spoke. And he understood: the greatest betrayal was not that of the whites. It was the betrayal that came from their own throats.

Screaming children, silent men

It was always the children who screamed first. They screamed when the bullets whistled. They screamed when the fire consumed the teepees. They screamed when the horses charged through the camp, their hooves like thunder. Their screams were sharp, bright, unmistakable—like a knife cutting through the smoke.

The men, however, remained silent. Not because they weren't afraid, but because their voices had been stolen. Every scream a man didn't utter ate into his chest like a trapped wolf.

I remember a massacre where the children screamed until their throats were raw. The mothers tried to stifle the screams with their hands, pressing faces against their chests as if they could muffle the horror with flesh. But the fear always found a way out.

The men stood by, their eyes seeing everything and their mouths saying nothing. Their tongues were heavy, as if the white man's lies had petrified them. They saw the dying, they heard the screams—and yet there was only silence.

Crazy Horse heard both. The children's screams cut into his heart, the men's silence burned in his bones. "A people," he said, "that only lets children scream and men remain silent is already half dead."

And so it was. The future screamed, the present was silent.

The children's screams were like a never-ending chorus. They screamed in the camp, they screamed in their sleep, they screamed whenever the wind so much as touched a tent, thinking it was bullets again. Their voices were the only thing that still sounded alive—shrill, raw, unvarnished.

The men, on the other hand, sat like stones. They smoked, they stared into the fire, they said nothing. Even when their children screamed, they rarely moved their lips. Silence was no protection; it was a grave they dug for themselves.

I remember one evening when a boy was screaming because he was dreaming of blood. His father sat next to him, silent, his face like a mask. Someone asked him, "Why don't you say anything?" He didn't answer. He just stared into the embers. The next morning, he was gone, as if the silence itself had swallowed him.

Crazy Horse observed this world where only children shouted the truth and men swallowed it. "A scream is life," he said. "A silence is death." But who wanted to hear that? The men had learned that screams changed nothing. So they gave up their voices, like one lays down weapons.

The people weren't just destroyed by hunger or bullets. They were destroyed by the loudness of their children and the silence of their men. One generation

roared because it had no words. The other remained silent because it had lost all words.

And between the two hung an abyss into which the future fell.

The men's silence wasn't strength. It wasn't iron calm, nor stubborn resistance. It was only resignation—a silent admission that their voices no longer mattered. They had wasted so many words, heard so many promises, swallowed so many lies, that their mouths were now empty.

Children screamed because they didn't know any other language. Men remained silent because their language had died. That was the difference.

I remember a scene by the river. A little boy was screaming because he saw a dead horse washed ashore, its belly bloated, its legs stiff. He screamed as if the world had shattered.
His father stood beside him. He said nothing. He saw the horse, he saw the boy—and he remained silent. When I asked him why, he simply said, "Words won't bring the horse back."

So it was with everything. Words brought back no fields, no dead, no land, no pride. So the men let the words die.

Crazy Horse understood it, but he also despised it. "A man who remains silent dies twice," he said. "Once in the mouth, once in the heart." For him, a scream wasn't just a sound. A scream was resistance. A scream was proof that one was still alive.

But most men had long since decided that life was no longer worth anything if it only meant suffering. So they remained silent—and let the children do the screaming.

Thus, the future became the people's only voice. And it sounded desperate.

The children were the loud, raw truth. Their screams weren't beautiful, melodic, or bearable—but they were real. They screamed of hunger, of fear, of rage. Every sound was a knife cutting through the air, mocking the men's silence.

The men, on the other hand, were living death masks. They sat, they smoked, they stared. Not a word, not a scream, not a song. Only blank faces that looked as if their voices had been torn from their throats.

I remember a girl crying because her mother had fallen in a hail of bullets. She screamed so loudly that even the dogs howled. Her father stood beside her. He looked at her, raised his hand—not to comfort her, but to cover her mouth. Not because he was angry. But because he couldn't bear the scream any longer. The silence had already consumed him.

Thus, every child became living proof that the people could still feel. And every man, proof that they had simultaneously died. The contrast was cruel: small bodies trembling with life, large bodies that were now mere shadows.

Crazy Horse saw it, and he felt the poison taking effect. "The children bear the burden of the voices," he said. "The men carry only bones."

And so it was. The future screamed. The present was silent. And the past grinned, bloody, from the mouths of the whites.

Crazy Horse was one of the last people who still had his voice. He didn't scream like children, nor was he silent like men. His words came rarely, but when they did, they fell like stones into a still lake. Everyone heard them, whether they wanted to or not.

Yet this very thing made him a stranger in his own camp. Anyone who spoke stood out. Anyone who called out, anyone who accused, anyone who named, disrupted the rhythm of silence. And for many, silence was easier to bear than the truth.

I remember a council where everyone just sat in a circle, eyes on the ground, mouths closed. Crazy Horse stood up and said, "We don't lose to guns. We lose because we remain silent." The silence that followed was so harsh that you could hear the crackle of the fire horns. No one responded. Some turned their heads away as if he were a madman.

He wasn't mad. He was just someone who hadn't forgotten the scream. But that was precisely what made him dangerous. A people accustomed to silence hates someone who speaks again.

"A man without a voice is dust," he said. "A people without voices is wind. And the wind drives away what it touches."

The children heard him. They continued screaming. The men heard him. They fell even more silent.

And so Crazy Horse stood between both worlds—too loud for the men, too quiet for the children. A warrior with a voice in a valley full of throats that no longer spoke.

In everyday life, the picture became even more gruesome. The children screamed until their voices were hoarse, until their throats were sore, until at last they could only utter a scratchy whimper. But even then, they didn't give up. They screamed because it was the only thing left to them.

The men, on the other hand, remained silent until they almost disappeared. Some didn't speak a word for weeks, not even to their wives. Others responded only with a nod or a shrug, as if they were already half-shadows. It was as if silence itself had teeth that were eating away at the men's flesh, bit by bit.

I remember one winter when the children screamed because hunger cut into their stomachs like knives. The women tried to calm them, rocking them, singing soft songs. But the screams didn't stop. The men sat beside them, staring into the embers that no longer provided any warmth. Not a word, not a scream, only silence. And the silence was louder than any screaming.

Crazy Horse knew that a people who only let children scream and men remain silent wouldn't have long lives left. "He who screams lives," he said. "He who remains silent dies." But his words were mere drops on hot stone. They hissed, they burned, but they quickly evaporated.

The children continued to scream. The men fell silent. And between them lay an abyss that no song, no advice, no prayer could bridge.

In the end, this image remained like a wound in the flesh of the people: the future cried, the present remained silent.

The children were the raw heart that still beat, loud, impetuous, uncontrollable. Every cry was proof that they were still alive, that they still felt, that they hadn't given up. Their voices were wild, desperate, but real.

The men were the broken backbone. They bore the weight, but they no longer made a sound. Their silence was not dignity, it was not courage—it was surrender in slow motion. They remained silent because they knew their words would change nothing. And because a man who remains silent at least doesn't hear how empty he sounds.

Crazy Horse saw this more clearly than anyone. "A people who live only in screams and silence," he said, "has no breath left for songs." He knew that

without voices, there would be no hope. And that without hope, even the screams would eventually die down.

But he bore the burden. He spoke, he rode, he fought, while around him children screamed and men remained silent. He knew: someone had to keep their voice. Not for fame. Not for honor. But so that the people wouldn't fall completely silent.

Thus, he became the latest thing in a sea of silence. And that's precisely why he became dangerous—for the enemies outside, but even more so for the brothers inside.

For anyone who has a voice in a world full of silence is no longer a man. He is a noise. And at some point, you want to silence a noise.

Salt in open wounds

There was nothing worse than when the wound was still open—and someone came with salt. Not to heal it, but to make it sting. That was precisely what life in the camp was like: every new day was a handful of salt sprinkled into old cuts.

The salt was hunger that ate into their stomachs. It was the smoke from the burned teepees that hung in their clothes for weeks afterward. It was the sight of the empty spaces where brothers had stood yesterday.

I remember a boy who lost his mother in a hail of bullets. Every night he woke up screaming. Someone said, "Time will heal it." But time didn't heal anything. Time was salt. It reminded him every morning that the seat next to him was empty.

The whites understood the game well. They knew that open wounds never heal properly if you keep scratching at them. So they made promises and broke them. They offered peace and sent soldiers. They let hope grow and crushed it in the next breath. Every broken promise was salt in a wound that had long since begun to bleed.

Crazy Horse saw it coming. "They're not just killing us with bullets," he said. "They're killing us with what they take from us—and with what they make us believe."

So every heart in the camp burned like an open wound. And every day the salt came.

The salt was everywhere. It wasn't just hunger and cold. It was humiliation, like an invisible cut that went deeper than any knife. Every loss, every broken promise, every stolen piece of land was another scratch into which they poured salt.

The men bore it silently, as if they had already forgotten how to scream. The women bore it more loudly, with tears and harsh words. The children felt it without reason – they screamed because their stomachs burned, because they no longer had milk, because they were nothing but bones shaking in the wind.

I remember one night when an old man spoke to the fire: "It would be easier if they shot us all at once." And no one objected. Because the salt was worse than the cut. The cut hurt—the salt made pain permanent.

Crazy Horse knew this game was worse than any open battle. "A bullet kills the body," he said. "But salt kills the spirit." He saw the warriors still breathing, but already broken from feeling the burn every day.

The wounds didn't heal. They remained open, fresh, burning. And that was exactly what the whites wanted. A broken people didn't even need to be shot anymore. They died of their own accord, from salt.

And so it devoured the inside – more slowly, more cruelly than any blade.

The open wounds didn't just consume flesh—they consumed the mind. A people constantly burning cannot look forward. They live only in the pain of the present. Every thought ends in the same place: with the burning, the stinging, the salt.

The men no longer thought about hunts or victories. They thought about how long they could endure the hunger. The women no longer dreamed of their children growing up, but of how they would survive the next day. The children no longer played games. They drew lines in the dust as if they were graves.

I remember an old woman sitting by the fire with her eyes closed. I asked her what she was thinking about. She said, "I'm not thinking. I'm burning." And that was the answer for everyone. They were no longer thinking—they were burning.

But Crazy Horse remained clear-headed. He knew that salt only has power if the wound remains open. "Healing doesn't mean forgetting," he said. "Healing means transforming the cut into flesh that can bear the weight again." But he was almost alone with this thought. For most, pain was already their only truth.

So the camp was full of living bodies and burned heads. And each new day sprinkled another handful of salt into it.

The terrible thing about salt was that it didn't require major cuts. A small tear was enough. A single loss, a single humiliation—and the salt turned it into a torment that poisoned the entire body.

A man who lost only a horse could not recover. Every morning he saw the empty spot in the camp, and each time it burned anew. A woman who buried a child had no more consolation. Not because other children were there—but because the wound remained open, and the salt ate away at her, day after day.

I remember a young warrior who was only slightly wounded. A cut on his arm, nothing more. But it didn't heal. Not because the flesh was weak, but because every day he thought about how he got it—in the hail of bullets, as his brother died next to him. The cut remained open, not in his body, but in his head. And the salt drove him mad. One night he ran into the darkness and never came back.

Crazy Horse understood: The salt was more than hunger, more than pain. It was a memory that couldn't be shaken off. "An open wound heals," he said, "but salt turns it into a song that never ends."

And that was precisely what hell was: a people who bore their scars not as strength, but as a brand that would reopen again and again. The whites didn't even have to kill anymore. They only had to scatter.

And the salt did the rest.

Most of them broke on the salt. They writhed, they cursed, they wept quietly in the darkness. Some endured it until they were extinguished inside. Others gave up, letting the pain become their final language.

But Crazy Horse wouldn't let the salt eat him. He absorbed it like fire, which not only destroys wood but also warms it. For him, every burning sensation was proof that he was still alive. "When it burns," he said, "I know I'm not dead yet."

I remember one night he was sitting by the fire. A young warrior came to him, his eyes red from crying. He held his arm, where a wound still gaped, and whispered, "It won't stop." Crazy Horse took a handful of ash and rubbed it into the wound. The boy screamed, but Crazy Horse remained firm: "Now it burns twice as much. But when you wake up tomorrow, it will be your arm—not the wound."

The boy didn't understand immediately. But later, he continued to fight while others disappeared into silence.

This is how Crazy Horse turned salt into strength. Not because he was stronger, but because he refused to see the burning as the end. For him, pain was a teacher, not an executioner.

But the more he said this, the more he distanced himself from the others. For whoever took salt as fire made himself suspect. And suspects didn't live long in a people who were already burning from within.

