Geronimo

Apache pride against steel tracks

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Born in the smoke of the huts

They say the Apaches came from the south, from somewhere in hell, and had their sights set on Mexicans long before the great bastard Washington even knew how to worship the goddamn sun. Maybe that's true, maybe not. The stories change depending on who's chewing the corn porridge and drinking the booze. But one thing was clear: Geronimo didn't come from a clean cradle. He was born in dirt, smoke, the stench of sweat lodges, horse dung, and burnt corn. The old men said it was a good omen to be born while the lodges were filled with smoke like rotten clouds. "Then the boy breathes the battle right in," growled an old bone healer who looked like a skeleton with a leather covering.

The world Geronimo crawled into was no place for wimps. It was a place where the sun would bake your skull, where the rivers would either dry up or flood you with a flood of filth and dead fish depending on its mood. A land that constantly crunched, as if saying, "Eat or die." There was no romantic bullshit, no "noble savages" from the fairy tales of white bookworms. There was only hunger, blood, revenge, and the daily business of not dying.

The huts were built of poles and furs, smoke creeping through every crack. Men spat their tobacco onto the ground, women carried water, and children screamed as if the sky were about to fall. Geronimo was born into such chaos. No doctor, no birthing bed. Only blood on the floor, smoke in his lungs, and his mother's teeth digging into her own arm to keep her screaming in despair. The shaman muttered something about gods, but everyone knew: the only gods who helped were fast legs and a sharp knife.

The child didn't receive a golden name. No "Edward," no "George," no "William." No, he only received the name Geronimo later, and not even from his own people, but from his enemies, who feared him and christened him after some Catholic saint because they didn't know any better. In their own language, he was called something else – Goyaalé, he who yawns. But no one yawned for long in that part of the country. You quickly learned to grit your teeth, because otherwise someone else would come along and knock them out.

The Apaches were not a friendly people. They had no patience for weakness. Those who couldn't fight had to carry. Those who couldn't carry were eaten—not by humans, but by the land itself. Coyotes, scorpions, hunger—everything was just waiting for someone to show weakness. And in the middle of it all, this little boy, who barely knew how to breathe, was already being fed stories of blood and revenge.

"You'll grow up, boy," his uncle said when he held him in his arms for the first time. "Big enough to slaughter whites and Mexicans like pigs one day." That wasn't a blessing, it was a statement. That's how you grew up, in a world where you didn't ask if the sky was blue, but when it would turn red again.

The old folks loved to talk about the past, about the days when their ancestors rode freely across the land, without some bastard from the East gnawing the earth with wooden stakes or cutting it up with railroad tracks. But even then, everyone knew: nostalgia was for weaklings. The present consisted of sweat, blood, and constant fear that the next attack was already lurking on the horizon.

Geronimo grew up among bones. Not the delicate bones in European museums, but the real ones, half-buried in the sand, bleached by the sun. Children played with them, throwing skulls like balls, without giving it much thought. Death was nothing special. Death was part of everyday life, like fetching water or chasing rabbits. People got used to the stench like they got used to flies.

His father, a man with scars on his back that looked as if he had been whipped by the earth itself, often said: "The white people call themselves civilized. Their civilization stinks of sweaty feet and rotten pork. They have books, but no honor. They have churches, but no soul. They have guns, but no balls." Geronimo listened, silent as a wolf in the tall grass. He didn't yet understand everything, but he sensed that his life would not consist of friendship with these palefaces.

And when he left the hut, which always stank like a mixture of smoke and cold flesh, he saw the world as it really was: a hard, dry piece of earth that either toughened you up or ate you away. The women shouted orders to the children, the men went out with arrows, and the old men stared into the embers of the fire as if they might find answers there. But the flames said nothing. They ate wood, just as life ate flesh.

Geronimo learned early on that no one would save him. No god, no prophet, no great