Those who couldn't bear the salt became shadows. They still walked through the camp, they ate, they breathed—but they were no longer there. Their eyes looked right through you, their voices were hollow, their movements empty. They were bodies without spirit, open wounds that only burned without ever healing.

I remember a man who always sat by the edge of the fire. No one spoke to him, no one asked him anything. His skin was pale, his hands trembled, his lips moved, but no sound came out. At some point, he simply disappeared, and no one was surprised. As if the salt had dissolved him.

Crazy Horse saw these shadows and knew: The people weren't dying in a hail of bullets, but in the heat of open wounds. "A cut doesn't kill," he said. "Salt kills."

But the more he said it, the lonelier he became. The others couldn't bear his fire. They didn't want to hear that pain could still be of any use. For them, it was easier to remain silent, to drift, to become shadows.

So he stood there, like a man of flesh and blood amidst ghosts. A warrior burning while the others turned to smoke.

And that's precisely what made him suspicious. For whoever remains alive among the dead is always a stranger.

In the end, the salt was no longer just an image—it was the reality that lay on every face. A people full of open wounds, and every day brought a new handful. The burning never stopped. It made the children older than they were. It made the women harder than they wanted to be. It made the men quieter than they should ever have been.

The salt wasn't hunger alone. Not loss alone. It was the sum of everything—humiliation, fear, lies, broken promises, scorched earth. An invisible poison that consumed the flesh while the bodies were still alive.

Crazy Horse stood in the middle of it all. He felt the burning like everyone else. But he didn't silence it. He turned it into flame. "A wound doesn't stay open," he said. "Either it closes—or it consumes you." For him, it was clear: The people had to burn, or they would rot.

But most just wanted the fire to stop. They hated him for starting fires while they screamed for water.

Thus, salt became a symbol: for a people who were disintegrating. for men who became shadows. for women who swallowed suffering. for children who grew up in the screams.

And for Crazy Horse – the last one to strike flame from the salt.

But he knew: A flame alone cannot save a camp. It can only show how much shadow already exists.

The night knows no mercy

The night was no cloak, no protection, no friend. It was a knife that slowly drew its blade. When the sun disappeared, so did the last illusions. During the day, one could still pretend there was hope, as if there were a future. At night, only the naked truth remained: cold, hunger, fear.

The darkness wasn't sleep, but a second battlefield. Sounds grew louder, shadows were alive, and every breath was suspicious. A branch cracking sounded like a gunshot. A horse snorted like an enemy. Even the wind seemed to have a knife between its teeth.

I remember one night when the entire camp lay awake. No attack, no fire, no rain of bullets. Only silence—and the silence was worse than any thunder. Women clutched children to their chests, men held weapons in their hands, unraveled. They waited. For what? For everything. For nothing.

Crazy Horse sat in the shadows, his eyes open, unmoving. He knew the night showed no mercy. "The day lies," he said, "the night doesn't." And he was right. By day, one could find words. By night, there was only the truth—and it was always merciless.

The night crept into their bones like cold water. It took away their warmth, their courage, their voices. Even the strongest men, who rode proudly by day, were diminished when darkness enveloped them.

It wasn't the darkness alone. It was what lived within it—sounds that became enemies, thoughts that grew into ghosts. Every shadow could carry a knife, every gust of wind could bring the breath of death.

I remember a warrior who laughed by day, loudly, unwaveringly. At night, however, his hands trembled so much he could barely hold his spear. He saw eyes in the darkness, faces long dead. He murmured names until he himself fell silent. In the morning, he was found sleepless, his eyes open—and broken.

Crazy Horse was different. He didn't fear the night because he didn't make it more beautiful than it was. "The night gives nothing," he said. "It only takes. But what it doesn't take truly belongs to you." So he sat awake while others squirmed, and he knew: Strength is not conquering the darkness. Strength is enduring it without lying to yourself.

And the night knew no mercy. Those who could not withstand it were swallowed by it—not with teeth, but with silence.

In the camp itself, night became a weapon. It forced everyone into silence, and in this silence, mistrust grew. A clearing of the throat could sound like betrayal, a step like a threat. No one spoke because every word made the darkness louder.

The dreams were worse than reality. Men writhed, groaned, and cried softly in their sleep. They saw the bullets raining down again, the horses falling again, the children screaming again. Some woke up and no longer knew whether they were dreaming or living.

I remember a woman who strangled her husband as he slept. Her hands were around his throat, and she didn't stop until he stopped breathing. When they woke her, she screamed, "I just wanted to stop the soldier." But there was no soldier there, only her own husband. The night had forced her to continue the war, even in her sleep.

Crazy Horse knew that the night showed no mercy. It gave you no respite, no escape. "By day, you fight men," he said. "By night, you fight yourself." And that fight was often the crueler one.

Thus, the camp transformed into a nest of shadows, voices, and silence. Everyone saw the night differently—but everyone lost a piece of themselves in it.

The children learned it the quickest: Night was no place for dreams. They knew early on that darkness didn't mean sleeping—it meant lurking.

Their screams were different at night than they were during the day. By day, they screamed loudly, shrilly, full of breath. At night, it was a muffled whimper, a choking sound, as if even fear was trying to be quieter. They buried their faces in their mothers' arms, but it didn't help. The shadows still crept under their skin.

I remember a boy who kept jumping up because he thought he heard footsteps. He ran to the tent entrance and ripped it open—and outside there was only wind. But he swore he saw soldiers, white faces in the darkness. At one point, he was so exhausted that he fell asleep standing up, knife in hand.

The night turned children into small animals, ready to flee or bite at a moment's notice. They learned faster than the men that there was no mercy in the darkness. One mistake meant death. A scream too loud could betray the entire camp. So eventually, they only screamed inward.

Crazy Horse saw the small bodies tremble, heard the small voices break. "When children know the night," he said, "then the people die twice." For children should have dreams—not nightmares that were louder than any drum.

And yet: the night brought no mercy. It even took away what children could have still saved—innocence.

Crazy Horse wasn't afraid of the night. Not because he was stronger, but because he didn't lie to it. He knew: The night has no gifts, no refuge, no

beauty. It's only a black mirror that shows you what you really are when the fire goes out.

While others tossed and turned in their sleep, while children screamed and men remained silent, he sat still. He didn't speak, he didn't pray. He looked into the darkness and accepted it as if it were another enemy that couldn't be killed, only endured.

I remember one night when the camp trembled with fear. A noise in the woods, a shadow moving—immediate panic. Men reached for weapons, children screamed, women held their breath. Crazy Horse went out alone, disappearing into the darkness.
When he returned, he had only a handful of dirt in his fist. "It was just wind," he said. "But the wind has more courage than you."

For him, the night wasn't a trap. It was a teacher. It forced everyone to confront themselves. And most didn't like what they saw. "During the day, you fight against others," he said. "At night, you fight against yourself. Those who can't stand themselves die twice."

So Crazy Horse bore the night without fearing it. But that only made him feel more alien. For those who accept the darkness are always a disturbing noise in a camp that only wants to tremble.

The days were hard, but the nights were more cruel. By day, you could see where the danger was coming from—a bullet, a soldier, a horse, a fire. At night, everything was invisible. Every sound could mean anything. Every shadow was a culprit, an executioner, a traitor.

The night was longer than the sun. Not because the hours were counted differently – but because every minute burned twice as hard. The darkness stretched, crept through every crack, turning one breath into ten.

I remember one night when a man screamed, for no reason, simply out of fear. Immediately, the others grabbed their weapons, jumped up, and ran in confusion. There was no enemy—only darkness. In the end, a warrior lay dead, at the hand of a brother. The night had taken him again, without even carrying a knife.

The whites didn't have to do anything on such nights. They could simply wait. The night itself did the work. A people afraid of the dark will eventually tear itself apart.

Crazy Horse knew that the night was longer than any battle. "The day eats your skin," he said, "but the night eats your heart." And that was the difference. By day, you died if the bullet found you. By night, you died even if you were still breathing.

Thus the night became a second enemy – silent, invisible, merciless.

In the end, all that remained was the realization: The night knows no mercy. It wasn't a veil to cover you, a friend to protect you. It was the judge who forced you to sit with yourself—without excuse, without light, without lies.

The children screamed until their voices broke. The men remained silent until they themselves disappeared. The women held back the trembling with their bodies as long as they could.

And Crazy Horse? He remained silent, but not mute. He looked into the darkness, the way one looks into a face one cannot love, but also cannot ignore. "The night is honest," he said. "It takes away everything that isn't real. And only those who remain are truly alive."

Thus, the night became a symbol. For fear that knows no end. For wounds that do not heal. For voices that suffocate. For a people persecuted even in their sleep.

But also for the clarity that remains when you've lost everything. The night gave nothing—and that was precisely its truth.

Crazy Horse understood that a warrior doesn't just fight against men and guns. He fights against the darkness in the hearts, against the silence in his own camp, against the darkness that knows no mercy.

And he knew: As long as he looked the night in the face, he wouldn't break. But he also saw—most others had long since done so.

Horse eyes that have seen everything

The horses knew more than humans. Their eyes were dark, round, clear—and in them reflected every fire, every massacre, every escape. They saw when men fell, when children screamed, when women died. They saw it silently, without judgment, without lies.

Sometimes I thought the horses bore all the suffering in their eyes. No human could see so much without breaking. But the horses saw and kept going. They ate the horror like they ate grass—silently, with wide eyes that took in everything.

I remember a horse that stopped beside its fallen rider. Bullets flew, smoke hung over the prairie, men screamed. But the animal didn't move. It looked at the dead body as if trying to wake it. There was more pain in those eyes than in any of the men's faces.

Crazy Horse trusted horses more than people. "A horse doesn't lie," he said. "It sees and walks. That's all you need." He knew: horses were the last witnesses who couldn't be bribed, broken, or silenced.

And so the horses' eyes became mirrors. They saw the blood, the dust, the tears—and they saw that everything continued.

The horses weren't animals in the usual sense. They were witnesses. Silent, incorruptible witnesses who saw everything and forgot nothing. Their eyes reflected the dead by the river, the burned teepees, the broken promises.

When a person could no longer bear something, they averted their gaze. A horse never did that. It saw, even when blood ran into the dust, even when children screamed, even when men froze in silence. Its eyes were like black mirrors in which the whole truth hung.

I remember a camp after an attack. Smoke, bodies, rubble everywhere. Among the rubble stood the horses, calm, unmoving, nostrils flaring. Their eyes glittered, and in them you could see everything—the past, the present, what was yet to come. They stood there like witnesses to a court no one wanted to conduct.

Crazy Horse often spoke to the horses as if they were brothers. "You carry us," he said, "and you carry our spirits." He knew: A horse doesn't just carry burdens. It carries stories. Every scar on its coat was a chapter, every movement of its eyes a memory that wouldn't fade.

And while people lied, swore, cheated, and remained silent—the horses watched. Always.

So they became the only creatures who knew everything and still ran.

The horses weren't just witnesses—they were part of the war. Their bodies became weapons, their hooves thunder, their speed blows. Without them, no attack, no escape, no victory would have been possible. They were muscles with a heart, and that heart always beat to the beat of the drums—even when no drums were beating.

But while the men screamed, laughed, and died, the horses remained silent. Only their eyes betrayed that they saw everything. When blood splashed on their coats, they didn't flinch. When a rider fell, they kept running until they themselves were struck. Sometimes they stumbled over bodies, sometimes they crushed bones. But there was no judgment in their eyes—only the image.

I remember a horse that ran with three arrows in its body. Its rider was long dead, its reins dragging on the ground. But it ran until its legs could no longer support it. When it finally fell, its eyes remained open. And in those eyes lay the entire battlefield—men, smoke, dust, vultures. Everything was reflected in them until the glare faded.

Crazy Horse loved horses because they knew no lies. "A horse dies as it lives," he said, "without words, but with truth." To him, they were more than animals. They were warriors without language, who saw more than a human could ever bear.

And so they didn't just carry bodies - they carried the whole story on their backs.

The horses were a mirror to the people. Strong, loyal, silent—and yet full of eyes that never forgot the horror. They ate dust, they drank blood, they knew no lies. Everything that happened burned into their gaze, and those gazes burned into the hearts of those who saw them.

The people and the horses shared the same path: hunted, driven, used, and burned. And yet both persevered, step by step, breath by breath. Sometimes the horse was the last remaining friend when brothers had fallen and women had disappeared.

I remember an old woman who looked a horse in the eye as her son lay dead beside her. She whispered, "You've seen more than I have. And you'll see

more." The horse blinked, didn't move. But in that gaze lay everything—loss, pain, loyalty.

Crazy Horse knew that horses carried the people's destiny. "As long as they run, we live," he said. "If they fall, we fall."
And so, whenever he had doubts, he looked into the horse's eyes. For there he found no lie, no disguise, only the pure image of reality.

The horses were the last mirrors that didn't break. And their eyes told stories no one wanted to hear—but everyone knew.

For Crazy Horse, horses were brothers. Not servants, not tools, not possessions. He spoke to them like humans, sometimes softly, sometimes harshly. He knew: They didn't understand words—but they did understand truth. And there wasn't much of that anymore.

When he rode, he spoke into his horse's ear, telling him of what was to come. Not to calm him, but to share it. "You will see what I see," he often said. "And you will bear what I cannot bear."

I remember one morning before a battle. He stroked his horse's neck, his eyes serious but calm. "If I fall," he murmured, "then run. Run until no one can see you. Let the vultures find me, not you." The animal snorted, and in his eyes there was a clarity no human could give.

Crazy Horse trusted them more than many men. "A horse won't betray you," he said. "It dies with you, or it lives for you. But it never lies." He saw in their eyes an honesty he had lost in humans. The horses weren't traitors, they weren't gossipers, they weren't liars. They were simple—and therein lay dignity and truth.

Thus, the horses became his brothers in battle. Quiet, loyal, incorruptible. And in their eyes, he always found what he no longer sought in humans: trust.

Even in death, the horses still spoke. Their eyes remained open, round, black, shining—as if they wanted to capture everything until their last breath. No horse died with its eyelids closed. It died seeing, as a witness, as a mirror, as a memory no one could erase.

I remember a battlefield where more horses lay than men. Their bodies steamed, their blood ran into the earth, and their eyes stared at the sky as if they wanted to force it to finally look. The men looked away. But the horses couldn't. They saw, even in their deaths.

Crazy Horse once knelt beside a fallen horse. He placed his hand on its still-warm neck and looked into its open eyes. "You saw everything," he said quietly. "And you won't forget it." For him, those eyes were chronicles. Open books, written in blood and dust, that no one could close.

The people lied, remained silent, and forgot. The horses saw, died—and continued to speak, even though their mouths had never known a word.

Thus, dead horses became witnesses that bore more truth than an entire village full of living men.

In the end, it was the horses' eyes that carried the whole song. They saw when children screamed. They saw when men were silent. They saw when teepees burned, when blood stained the snow, when the vultures circled.

And they forgot nothing. Where people closed their eyes because they could no longer see, the horses' eyes remained open. Black, deep, endless – mirrors that tolerated no lies.

Crazy Horse knew this. "If anyone tells our story," he said, "it won't be the men. Not the women. Not even the children. It will be the horses' eyes. They've seen everything. They always see."

This made them the last guardians of truth. A people could be broken, sold, betrayed. But as long as horses ran, as long as their eyes saw, the memory remained in the dust, the wind, the fire.

And so the horse's eyes became a symbol. For a people who could not forget. For wars that never ended. For truth that even death could not close.

For a horse dies seeing. And his eyes continue to speak long after all voices have fallen silent.

The camp smells of decay

It began with a smell. Sharp, sweet, rotten—a smell that ate into the tents, into the hair, into the skin. Once you got a whiff of it, you carried it with you all day. It was the smell of decay.

The camp was no longer a place of healing. It was a cemetery pretending to be a village. The corpses weren't always visible—some had already been buried, others had disappeared into the river, and still others had long since been taken by the vultures. But the smell remained. It hung in the air like an invisible veil.

I remember a child asking, "Why does it smell like that?" His mother remained silent, holding him close as if she could block the stench with her body. But the stench was stronger. It crept through every hug, through every song, through every prayer.

Crazy Horse smelled it too. He didn't say much, only, "As long as we smell like that, we're already half dead." For decomposition didn't just mean death. It meant that even death no longer happened in peace. It remained, it consumed, it remembered.

The camp was still alive, yes. But it smelled as if it had already fallen.

The stench changed everything. It didn't just eat into people's noses, it crept into their heads. Conversations became shorter, dreams darker, and food no longer tasted of anything because every bite was accompanied by that sweet, rotten aftertaste.

The men sat more quietly, the women spoke more quietly, the children cried more quickly. Even the fire seemed to provide less warmth, as the smoke mingled with the smell of decay.

I remember one night a man woke up drenched in sweat. He said, "I dreamed I was dead." But it wasn't a dream. He smelled himself, his skin, his breath—everything tasted of earth, of the grave. The camp turned the living into half-dead.

Crazy Horse understood that this stench was more than just rotting flesh. It was a sign. "When a village smells of decay," he said, "then the souls have already left, even if the bodies are still there."
And he was right. You could see it in their faces. Eyes without shine, mouths without voice, hands without strength.

The decay wasn't just in the air. It was in the people. The camp itself was a corpse breathing once more.

They tried to combat the smell. They threw herbs into the fire, so many that the smoke became thick and pungent. Some rubbed themselves with earth, others with fat. The women sang old songs to fill the air with voices, as if words could dispel the stench.

But nothing helped. The sweet, rotten smell remained, creeping through the tents, settling in people's hair, the animals' fur, the blankets, their breath. It was stronger than any herb, stronger than any smoke.

I remember a woman who held her child to her breast and whispered "don't smell it" over and over again. But the child cried even louder. Children couldn't lie, couldn't pretend something wasn't there. They smelled what was there—death.

Crazy Horse felt that covering it up was pointless. "You can't paint over death with songs," he said. "It stinks through everything." For him, it was clear: the stench was truth. And truth couldn't be smothered.

No matter how hard the camp tried to appear alive, it still smelled like a grave.

The stench changed people. It wasn't just disgust—it was a poison that slowly corroded their minds. Every breath tasted of the end, and that made them harder, colder, more distrustful.

Men looked at each other as if they were already half-corpses. Women spoke of the living as if they were already dead. Children kept their distance from each other, as if afraid the smell might spread like a disease.

I remember an old man who said, "We smell of what we are becoming." After that, no one spoke to him again. Not because he was wrong, but because he had spoken the truth, which everyone smelled and no one wanted to hear.

Crazy Horse understood: Decomposition isn't just a smell. It's a sign. "When you smell of death," he said, "even the living believe you've already fallen." And so some began to see each other not as people, but as a burden. As flesh that would soon stink.

The camp was no longer a place where people clung to one another. It was a place where every breath reminded them that everything had already rotted.

Crazy Horse didn't pretend the stench could be masked. He didn't hold his breath, he didn't stuff his nose with herbs. He inhaled it—deeply, hard, like a man drinking poison to see if he can survive.

"The smell is truth," he said. "And as long as we smell it, we are still alive." For him, the stench was not the end. It was the sign that bodies remained, that the people had not yet been completely wiped out. The dead only smell when they are still lying with the living. A people that has truly disappeared no longer stinks.

I remember how he once stood in the camp with his arms crossed, head held high, nostrils wide open. Others held cloths over their faces, coughing, choking. But he smiled coldly and said, "Whoever smells death and still stands has already won." People looked at him as if he were crazy. Perhaps he was. But it was precisely this madness that sustained him.

The stench paralyzed everyone else. Crazy Horse turned it into a weapon. He breathed it like fire, burning but also giving off light.

And so he became the only man in the camp who didn't fear the smell - but took it as proof that it wasn't over yet.

The stench haunted people even in their sleep. You could close your eyes, but not your nose. Every dream tasted of death. Every breath reminded you that the ground was full of bodies—whether you could see them or not.

The children screamed in their sleep, tossing and turning, tearing off the blankets. They dreamed of corpses running after them, of faces without eyes, of brothers speaking from the earth with open mouths. The men tossed and turned in silence, their foreheads wet, their fists clenched. They said nothing when they awoke, but their eyes betrayed that they, too, had seen the same images.

I remember a woman who jumped up in the middle of the night and ran outside. She screamed, "It's all over me!" But there was nothing there. Only the smell. Only the stench that shattered even sleep and turned rest into hell.

Crazy Horse hardly slept. He sat, he woke, he smelled. "Death wants us to forget," he said. "But as long as it stinks, we can't." For him, the burning sensation in his nose was a reminder—cruel, but also a protection. For whoever smells death knows he's still alive.

Thus, the night turned into a second battlefield: not against bullets, not against soldiers, but against the stench that gave no respite.

In the end, the camp was no longer a place for the living. It was an in-between realm—half village, half cemetery. The teepees stood, the fires burned, the people breathed. But the smell told a different truth: Everything here was already rotten, everything was already dying.

Decomposition became a symbol. It was the song of the dead, which the living had to sing along to with every nostril. It was the reminder that the war raged not only outside, but within the people, in their skin, their flesh, their breath.

I remember one morning when the wind shifted and the stench pervaded the entire valley. An old warrior said, "Now even the heavens know we're dead." No one objected. Because everyone knew he was right.

Crazy Horse, however, saw it differently. "As long as we stink, we're still here," he said. "A grave doesn't smell." For him, the stench wasn't the end—it was the final sign that they weren't gone yet. He knew: The smell made them weak, but it also made them visible. And being visible meant they weren't yet extinct.

Thus, the camp remained a place that lived as the dead live—breathing, stinking, half-gone. And everyone who walked through the teepees knew: We're still here, but we already smell of what we're becoming.

Women who count the shadows

The women were the shadow counters. When the men were silent and the children cried, it was the women who measured the invisible. They knew how many shadows lengthened in the evening, how many were missing at dawn. Every return, every disappearance, every dead horse, every empty bed—they had it all in their sight, even if they didn't say anything.

Their eyes were like blades, sharp and tireless. They counted not with numbers, but with glances, with breaths, with the silence that lay between the tents. A woman needed no lists, no signs. She saw who was missing, who ate less, who no longer spoke.

I remember one night when a mother sat by the fire. She stared at the flames and moved her lips, quietly, as if in prayer. I asked her what she was saying. She replied, "I'm counting how many shadows are less." And then she added,

"Tomorrow there will be more." Her voice wasn't a complaint. It was a sober calculation.

Crazy Horse saw that the women were the silent accountants of death. "The men fight," he said, "but the women know what it costs." And that's precisely why their faces spoke more truth than any words in the camp.

Because whoever counts the shadows always knows that the night is getting longer.

The women didn't count out of sentimentality. They counted because it was the only order in the chaos. The men spoke of honor, war, and revenge. The children cried out of hunger, fear, and dreams. But the women recorded the bare numbers—not with writing, not with symbols, but with their memory.

Every night they knew how many were missing from the camp. Every morning they knew who was no longer breathing. They counted horses, teepees, bodies. They counted breaths that grew shorter, footsteps that sounded slower.

I remember an old woman sitting at the edge of the camp. She closed her eyes and recited a series of names, one after the other, quietly and monotonously. When she was finished, she simply nodded and said, "There are fewer today." No crying, no cursing, just a sober assessment.

Crazy Horse knew that this shadow counting was the only anchor. "The men forget, the children don't know, the whites lie," he said. "Only the women keep the book, even if it's never written." And he was right. Without the women, the camp would have long since become nothing more than a pile of voices and dust.

The women gave structure to the downfall. They turned chaos into a list—even if each list got shorter.

Counting wasn't a solution. It was a burden that grew heavier day by day. Each number was like a stone that the women placed on their chests. And they never stopped collecting stones.

A man could see a dead man and ride on. A child could scream and laugh again the next day. But women wore memory like a second skin. They didn't just know who had died—they knew how many remained, how many were breathing less, how many footsteps had fallen silent.

I remember a woman who one morning looked at the horizon and quietly counted. "Forty-seven to go." The next evening, she said, "Forty-five to go." She spoke it as if she were counting logs—and yet her voice broke on the last word.

Crazy Horse saw this burden. "Men carry weapons," he said, "but women carry the truth. And that's heavier." Because the truth wasn't just blood, not just hunger, not just bullets. The truth was an ever-shrinking number.

And at some point, every woman herself became a stone, bent over by the numbers she carried in her head. Numbers that didn't fade. Numbers that remained like shadows, even when the people had already vanished.

Over time, the shadows became more than just numbers. The women began to hear them like voices. As if the dead themselves wanted to be counted, as if they were whispering:*Don't forget me. Include me.*

At night, when the fire was only smoldering and the men sat in silent stupor, the women murmured names. They did so not for the living, but for those who were already gone. Every name was a shadow, every shadow a memory.

I remember a young widow clutching her child to her breast and whispering three names at once: that of her husband, her brother, her father. "They're still standing here," she said. "Even if you don't see them." Her gaze was empty, but her voice was confident, as if she were standing before the shadows themselves.

Crazy Horse observed this and understood: The women held the bridge between life and death. "We fight," he said, "but they remember. And memory is sharper than any knife." For a people that forgets dies twice. And the women made sure that the second death didn't come so quickly.

But the price was high. Those who counted the shadows carried them with them – until they became heavier than their own lives.

Counting made the women harder—but also ghostly. With every name they whispered, with every number they chewed over, they became less alive. They barely laughed, they no longer sang, they no longer danced. Their faces bore the same pallor as the ones they remembered.

Sometimes it seemed as if they already had one foot among the dead. They moved through the camp like shadows, quietly, controlled, with looks that cut deeper than any words.

I remember a woman who had lost three children. She no longer spoke to the living. Every evening, she sat outside her tent and quietly counted the same names over and over again. For her, the camp wasn't full of people, but full of absences. She lived among emptiness.

Crazy Horse saw this transformation. "Women are the souls of our people," he said. "But those who carry too many shadows become one themselves." He knew: without women, the people would disintegrate. But with every number they carried, they became colder, distant, stranger.

Thus they became guardians of the dead – and at the same time less and less a part of the living.

The men feared the women. Not loudly, not openly, but deep in their silence lay fear. They sensed that the shadow counting was a force stronger than weapons.

A man could carry a rifle, ride a horse, and shed blood. But all that faded when a woman measured him with a single glance—and in that glance lay the memory of everyone who had already fallen. The men felt that one day they themselves would be counted. And that made them small.

I remember a scene in which a warrior boasted that he would destroy the white people. A woman looked at him for a long time without a word. Finally, she said, "You will be a shadow before you cast a shadow on them." The man was silent. His pride was broken, not by a knife, but by a sentence.

Crazy Horse understood that women were the secret power of the people. "We carry weapons," he said, "but they carry the truth. And the truth strikes harder." For a bullet kills a body. But a woman who speaks your name in the line of shadows kills your legacy.

That's why the men kept their distance. They weren't afraid of the women's voices—they were afraid of their silence, their counting, their eyes that saw everything.

Thus, women became silent rulers of an empire of absence.

In the end, women were no longer just mothers, sisters, and daughters. They were the keepers of the shadows, the silent judges of memory. When a man died, they kept him alive by naming him. When a child disappeared, they made him immortal by adding him to the line of voices.

They were incorruptible. No bribe from the whites, no proud oath from the men, no loud victory could deceive them. They kept counting. And their count was the true measure of the war—not the guns, not the horses, not the dead on the battlefields, but the number of shadows that grew longer every evening.

I remember one night when a woman stood alone by the river. She spoke names, one after the other, quietly, monotonously. Then she looked into the water and said, "One day I, too, will be counted." But she didn't cry. She spoke it like a law.

Crazy Horse knew that the women were fighting the real battle. "We die," he said, "but they remember that we were there." For whoever is forgotten is truly dead. And the women made sure that the people didn't disappear into the shadows—even if they were only shadows.

Thus they became a symbol: not of hope, not of life, but of memories that never break. They were the counters of the night – and without them, no one would have known how many were still breathing.

A heart that no longer beats

There are sounds louder than any gun. The silence of a heart is one of them. When a heart stops beating, it's not a bang, not a scream—it's a hole. A hole in the air, a hole in the body, a hole in the world.

In the camp, one often heard screams, often drums, often wind. But worst of all was the silence that remained when a heart fell silent. A silence that spread like smoke creeping through every crack.

I remember a young warrior who was struck by a cough. Not a bullet, not a knife, just a cough, day and night. One evening, he lay there still, his breath gone, his chest unmoving. His mother placed her hand on him, waiting. But there was nothing. No beat, no rhythm. Only silence. The woman didn't cry. She simply said, "Now he's completely still."

Crazy Horse knew bullets were cruel, but the silencing of a heart was worse. "Death by gun is loud," he said. "But when the heart stops, no one hears—except those who love."

And so every silenced heart was not only an end, but a reminder that true cruelty often came quietly.

Every heart that stopped beating didn't just tear a person away—it tore a piece of the entire camp away. A heart wasn't alone. It was part of a rhythm, a beat that held the people together. If one fell silent, the silence was heard by all, even if no one spoke it.

The women felt it first. They knew when a heart had stopped, even before anyone found the body. Children stopped laughing, men became speechless, and even the dogs in the camp raised their heads as if they had lost something.

I remember an old grandmother who, when her grandson died, just shook her head and said, "The song has one less drum." It was a simple truth: the camp sounded weaker when a heart fell silent.

Crazy Horse understood that strength lay not only in weapons, but in hearts. "A people is as strong as its pulse," he said. "When the beats diminish, it slowly dies." And he was right. The white man's armies could send bullets, but the real killing occurred in silence—every time a heart stopped and no new beat followed.

The camp was like a song that grew quieter and quieter. And everyone knew that one day it would fall silent completely.

People tried to drown out the missing hearts. They beat drums, louder, faster, until their hands bled. They sang songs, shouted their voices hoarse, stamped their feet to the earth's rhythm. All to reclaim the sound they had lost.

But the silence remained. It lurked beneath every note, tugging at the songs, sucking at the drums. It was like a black hole: no matter how loud they were, the silence swallowed everything.

I remember one evening when the entire camp sat around a fire. Men drummed, women sang, children clapped in time. It was a rebellion, a defiant "We're still alive." But suddenly, in the middle of her singing, a woman fell silent, looked into the fire, and whispered, "Someone just left." The next morning, an old man was found dead in the tent. Her ear had heard the missing drum, even though the others were still playing.

Crazy Horse knew that noise cannot overcome silence. "You can't drown out death," he said. "It's always listening." He understood: every drumbeat, every voice, was worthless if the pulse of the people weakened.

So every song became a cry against the emptiness – and every drumming a battle they had already lost.

The women heard the silenced hearts differently than the men. For the men, it was a loss, a hole, a beat less in the song. For the women, it was a shadow that had to be included in the line.

They counted not only the living. They also counted those whose chests had fallen silent. "A heart no longer beats," they said, "but a shadow remains with us." Thus they held the dead, thus giving them weight, even when the body had long since cooled.

I remember a mother who, after her son's death, continued to keep a place by the fire for him every night. "His heart no longer beats," she murmured, "but he's still sitting here." No one dared to take the seat. It was as if the invisible beat still resonated around them.

Crazy Horse understood this. "Women hear what we can't hear," he said. "We only hear the noise. They hear the silence." And he knew: This silence wasn't empty. It was full of ghosts, full of memories, full of hearts that no longer beat but still counted.

Thus, the people lived between two rhythms—that of the living and that of the shadows. And both were equally loud, if you really listened.

Crazy Horse saw the silencing of hearts not as an end, but as a surrender. For him, every heart that stopped beating was a beat that transitioned into another. "When one falls," he said, "another must beat faster."

He often spoke of death not as a falling silent, but as a rhythm that changes places. But he also knew that the burden of bearing this blow fell on those who remained. And the burden was heavy.

I remember one night he stood bent over a dead warrior. He placed his hand on the warrior's still chest and murmured, "Your blow is now mine." Then he stood upright as if he had truly taken on something—not just a weight, but a beat. He rode the next day as if he were living twice: for himself and for the one who was no longer there.

Crazy Horse understood: The true betrayal wasn't dying. The betrayal was not carrying the blow. "A heart that no longer beats has done its duty," he said. "The shame lies with the one who wastes his own beat."

Thus, death became not only a loss, but also a task. And as long as Crazy Horse lived, he carried the silent drums of the dead within his own chest.

Over time, the camp became full of silent hearts. You couldn't see them, you couldn't touch them—but they were there. Each dead body perished, but the silence remained like a second skin over the camp.

It was as if the air became heavier. Every movement seemed slower, every conversation shorter. Even the laughter, when it flashed out, sounded sharp and hollow, as if it were colliding with an invisible wall of silence.

I remember a night when no fire was burning. We sat in the dark, yet the silence was so loud that we swore we could hear hearts beating that had long since stopped. The women nodded. "They're still here," they said. The men were silent, but their hands trembled.

Crazy Horse knew: The living had no choice. "The silence is growing," he said. "But we must continue in it, or it will consume us." He understood that the fight wasn't just against guns and hunger—but against the overwhelming power of the silence, which grew stronger every night.

And so the people learned to live with the silenced hearts as if they were neighbors. They moved on—not with courage, but because there was no other direction.

In the end, every silenced heart was more than just a death. It was a symbol. For the end of a life – and for the duty of those left behind not to lose the rhythm.

A heart beats until it can't anymore. Then it passes the beat, whether you want it or not. Some embraced it, some were broken by it. But no one could pretend they didn't hear the silence.

I remember a morning when three hearts had fallen silent during the night. The camp was pale, wordless, empty. But Crazy Horse stood up, beat his chest, and said, "Then we'll beat louder today." And he rode off as if he were carrying four lives in one body. People saw him and knew: This is what it means not to give up.

Crazy Horse understood that the heart wasn't an infinite supply. But he also knew: as long as one heart beat, the nation wasn't dead. "We aren't many," he said, "but we still beat. And as long as we beat, we don't belong to silence."

Thus, the silenced heart became a symbol. It reminded us of loss—but also of the duty to continue living, to continue moving, to continue beating. For as long as a rhythm still beat somewhere in a warrior's chest, the people had not completely fallen.

And the silence, no matter how great it became, could not erase that.

The Tongue of the Traitor

It was never the knife that killed first. It was the tongue. A tongue could create more corpses than a gun. It didn't have to shoot, it didn't have to cut—it only had to talk.

In the camp, the traitor's tongue was more feared than the steel of the white man. It was soft, moist, inconspicuous. But it crept into the ears, into the heads, into the hearts. And once it was there, it ate from the inside out.

I remember a man who came with kind words. He spoke of peace, of gifts, of security. His voice was warm, his gaze soft. The people listened to him, believed him, nodded. But behind every word stood a soldier, behind every promise a bullet. That same week, three teepees burned, and two families disappeared.

Crazy Horse spat on the ground when he heard of such tongues. "You see the knife coming," he said. "You hear the bullet. But the tongue—it eats you while you think it feeds you."

The traitor's tongue was the quietest weapon. And that's precisely why it was the deadliest.

Betrayal doesn't begin with a blow. It begins with a whisper. A quiet word by the fire, a half-sentence in the darkness, a look that lasts longer than necessary. No one notices it immediately, but it seeps in, drop by drop, like poison in water.

The traitor's tongue doesn't speak loudly. It speaks cautiously, confidentially, almost tenderly. "Perhaps we should..." - "Have you heard that..." - "They say Crazy Horse only thinks about himself." And already the camp begins to crumble. No shot, no knife, just syllables that run like cracks through wood.

I remember a night when two men were arguing. It wasn't about food, or weapons—it was about a rumor, a single word one of them had heard. No one knew if it was true, but that didn't matter. The poison had already taken effect. In the end, both lay bleeding in the dust—and the traitor hadn't even raised a hand. His tongue had fought for him.

Crazy Horse knew that words were worse than bullets. "A bullet kills a body," he said, "but a word can tear a people apart." That's why he listened more to voices than to guns. For the true enemy rarely came with a gun. He came with a smile and a soft, wet tongue.

The most dangerous tongue wasn't the one that spit lies. It was the one that twisted the truth. Because you could smell a blatant lie immediately. But a truth twisted was like a knife that cut so finely that you didn't see blood until it was too late.

The traitor's tongue often spoke half-truths. "Yes, Crazy Horse fights well... but he wants the honor for himself." "Yes, the white man gives gifts... but only if you listen to them." Thus she built bridges that led into abysses.

I remember a man who swore he had listened to the officers. "They just want peace," he said. "And they say they respect us." He wasn't misspoken—the words were genuinely spoken. But he omitted the fact that, in the same breath, the whites were demanding land, horses, and submission. Suddenly, it no longer sounded like betrayal, but like hope. Hope that killed more than bullets.

Crazy Horse despised these tongues. "Half a word is worse than a knife," he said. "For a knife only cuts once. Half a word cuts anew every day." And he knew: The camp could survive ten bullets. But a single twisted sentence could burn down more teepees than fire ever could.

The traitor's tongue rarely worked directly against the enemy. It worked within. It needed no white officer, no treaty, no dagger in the back—it needed only its own people, who distrusted one another.

Thus, brothers became adversaries, cousins became enemies, friends became strangers. The tongue didn't need battlefields; it created its own—in the middle of the camp, in the middle of sleep, in the middle of the fire.

I remember two men who had ridden side by side since childhood. They hunted together, they fought together, they laughed together. But a single rumor—"he gave your horse away"—was enough, and brothers became rivals. In the end,

one of them lay dead, and the tongue that had started it smiled in the shadows.

Crazy Horse understood that the enemy didn't need to send guns when the people were consuming themselves. "The white man loves a traitor," he said. "All he has to do is listen and wait." And he was right. Every drop of distrust, every poisonous syllable, weakened the camp more than a thousand soldiers could have.

The traitor's tongue was the invisible army. And it marched day and night, unstoppable.

Crazy Horse knew that you couldn't stop a tongue with pleas. A tongue had to be silenced—hard, fast, without hesitation. Silence against silence.

It was said that he even strangled traitors, not in anger, but coldly, as one would smother a fire. A grip around the throat, a pressure until the tongue fell silent. "A poisonous snake won't bite once its head is off," he said.

I remember an incident in the camp: A man who spoke too often to the whites, who too often used words that divided more than united. One night he disappeared. In the morning he was found by the river, his face in the mud, his tongue blue and swollen. No one asked, no one cried. Everyone knew why. Crazy Horse remained silent, but his gaze said enough: betrayal was worse than the enemy itself.

For him, it was a law: A warrior may fall, a child may scream, a woman may mourn—but a traitor may not live. "The white man's bullets only kill us half," he said. "The traitor's tongue kills us completely."

And so he dealt with betrayal like an illness: no pity, no hesitation, only annihilation.

But even if one tongue was cut out, new ones grew back. Not because the people were weak—but because hunger, fear, and despair spoke faster than loyalty.

An empty stomach whispers louder than an oath. A crying child turns any father into a beggar. And a man who feels death at his heels speaks, even if he swears to remain silent.

I remember a young warrior who secretly spoke with the white men. Not out of greed, not out of malice—but because they had promised him flour so his wife

wouldn't starve. He thought he was saving lives. Instead, he revealed the location of a hunting trip, and three men never returned. His wife didn't cry as he hung dead in the tree. She only said, "He had two tongues—one for me, one for her."

Crazy Horse understood that not every betrayal could be explained away with rope and knife. "Some tongues aren't poisonous," he said, "they're desperate. But they kill just the same." He knew: A starving people breeds its own traitors, just as rotten flesh breeds worms.

And so the camp remained full of voices, not all of them loud, but many of them false. Every tongue that whispered was a blade that cut from within.

In the end, the traitor's tongue was more feared than any gun. A bullet came from outside, loud, fast, visible. But the tongue came from within—quiet, warm, familiar. It ate slowly until the people chewed themselves to pieces.

The traitor's tongue was no longer an organ. It was a symbol. A symbol for the poison that didn't bleed, but crept. For the rupture that came not from soldiers, but from brothers.

I remember a girl who asked, "Why do we die if no one shoots?" Her mother replied, "Because some tongues are sharper than knives." The child didn't understand. But the men sitting beside her did. They bowed their heads, knowing that one day they themselves might be counted—not by bullets, but by words.

Crazy Horse once said, "The white man just has to wait. We kill ourselves with our tongues." And that was the truth, harder than steel, bitterer than firewater.

Thus, the traitor's tongue remained a curse that weighed heavier than any defeat. For as long as she spoke, no one had to shoot. The people did not fall by cannons—they fell by words that were quieter than breath.

Palefaces with paper dreams

The white people had no dreams of smoke or blood. Their dreams were made of paper. Thin, dry, rustling—but sharper than any sword. They needed no drums, no dances, no ancestors. They needed ink.

A piece of paper could steal more land than a thousand soldiers. One line, one stamp, one signature—and entire valleys suddenly no longer belonged to the people who had lived there for centuries, but to those who had never set foot there before.

I remember an officer waving a document, laughing. "Now it's no longer your country," he said. He held the paper in his hand as if it were a weapon. And he was right: It was deadlier than a rifle. The rifle took lives, the paper took the future.

Crazy Horse spat when he saw the treaties. "Paper dreams," he said. "You can't eat them, you can't ride them, you can't love them. But the white people believe in them as if they were gods." He knew: A people who believe in paper is more dangerous than one who believes in cannons. Because paper promised something that was never real—and that's precisely why the white people clung to it so tightly.

The palefaces didn't dream of sun or rain, not of horses or hunts. They dreamed of lines on a map.

And these dreams were deadlier than any bullet.

The paper dreams of white people had their own rules. One man wrote a word, another put a mark underneath it – and suddenly it was considered truth. Not because it was true, but because it was written.

They called it a treaty. For them, it was more binding than blood, stronger than an oath, more sacred than heaven. But for the Lakota, it was ridiculous. "A word on a leaf?" the elders said. "The wind can tear it, the fire can consume it, the rain can erase it. What is that worth?"

But the whites laughed. They knew: Paper doesn't need eternity. It just needs enough weapons to back it up.

I remember a chief who was forced to sign his name on a document he couldn't read. He saw the symbols, the squiggles, the lines, and said, "That's smoke

without fire." Two months later, his village burned down—and the whites showed the paper as if it were proof that everything was legal.

Crazy Horse despised this logic. "A promise that has to be written down is already a lie," he said. "Because if it were true, there'd be no need to put it on paper." For him, it was simpler: Either you kept your word—or you died a liar.

But the whites held their paper dreams high like shields. And every line on them was a dagger in the heart of his people.

For white people, paper was more sacred than life. A man could be shot—it was an accident, a loss, an entry in a report. But a torn document? A missing contract? That was a crime, worse than murder.

They guarded their papers like others guard their children. They locked them in boxes, sealed them with wax, and carried them in leather briefcases across battlefields while men died and horses fell. Paper was not allowed to burn, disappear, or crumple. A human life was replaceable—a piece of paper was not.

I remember an officer laughing while a village was in flames. "Everything's fine," he said, "the treaty is secure." And he held up a sheaf of parchment while behind him children screamed and women fell into the smoke. For him, the paper was the heart—not the people.

Crazy Horse couldn't believe this madness. "They're killing lives to save lines," he said. "It's like starving the horse and polishing the saddle." He knew: this world was sick. A world where ink counted more than blood couldn't be just.

But therein lay the power of the whites. They had learned to make dreams out of paper harder than bones. And bones broke – but paper remained.

Paper didn't just steal land—it stole names, faces, entire lives. White people wrote down who someone was, and from then on, it was valid. A man could be a warrior, a hunter, a chief—but if they put his name on a document, they called him a "subject" or a "friend of the government." And that was the new truth.

It was as if they were erasing entire identities with ink. They renamed rivers, renamed mountains, and marked boundaries through hunting grounds as if they were mere fields. What the Lakota had lived for generations was, for the whites, merely an empty space that needed to be filled—with letters.

I remember an old man shouting angrily when an officer told him, "This land no longer belongs to you; it now belongs to the government." The old man stamped his foot in the dust and shouted, "My feet say it's mine! My bones lie here, my children were born here—what does your paper say against that?" The officer laughed and simply held up the document. And that was enough.

Crazy Horse saw in these paper dreams a weapon worse than any bullet. "A bullet kills you," he said. "Paper kills your memory." For what good is a living people if they no longer exist on paper?

Thus, the ink of the whites became the second blade – invisible, but sharper than steel.

The Lakota tried to destroy the paper dreams. Some tore the documents to pieces, others threw them into the fire, laughing as the writing vanished in the smoke. "Now the land belongs to us again," they said. But they still didn't understand how deep the white people's sickness ran.

For the whites didn't react to the loss as if it were ashes. They reacted with violence, as if a heart had been ripped out. A burned treaty meant riders, soldiers, and bullets. A torn document brought more revenge than the death of an officer.

I remember a scene in which a chief tore up the treaty in front of a white messenger. "Your paper has no breath," he said. "It's a lie, and we don't believe it." The messenger remained silent—but two weeks later, the village was burned down, the horses stolen, the women abducted. For the whites, the crime wasn't the rebellion—it was the banished piece of paper.

Crazy Horse sensed the madness. "They love their ink more than their blood," he said. "And whoever sets paper on fire sets their heart on fire." He knew: The paper wasn't weak. It was stronger than fire, because the whites were prepared to kill anyone who burned it.

Thus, the Lakota realized that smoke could not be pitted against ink. For the white people had learned to nourish paper dreams with blood.

Crazy Horse laughed at the paper dreams—but his laughter was cold. "They sleep on ink," he said. "They dream in lines and wake up in lies." To him, it was madness: men who believed in something that could neither ride nor eat. A sheet of paper couldn't stop a bullet, satisfy hunger, or warm a child. And yet people died because of these sheets of paper.

He mocked the treaties. Whenever a document was presented to him, he looked at it as if it were a dead bird. "Nicely painted," he said, "but it doesn't fly." But behind the mockery lay something else—an insight.

Crazy Horse knew that fire and knives were useless against paper dreams. White people loved them so much that they were willing to pile up mountains of corpses just so a scrap of ink could continue to exist. "You can't burn words," he said. "They grow back like weeds."

I remember one night when he stared into the fire and muttered, "You can kill a warrior, but not a word if enough fools believe it." His gaze was dark, not because he feared the white people—but because he knew their madness knew no bounds.

So he realized: You could fight bullets. But paper dreams? That was a war that was already lost before it even began.

In the end, the paper dreams were more than just leaves. They were the true heart of the white people—cold, dry, black with ink. They prayed to them, they fought for them, they died for them. Not for their children, not for their country, but for lines drawn by a man with a pen.

The Lakota never understood it. For them, life was breath, blood, soil, and fire. For the white people, life was a stamp, a contract, a document. And so two worlds collided that could not understand each other: one full of smoke and heart, the other full of paper and numbers.

I remember a girl who asked, "Why do we give land for words?" Her mother replied, "Because white people carry their words like weapons." The child shook her head—and that was the truth: No child could understand why ink should be more deadly than steel.

Crazy Horse saw in the paper dreams the madness of an entire race. "They write the world for themselves," he said. "And then they believe it belongs to them." He knew: One could fight against men, against hunger, against cold. But against a dream made of paper? That was like fighting against smoke.

Thus, the white people's paper dreams became a symbol. Not of strength, not of justice—but of the cold madness that turned blood into ink. And in the end, it wasn't the rifle that crushed the Lakota. It was paper that weighed heavier than corpses.

One last whistle, one last look

There are moments when a warrior knows the path is getting shorter. Not because he's old, not because he's sick—but because the shadows are thickening and silence is approaching. Then he reaches for his pipe. Not out of habit, not out of desire, but because the smoke is the only thing that still belongs to him.

A pipe is more than tobacco. It is a memory, a farewell, the last vestige of freedom when everything else has been taken away. You draw the smoke into your lungs and blow it out again – and for that brief moment, the world belongs to you alone.

I remember an old man sitting at the edge of the camp, his face wrinkled, his eyes tired. He smoked, slowly, evenly, as if trying to count every cloud. When the pipe was empty, he put it aside, looked up at the sky once more, and whispered, "Enough." By morning he was dead. No one was surprised.

Crazy Horse understood this language. "A man who smokes his last pipe," he said, "has already cast his last glance." Because sometimes you don't need a bullet, a knife, or betrayal. Sometimes it's enough for the smoke to clear—and you decide to follow it.

In the camp, everyone knew what it meant when someone picked up their pipe and smoked longer than usual. It was a secret ritual, without words, without chants. Just smoke and eyes scanning the horizon. No one spoke about it, but they saw it.

The last pipe was like a farewell, one no one said aloud. The men passed on the tobacco, even though it was scarce. The women sat silently by, keeping the fire smoldering. Children stared curiously, not yet understanding that they were watching someone gaze at the world through the smoke for the last time.

I remember a woman who held her husband's hand while he smoked. She didn't say a word, only her fingers tightened as he exhaled. When he finally lowered his pipe, she kissed him on the forehead. The next morning, his seat was empty—but no one asked, no one complained. It was expected.

Crazy Horse saw this and remained silent. "When someone smokes their last pipe," he murmured, "we don't have to look for the reason. The reason lies in the smoke itself." For the last pipe wasn't giving up—it was a silent contract with the earth that one had vacated one's place.

Thus, the pipe became more than just a pleasure. It was the key to the door that one had to pass through alone.

The last glance never went into the camp. No one looked at the teepees, at the fire, at the faces of those left behind.
The last look was always outward—to the horizon, to the hills, to the stars. To where perhaps something more than dust and hunger still awaited.

It was as if, at the last moment, their eyes could see something that remained hidden from the others. Some smiled, as if they had recognized something. Others blinked, as if they saw shadows already calling. But no one looked back at the camp. Never.

I remember an old warrior who lay dying. His breathing was shallow, his whistle long extinguished. But his eyes rested on the distance, as if he saw there a hunt, a green valley, a freedom denied to the living. His wife shook him, called his name—he didn't respond. But his gaze remained clear until it went out.

Crazy Horse saw those last glances often. "The living see only tents and dust," he said. "The dying see what we've lost—or what's yet to come." For him, the last glance wasn't a farewell. It was a gate that opened only for a moment before slamming shut again.

And so the last look remained a secret that only the dying knew – and that the living would never find out.

For those left behind, the last whistle was no consolation. It was a command. Silent, invisible, but clear: stay strong, carry on, carry the smoke when the one who had blown it out was no longer there.

The survivors knew the smoke wouldn't go away. It crept into the teepees, settled in the blankets, and hung in their hair. Every breath was a reminder: One has left, and you must stay.

I remember a child sitting next to his father's body. The pipe still lay there, cold, the last bit of tobacco unsmoked. The child picked it up and held it to his lips, as if accepting the promise. His mother gently took it from him and said, "Not yet. But one day, your pipe, too, will be the last."

Crazy Horse understood that these moments weighed more heavily than any battle. "Fighting is easy," he said. "Staying is hard."
For the whistle left behind a duty harder than riding into the bullets. It left behind bare survival, day after day, breath after breath.

So the last pipe was not an escape, not a surrender. It was the baton that one person passed on in the smoke—and that the other had to carry, whether he wanted to or not.

Crazy Horse always carried the image of one last pipe with him. He knew that day would come for him too—the smoke, the last look, the silence afterward. But he swore to himself: When he raised his pipe to his lips for the last time, it wouldn't be out of weakness. But out of defiance.

"My last pipe," he once said, "will not be the pipe of a tired man. It will be the pipe of a warrior who spits before he goes." He wanted its smoke to taste of resistance, of dust, of blood, of everything the whites could never erase.

I remember one night when he sat alone by the fire. He didn't smoke—he just turned the pipe bowl in his fingers, as if talking to it. Then he put it aside, looked into the embers, and said quietly: "Not yet. Not for a long time." The men who heard him understood: for him, the last pipe wasn't a farewell. It was a war cry, only without a voice.

Crazy Horse knew that one day he would take one last look. But he vowed that this look would not be empty. "I will look into the distance," he said, "and the whites shall tremble, knowing that even as I walk, I am still staring at them."

Thus, his presentation of the last pipe became not an act of decay, but a promise: When he left, he would not do so quietly – but with smoke that remained like a threat.

Not every last pipe was the same. Some warriors smoked quickly, greedily, as if they wanted to devour the world in one breath. Others puffed slowly, almost reverently, as if listening to the spirits in the smoke. Every last pipe told a different story—and those who looked closely could read it.

A young man who never saw his first child grow up blew the smoke high into the sky, as if sending it to the child. An old hunter who had spent his entire life among horses and herds blew the smoke into the earth, as if he wanted to feed it once more. And one, full of rage, spat the smoke in the faces of the living, as if to say, "Don't forget that you are cowards."

I remember a night when three warriors smoked their last pipes together. They knew that in the morning they would ride into battle from which neither would return. They sat silently next to each other, letting the smoke rise in rings. No

song, no prayer, just smoke. When the pipes went out, they stood up—and the next day they were history.

Crazy Horse saw these differences and said, "The pipe reveals who you really are. Your last puff says more about you than all your battles." For in the smoke, no lies were possible. In the end, only truth remained—in gray clouds that vanished in the wind.

In the end, the last pipe was more than smoke. It was a symbol—of farewell, of freedom, of defiance. It was the final moment in which a man decided for himself when to leave. Not the bullet, not the knife, not hunger—the pipe.

The last look was also a sign. Not to those who remained, but to those who had already left. A look out, a look across. No one could say what the dying saw. But everyone sensed that they saw something that remained hidden from the living.

I remember a girl watching her grandfather die. He was smoking, looking out, and smiling faintly. She asked, "Where are you looking?" He replied, "To where there are no white people." Then he closed his eyes—and his smoke hung over the camp as a final greeting.

Crazy Horse knew that neither bullets nor treaties could break the last look. "As long as one breathes free, one can die free," he said. "And the smoke speaks louder than any words." That's why white people feared these moments, even if they never understood it. They could kill bodies, take land, break dreams—but the last pipe, the last look, no one could steal from them.

Thus, smoke and gaze became a legacy. No prayer, no contract, no memorial—just tobacco, fire, eyes into the distance. And that was enough.

Bones that no one buries

There were too many dead. Too many to bury them all. Too many to honor them all. The earth was tired of all the flesh given to it, and the sky was sick of all the smoke sent by the burning bodies.

So bones remained lying there. Among the grasses, in ravines, at the edges of paths. White in the sunlight, gray in the rain, black in the fire. No one came to take them anymore, no one sang for them, no one laid them to rest.

People walked by as one walks past stones. Children played with the skulls, dogs gnawed at the ribs. And at some point, bones were no longer anything special—just remnants, like wood, like dust.

I remember one ride where we passed a whole field of skeletons. Horses and humans, mixed together, like a smashed herd. The wind played with their jawbones, and it sounded like they were laughing. None of us laughed back.

Crazy Horse looked at the corpses lying there and fell silent. Then he said, "Look closely. Each of these bones was once a heart, a breath, a dream." He knew: It's not death that brings dishonor—it's forgetting.

And nothing smelled as strongly of oblivion as bones that no one buried.

The camp lived among the bones. They lay at the edge of the paths, at the edge of the fire pits, sometimes even in the middle of the tent when the ground was too hard to dig in. They were stepped over, pushed aside, ignored—and yet they were always there.

The children were the first to get used to it. To them, skulls were balls, ribs were arches, and vertebrae were little wheels. They laughed as they played, unaware that they were romping with the remains of their own uncles and brothers.
The women looked away. They knew they couldn't cry all their tears, so they stopped crying altogether.

I remember one night a dog came into camp with a femur. He chewed it contentedly, and the men looked at it briefly, then back at the fire. No one said anything. No one took the bone away from the animal. It was easier to pretend it was wood.

Crazy Horse observed this indifference with quiet anger. "Those who live among bones get used to death," he said. "And a people who get used to death have already lost." He knew that the real poison wasn't the white man's bullets, but the slow freezing of the heart.

The bones lay there as a reminder. And the people moved on as if they were already part of it.

The bones were not silent. They cracked in the frost, they rattled in the wind, they gleamed in the sun like polished knives. When the rain came, they darkened, as if they were once again soaking in the life they had lost.

Sometimes they seemed almost alive. A skull, half-buried in the grass, seemed to grin. A rib cage in the dust looked like a cage still holding something. And when the wind blew through the fields, it sounded as if voices were laughing or crying.

I remember one night when we were camped. The wind rustled through the bones of a horse lying beside us. It sounded like a flute song, eerie, almost beautiful. No one could sleep because everyone swore the animal would call again.

Crazy Horse heard those voices too. "They speak to us," he said. "Not with words, but with what's left of them." For him, the bones weren't silent. They told of battles, of escapes, of defeats. Every notch, every break was a sentence you could read—if you looked.

But most people didn't want to look any further. Because whoever reads bones always reads from the end.

Sometimes, when the night was dark enough and no one was looking, the women went out. They collected bones, piece by piece, with hands that had long since borne enough death. They wrapped them in cloths, carried them out of the camp, and dug small holes somewhere, in the shade of a tree or on the bank of a river.

They didn't do it out of hope. They didn't do it because they believed the dead could find peace. They did it so that silence would return. So that the wind would no longer whistle through people's ribs, so that children would no longer play with skulls, so that dogs would no longer chew faces.

I remember a woman who spent an entire night collecting her husband's bones. He had fallen while retreating, and no one had been able to retrieve him. Weeks later, she found what was left of him. She quietly placed the pieces in the earth and said simply, "Now he's back to himself." No one thanked her, no one spoke about it. It was a secret task that the women did alone.

Crazy Horse knew about it, but he remained silent. "The men fight," he said, "the women preserve." And he understood: Without these silent graves, the camp would have been nothing more than a field of clattering bones.

But at least some dignity remained – even if no one saw it.

For the whites, bones weren't a warning. They were trophies. They collected skulls, hung them in houses, placed them in display cases, and wrote accounts

of them as if they were hunting trophies. A bone was proof for them:*Here we have won. Here, one of them is gone.*

Some officers took ribs or skulls home, just as others collected feathers or knives. They boasted about them, showing them to their wives and children, as if killing were an art to be exhibited.

I remember a settler laughingly recounting how he had boiled a skull to place on the mantelpiece. "A piece of history," he said. For him, it was decoration. For us, it was a brother.

Crazy Horse knew this cruelty. "They take bones like we take horses," he said. "But horses are alive, bones are dead. They don't understand the difference." For him, it was the deepest sign of alienation: where the Lakota were silent or buried secretly, the whites laughed and gathered.

The bones that no one buried were not a shame for them, but booty. And in doing so, they not only stole bodies—they stole dignity, even in death.

Crazy Horse saw more in the exposed bones than mere remains. To him, they were mirrors. Every femur bleaching in the grass, every spine lying in the dust, was an image of what the entire people could soon become: remnants no one collected anymore, shadows no one counted anymore.

"Look closely," he once said. "This is how we'll end up if we don't change anything. Not in songs, not in graves—only in the wind that pushes our bones around." His words weren't a prophecy, but an inventory. The land was already littered with silent witnesses.

I remember one ride where Crazy Horse dismounted and squatted for a long time in front of a skull. He turned it over in his hand, examined the holes left by bullets. Then he gently laid it back in the dust and said, "This isn't just one of us. This is all of us when we get weak." No one dared to reply.

The bones that no one buried were not just a memory for him, but a warning. They told of what happened when one trusted, when one hesitated, when one hoped where there was no more hope.

And the cracking of bones in the wind was like a bell to him – a call that time was running out.

In the end, the bones that no one buried were more than remains. They were the last witness when everything else had disappeared. No songs, no teepees,

no drums, no voices—just bones, white and silent, but harder than any white people's paper.

Forgetting them didn't make them smaller. On the contrary: the longer they lay, the more obvious they became. Sun, wind, and rain ate away the flesh, but the bones remained—as if they wanted to prove to the earth itself that not everything could be erased.

I remember a field where nothing grew but grass among skull fragments. No one went there, no animal grazed there. But the bones lay there like a never-ending gathering. They didn't speak, and yet their silence was louder than any words.

Crazy Horse understood that this, too, was a form of immortality. "If no one tells our stories," he said, "the bones will. And they don't lie." He knew that the white people could take land, water, horses, lives—but the bones remained. They were proof that we existed.

Thus, the bones that no one buried became a symbol. For defeat, for forgetting—but also for resistance. For even when the last breath falls silent, bones remain, allowing the wind to remind us: Here once was a people.

The Warrior Without a Pose

Most warriors loved the pose. They painted their faces, brandished their weapons, and shouted into the wind as if they could intimidate the stars themselves. Some fell before they had struck the first blow—but they fell with their mouths open and their fists raised, as if they wanted to represent something, at least in death.

Crazy Horse was different. He didn't need a pose, no makeup, no loud shout. He stood still, and that was enough. His calmness unnerved the others. His silence spoke louder than their drums. His eyes were harder than any war paint.

I remember one battle in which he simply sat on his horse, motionless, while the others shouted and stamped. He waited until the dust settled, until the white men grew nervous. Only then did he move—and it was as if the earth itself rode with him. No posturing, no acting, just deadly determination.

An old warrior once said, "The pose belongs to those who wish to die. Crazy Horse belongs to those who survive." And that was true.

The warrior without a pose was more dangerous than all those who adorned themselves. For he needed no spectacle. His gaze alone was enough to make others tremble.

Crazy Horse despised the poses. To him, they were noise without weight. "Anyone who shouts is already weak," he once said. "A strong man doesn't need to show his strength. He carries it within himself."

He saw the warriors painting themselves, beating their chests, shouting great words before the arrows flew. He saw them fall in the first hail of bullets, their faces covered in paint, their mouths open in surprise. And he spat in the dust. "The whites laugh at such men," he murmured. "They die beautifully, but uselessly."

I remember a young warrior who rode into battle with a feather crown and red marks on his cheeks. He screamed so loudly that the horses shied. A bullet hit him in the middle of his chest, and he fell like a sack. His pose didn't last even a minute.

Crazy Horse, on the other hand, rode in silence. No shout, no painting, no acting. Just his gaze, just his determination. And those who saw him knew immediately: This isn't a man who wants to die. This is someone who wants to survive—and will take you with him to his death if you stand in his way.

That's why the whites feared him more than the loud ones. For silence can be more deadly than any war cry.

Even in the camp, Crazy Horse was a stranger among the poseurs. The men adorned themselves with stories, each wanting to be the loudest, the wildest, the most indomitable. Around the fire, they boasted about how many they had killed, how far they had ridden, how bravely they had spit in the face of death.

Crazy Horse was silent. He listened, sometimes with a thin smile, sometimes with empty eyes. He didn't contradict, he didn't laugh, he didn't nod. And it was precisely this silence that made the others nervous.

I remember one night when a man boastfully claimed to have killed five white men with a single knife attack. The audience clapped, cheered, and demanded details. Crazy Horse sat silently, threw a piece of wood into the fire, and said

simply, "Then you would have had four knives left." The fire crackled, and the men fell silent. The pose vanished like smoke.

Crazy Horse didn't need stories. His life was proof. He knew that poses were only for the ears—but actions were for the earth. And the earth didn't forget.

So he sat among men who made themselves bigger than they were—and yet he was the greatest of them all. Not by volume, but by his silence, which weighed more heavily than all the words combined.

The men measured their poses, but the women and children saw deeper. For them, Crazy Horse wasn't an actor, a screamer, or a dancer by heart. He was a rock. Silent, immovable, tough—someone they could rely on, even when the rest of the camp was already descending into chaos.

The women saw that he didn't boast, didn't play games, and didn't lie. When he was silent, they knew he carried the pain with him, even if he didn't show it. When he spoke, they knew it was the truth, even if it hurt. And the children, who usually ran after the loud warriors, sometimes clung to his cloak, simply because his silence promised more protection than a thousand poses.

I remember a girl who said, "He has eyes like stone." Her mother replied, "Yes. But this stone won't break." And that was exactly it: Where the others stood out because they shone, Crazy Horse stood out because he stood.

Crazy Horse knew that poses could blind hearts—but he didn't want to blind; he wanted to carry them. "He who shows himself seeks applause," he once said. "He who remains silent seeks truth." That's why the weaker ones instinctively clung to him.

Because he wasn't a hero from stories. He was a man who stayed when everyone else had left.

The whites feared Crazy Horse more than any other chief. Not because he was louder, not because he boasted—but because he had no pose. A man who doesn't wear a mask is unpredictable. You don't know if he'll laugh, if he's angry, if he'll strike tomorrow or a year from now.

The officers called him "invisible." He appeared, struck, and disappeared again—without drums, without shouts, without signs that could be interpreted. They said: "We can negotiate with the loud ones. But with Crazy Horse—he'll silence us to death."

I remember a report from a white soldier:*"You don't hear a shout, a command. Just suddenly he's there. A rider without a pose, and behind him follows a storm. He doesn't look like a warrior, but he is war itself."*
That was the truth: his silence was more frightening than the battle cries of everyone else.

Crazy Horse knew that fear didn't lie in noise. "White people fear what they don't understand," he said. "And they don't understand silence." That's why he became a ghost to them—a man who didn't need a stage to be a terror.

The warrior without a pose was more than an enemy. He was a shadow against whom no paper, no contract, no shout could help.

For Crazy Horse, posturing was nothing but betrayal. Not of the men, not of the people—but of the truth. "He who paints his face hides his soul," he once said. "And he who screams wants to drown his own trembling."

He didn't believe in color, in jewelry, in grand gestures. He believed in what remained when everything else was gone: courage, action, silence. For him, the pose was a garment to wear when one cannot survive naked.

I remember a young warrior who painted his entire body before going into battle. He looked like a demon, full of color and roaring. Crazy Horse looked at him for a long time and then said quietly, "Your skin will die first. Your heart will follow later."
That evening, the man lay dead in the dust, his paint smeared, his heart stopped. Crazy Horse had been right.

He saw posturing as a weakness because it spoke more about fear than strength. "A man who remains silent," he said, "shows that he has nothing to hide."

That's why he himself became a picture without pose—raw, unadorned, honest to the point of harshness. And that's precisely what made him stronger than those who hid their faces behind feathers and paint.

In the end, the warrior without a pose was more than a man. He was a symbol. Not of loud victory, not of colorful spectacle, but of the naked truth: Strength needs no stage.

The pose was always the first to fade. The rain washed away the paint, the screams faded in the wind, the stories crumbled into the dust. But what

remained was silence. And in the silence, fear grew—greater than in any war dance.

I remember a boy who asked Crazy Horse, "Why don't you ever paint yourself?" Crazy Horse looked at him for a long time and replied, "Because my heart isn't a jewel." The boy didn't understand at the time—but years later, he said, "Now I know what he meant: He was already war, he didn't have to act it out."

To the whites, he was a ghost; to his own people, a rock. For history, he became proof that there's no need for poses when you're telling the truth.

So Crazy Horse remained the warrior without pose. No drama, no shout, no colorful face—only silence, only toughness, only determination. And that's precisely why he was feared more than all others.

Because there is nothing more deadly than a man who doesn't play a role - but simply remains himself.

Smell of blood in the morning wind

The morning wind carried many smells: wet grass, cold earth, smoke from the fires. But sometimes it carried something else—the metallic, heavy scent of blood. You smelled it before you saw it. Before you found the dead, before you saw the horses lying in the dust, before the flies came.

Blood in the morning wind was no coincidence. It was a promise. A sign that the night hadn't been silent, that somewhere bones were breaking and knives were singing. It was the smell of violence, fresh and raw, before the sun burned everything and turned it to dust.

I remember waking up to a feeling the air tasted of iron. Even before we got up, we knew: Today was going to be a bad day. And so it was – three men lay by the stream, their throats open, their faces rigid. The wind had woken us before them.

Crazy Horse knew that smell. "Blood doesn't lie," he said. "Sometimes words speak, sometimes smoke. But blood always tells the truth." For him, the smell of blood was like a messenger, arriving early, before the screams broke the silence.

So many days began not with birdsong, not with children's laughter – but with the heavy breath of death in the wind.

When the morning wind smelled of blood, the camp changed. The children stopped playing even before their mothers called them. The men spoke more quietly, the dogs growled, even the horses raised their heads and snorted restlessly.

Blood in the wind meant danger. It was as if the air itself was warning, as if it were saying, "Be alert. Someone will be missing today." No one had to explain it, no one had to name it. Everyone felt it in their throats, where the metallic taste lingered, as if they had chewed iron.

I remember an old woman who, when she smelled that smell, would always pull the covers over her head and murmur, "The wind brings us the spirits." She was right—because, usually, shortly afterward, news arrived of an attack, a battle, a betrayal.

Crazy Horse took the smell seriously. "When the wind smells of blood," he said, "it's already full of voices. And voices don't lie." He knew that the smell of blood never traveled alone—it always brought bullets, arrows, screams with it, even if they weren't yet heard.

That's why this smell was worse than any drum call. Because it didn't herald war—it brought it with it.

When the wind smelled of blood, the men immediately reached for their weapons. Not for food, not for horse reins, not for blankets—for bows, spears, rifles. It was instinctive, like a reflex, as old as hunting.

The smell of blood was like an invisible drumbeat. Before anyone had spoken a word, everyone knew: Today, they weren't riding to hunt. Today, they were riding to fight. And even before the sun had risen over the hills, their weapons were already hanging from their shoulders and their horses pawing the dust.

I remember one dusk when the wind smelled so heavily of iron that even the children wept. The men stood silently side by side, checking their blades, filling their rifles with powder. No one asked why. It was a given: blood in the air meant blood in the dust.

Crazy Horse was quieter than usual at such moments. "The wind tells us what's coming," he murmured. "And whoever doesn't hear the wind will hear it as the

last voice." For him, the smell of blood was no mystery, no coincidence—it was a messenger, clearer than any sign in the sky.

And so the mornings that smelled of blood became days when men steeled their souls even before the first cry.

The smell of blood brought not only fear. It also brought anger. For everyone knew: When the wind carries blood, it belongs to someone. A brother, a friend, a horse that belonged to a child. Blood never came alone—it carried a story with it.

And every story demanded revenge. The metallic taste in your mouth was like a reminder that your own heart was still beating—and that someone else's heart had stopped. And that difference was unbearable as long as you didn't respond.

I remember one morning when a young warrior first noticed the smell. He spat in the dust, wiped his mouth as if he could scrape away the iron. Then he shouted, "Whose blood is this?" No one knew—and yet everyone knew he would soon point a knife at someone to find out.

Crazy Horse saw this rage and understood it. But he warned: "Revenge brought by the wind is blind. Sometimes you hit the wrong man, and the wind laughs at you." Still, he knew: The rage couldn't be contained. The smell of blood awakened it like fire awakens sparks.

Therefore, the morning wind was not only a messenger of death. It was also a call to vengeance.

Not only humans reacted to the smell of blood. Nature itself became restless.

The crows came first. They circled over the hills, croaking as if they already knew where they would gorge themselves. Then the wolves. Their howls were deeper, longer, and they crept closer to the camp, their eyes glowing in the gloom. Even the dogs, who usually barked, tucked their tails and yelped, as if they had understood the wind's message: "Today you will gnaw bones."

I remember one morning when the horses shied before anyone noticed the smell. They stamped, pawed, nostrils wide open. Only then did the cloud of iron hit the men's throats, and everyone knew: the animals had sensed it earlier.

Crazy Horse paid attention to these signs. "The crows don't lie," he said. "They fly where death already sits." He observed how nature itself responded to the blood—as if it were allied with the wind, as if it were itself part of the message.

Thus, the smell of blood in the morning wind became not only a warning for humans. It was a call that the animals heard even more loudly—and one that indicated that death was not far away.

For Crazy Horse, the smell of blood was more than just a warning. It was a reminder. Every time the wind tasted of iron, he knew: one day his blood, too, would float out there, invisible but unmistakable, felt by the nostrils of the horses and the throats of the children.

"Blood belongs to the wind," he said. "It carries it on when we can no longer carry it." For him, this smell was not an end, but a transition—from the body to the air, from the heart to memory.

I remember one night when he sat by the fire, silent, while the others laughed and talked. He raised his head, inhaled the air, and said softly, "Today it smelled of me." The men fell silent; no one dared to ask. But everyone sensed that he hadn't spoken out of mockery.

Crazy Horse knew there was no escaping the scent of blood. You could delay it, you could ignore it—but it would come, for everyone. And perhaps that was precisely what made him unshakeable: He had death on his breath long before it struck.

So the smell of blood in the morning wind wasn't just a warning for him. It was the promise that his own name would one day hang in this air—heavy, sweet, bitter, real.

In the end, the smell of blood in the morning wind was more than just an omen. It was a bond. An invisible thread that connected the living to the dead. Every time someone tasted the iron in the air, they knew: somewhere, one of us has fallen. And one day, the wind will carry that same taste of me.

The wind never forgot. It carried the scent over hills and rivers, through forests and camps. Even when the meat had long since decomposed, the wind still seemed to recall the last remnant, as if to say, "It happened here. Don't forget."

I remember a morning when the wind smelled so heavily of blood that even the sun seemed pale against it. No one spoke, no one laughed. We all knew: Today

the day doesn't belong to us. Today it belongs to the ghosts that hang in the air.

Crazy Horse said, "The blood in the wind is the only truth that remains. No words, no contracts, no promises—only this smell that tells us we are mortal." And he was right.

Thus, the smell of blood in the morning wind became a symbol. For loss, for revenge, for the certainty that life was always closer to death than one would have liked to believe. And as long as the wind blew, it would carry on the stories of the fallen—invisible, but indelible.

Only ravens tell the story

When everything fell silent—when the people fell silent, the fires went out, the bones lay in the dust—then only the ravens remained. They sat on posts, on the branches of dead trees, on the shoulders of fallen horses. Their black eyes gleamed like polished stones, and their voices croaked like rusty knives.

The ravens were the only storytellers when no one could find any more words. They pecked at the leftovers, fluttered up when the wind blew, and returned again. And every croak sounded as if they were telling of what they had seen. Of the dead no one buried. Of the battles that disappeared into the dust. Of the hunger that filled more bellies than the meat on the fires.

I remember a field full of bodies, with ravens circling above. Their noise was louder than any drum, louder than any prayer. It was as if they wanted to shout out the stories of the fallen, even if no one wanted to listen.

Crazy Horse often saw the birds and said, "If we all remain silent, if we all forget, then the ravens will remain. And their voices are harsher than ours." For him, they were more than scavengers. They were witnesses who didn't negotiate, who didn't lie.

For when the wind carried everything away, when the blood dried and the bones bleached – then only the ravens continued to tell the story.

The ravens were both a curse and a prophet. People hated them because they sat on people's bodies, pecked eyes, stole tongues, and tore entrails apart.

Their croaking sounded like mockery, and no one wanted to see their black shadows over the camp.

But people also feared and respected them. For the ravens were always there when blood had been shed. They never disappeared. Wherever people fled, where the fire went out, where silence remained—there the ravens remained, as if keeping watch.

I remember an old woman who said, "They are the messengers no one asked. But they never leave." And indeed: when the dust had settled and no one was there, the ravens still flew their circles. They saw everything, they forgot nothing.

Crazy Horse was aware of this dichotomy. "We hate them because they eat us," he said, "but we need them because they keep talking when we're silent." For him, the ravens were neither friends nor enemies—they were truth. And truth is rarely beautiful.

That's why the ravens didn't remain mere scavengers. They became chroniclers—incorruptible, black, hungry, indestructible.

The ravens' cawing was more than just noise. To many, it sounded like voices. Some heard mockery in it, as if the birds were laughing at the dead, now flesh beneath their beaks. Others heard weeping, a hoarse, harsh wail that hung over the hills like smoke.

But everyone knew: there was memory in their croaking. For the ravens forgot nothing. They returned to the same places, fluttered over the same fields, perched on the same bones—as if repeating the stories, over and over again, until even the earth understood them.

I remember one night when the camp was silent. A flock of ravens sat above us, and their noise sounded like a gathering of spirits. The children wept because they swore they heard the voices of their fathers and brothers. A woman murmured, "They're talking to us." And no one laughed at her.

Crazy Horse listened when the ravens cried. "They don't speak for us," he said, "they speak for the dead. We just happen to be there." For him, the ravens weren't mockers, but interpreters. Interpreters between what was and what remains.

So her croaking became more than hunger. It was the language of the end—raw, hoarse, but true.

Sometimes the ravens came before any blood had been shed. They perched on bare branches, on rocks, on the white people's fences. They waited. Their cawing was even louder when nothing had happened yet—as if they already knew what was about to happen.

For the people, this was worse than their hunger. Because when the ravens appeared before the first knife was drawn, everyone suspected: someone would soon be lying here. The birds had sensed it before we did.

I remember one morning when we were still sitting by the fire. Ravens circled above us, and one landed in the middle of the camp, on a broken post. It stared at us, not moving. That same evening, the news came: two men had fallen, by the river, ambushed in the dark. The raven had already been there before the blood hit the ground.

Crazy Horse believed that ravens smelled death before it came. "They see what we don't," he said. "That's why we fear them. They are faster than our eyes." For him, the birds weren't coincidences—they were messengers casting the shadow of death ahead.

Thus, the ravens became not only witnesses of the past. They became harbingers, announcing the end before it even began.

People tried to drive the ravens away. They threw stones, shot arrows, and shouted at them. Some even lit fires where they were perched. But the birds only fled briefly, circling overhead—and returned as soon as the smoke cleared.

They couldn't be driven away because they couldn't be driven away the storytelling. They kept coming back, with the patience of scavengers and the stubbornness of ghosts. And the more they were driven away, the louder they croaked, as if laughing at the useless attempts.

I remember a young warrior who killed a raven with an arrow. He held the dead bird high and shouted, "This is what silence sounds like!" The next morning, ten new ravens perched on the same branch, croaking twice as loudly. The man fell silent afterward—not because he was afraid, but because he understood that this dark creature could not be defeated.

Crazy Horse said, "The ravens don't fly for us. They fly for what remains. We can't kill them because we can't kill the truth." For him, they weren't enemies, not friends, but an inescapable part of the circle.

So it remained: You could curse them, you could hate them—but you couldn't silence them. For only ravens continued to tell stories when all others had fallen silent.

To the white people, ravens were just vermin. They called them thieves, pests, birds that had to be shot like rats. They shot them out of boredom, hung dead ravens on fences to keep the others away. But the flocks kept coming back, blacker, louder, more persistent.

The whites didn't understand that the ravens were more than scavengers. To them, they were animals—to the Lakota, they were witnesses. And in this difference lay the entire gap between the worlds. The whites saw only feathers; the Lakota saw memory.

I remember an officer who laughed as he chased a whole flock of ravens from his camp. "They're not gods," he cried, "just birds!" The next morning, his men lay dead in the dust, and the ravens were perched above them again. The whites saw this as coincidence. The Lakota saw it as truth.

Crazy Horse said, "He who doesn't hear the ravens won't hear the spirits. And he who doesn't hear the spirits will die blind."
For him, the ravens were the voice of what doesn't go away—the stories that even bullets couldn't kill.

So the ravens remained a touchstone. The whites mocked them – the Lakota understood them. And only one of them heard when the world cried out.

In the end, the ravens were more than birds. They were the last storytellers when all other voices had broken. No drumbeat, no prayer, no treaty, no cry lasted as long as their hoarse croak over the fields of bones.

The ravens didn't tell stories beautifully. They told them rawly, with hungry beaks, with wings that blackened the sky. Their stories weren't comforting, but memories in their ugliest form: gaping eye sockets, torn tendons, broken ribs. But that's precisely why they were true.

I remember a hill where no one lived anymore. Only ravens sat there, year after year, their cries echoing across the valley. And every time one entered the place, they knew: Something had happened here that would never disappear. The people had forgotten it. The ravens hadn't.

Crazy Horse said, "We will die. But as long as ravens fly, no one will be able to say we were never there." For him, they were the chroniclers of blood—incorruptible, indestructible, black as truth itself.

So the ravens remained the last song that no one wanted to sing, but that always sounded. And when everything else fell silent, only the ravens continued to tell the story.

And the vultures wait patiently

The ravens screamed, but the vultures waited. Silent, high above, their circles growing larger as more blood hit the ground. They made no noise, they sang no songs. They simply waited until the sun was strong enough to heat death, and then they descended like shadows with broad wings.

The vultures had more patience than any warrior. They didn't fight, they didn't hunt, they didn't disappear. They knew: death is more reliable than anything else. Sooner or later, there's always something soft enough to be eaten.

I remember a field after a battle. The ravens had already arrived, loud and greedy. But high above them, the vultures circled, silent, unfazed. They knew the ravens were only the vanguard. They themselves would come when the stench was ripe. And they had time. They always had time.

Crazy Horse often saw them and said, "The vultures are smarter than we are. They waste no energy. They know that death feeds them. And they are never wrong." For him, the vultures weren't just scavengers. They represented the cold truth that patience is more valuable than haste—even in the face of death.

So the sky remained full of circles. And the vultures waited patiently.

For humans, vultures were more than just birds. They were symbols, memories with wings. No warrior could see them without thinking of the inevitable. For vultures were never wrong. They didn't come out of hunger alone—they came because they knew that death never fails.

The ravens seemed like mockers, loud, hungry, impatient. The vultures, on the other hand, were like judges. Quiet, calm, full of certainty. Their circling said: "We have time. You don't."

I remember a camp after an attack. Women screamed, children cried, men searched for survivors. And above it all hung the vultures, circling ponderously, as if they had already decided that it didn't matter how many died—they would get them all.

Crazy Horse once said, "Vultures don't believe in hope. That's why they never err." For him, they represented not bloodlust, but cold knowledge. They reminded him that death was not an exception, but the only promise the world held.

Thus the vultures became a mirror: not for cruelty, but for the patient certainty that in the end all the meat belongs to them.

The vultures made the camp restless. Their circling often began before anyone had died. They circled ponderously, patiently, as if they could sense the end before it came.

People looked up and felt their stomachs tighten. Because when the vultures circled, it meant: One of us would soon be missing. Maybe today, maybe tomorrow – but death was already on its way.

I remember one night when an old man lay sick by the fire. Vultures circled above the camp, even in the dark. The next morning he was dead. No one was surprised. They had known it for a long time, they just hadn't said it out loud.

The children feared the birds. They hid when their shadows glided over the camp. Some wept, others threw stones into the sky as if they could banish death itself. But the sky only laughed, and the vultures continued to circle.

Crazy Horse watched them for a long time. "They don't fly over the living," he said, "they fly over those who are already halfway across." For him, they were no coincidence. They were messengers announcing the approaching transition.

Thus, every flap of the vultures' wings meant one less heartbeat in the camp. And everyone knew: whoever lies beneath them will soon belong to silence.

On the battlefields, the vultures were the first to recognize victory. Not the warriors, not the chiefs, not the drums—the vultures. They hovered over the chaos, saw horses fall, men lie in the dust, the ground turn dark. And they waited, silent, motionless, with the certainty that death never abandoned their business.

For the victors, they were a warning. For even the survivor saw the circles above his head. They said: "Today you are here. Tomorrow you will not." For the losers, they were a mockery. For as they died, they knew: Wings are already circling above my flesh. Even before my breath ceases, heaven knows what will happen to me.

I remember a battle in which we held a hill. The white men retreated, the ground covered with bodies. Vultures hung above us, silent, unfazed by our victory. One of the young warriors shouted, "Look, they're waiting for all of us!" – and no one laughed. Because we knew he was right.

Crazy Horse saw the birds and said, "The vultures aren't laughing, they're judging. They're showing us that none of us will survive." And he understood: On the battlefield, there are no winners and no losers. Only meat, which sooner or later will be taken from the sky.

Thus the vultures became judges who told everyone the same thing – whether with a spear in their hand or with blood in the dust.

People tried to find hope beyond the vultures. They said, "Maybe they're just circling because the sky is empty." Or, "Maybe they're looking for another field." Or, "Maybe they're mistaken."

But the vultures were never wrong. They had a patience stronger than any prayer. They waited, and the longer they waited, the less hope they had.

I remember a mother sitting with her sick child. Three vultures circled above the camp, silent, distant, but visible. She whispered again and again, "Not for him. Not for him." But by evening, the child was cold, and the vultures descended further, as if they had known.

The men drank to avoid seeing the circles in the sky. They laughed louder when the shadows passed over their faces. But the laughter was thin, fragile—because everyone knew that no mockery could break the wings.

Crazy Horse said, "Vultures prove to us that we are lying when we hope. They show that patience is more important than courage."
To him, the vultures weren't cruel. They were just honest. And honesty hurts when you're mortal.

So the vultures dashed all hope – not with their beaks, not with their talons, but with the silent certainty that they never waited in vain.

Over time, many Lakota began to equate the vultures with the white people. Not because they were loud, not because they attacked like wolves—but because they waited. The white people were patient. They built their forts, they drew their maps, they sent their treaties. And they knew: The people would grow weaker, year after year, winter after winter.

Just as vultures circled the sky, the white men circled the land. They didn't pounce immediately. They waited until the bison herds dwindled, until hunger struck, until the tribes were exhausted. And then they came down—not with talons, but with paper, guns, and whiskey.

I remember a conversation around the fire. An old man pointed to the sky, where three vultures were circling. "That's what palefaces are like," he said. "They fly long distances, they don't laugh, they don't rush. But when we fall, they're there." Everyone nodded, no one objected.

Crazy Horse understood this comparison. "The vultures are more honest," he said. "They eat us because we're dead. The white men eat us while we're still alive." But he also knew: Both waited equally patiently. Both were never wrong.

Thus the vultures became the mirror of the enemy – cold, silent, and with a patience that was more deadly than any sword.

In the end, the vultures were more than shadows in the sky. They were the symbol of the inevitable end. Their circling reminded everyone that one could turn, run, fight, pray—but at some point, one lay still, and the wings descended upon one.

The vultures had no haste, no hatred, no joy. They only had patience. And this patience was deadlier than any bullet, because it never missed. A bullet could fly past. A knife could break. But the patience of the vultures waited for everyone.

I remember one morning when dozens of them hovered over an entire valley. Black against the sun, a silent sea of circles. No one spoke, no one moved. We knew: They weren't waiting for us alone. They were waiting for everyone who will ever be born. The valley smelled of iron, of dust, of the end.

Crazy Horse said, "This is what heaven above truth looks like. No God, no prayer, just wings to remind us we aren't eternal." And he was right.

Thus, the vultures became the final symbol. For patience, for certainty, for the end that looms over every human being. And when they cast their shadows over the land, it was clear: They had time. We didn't.

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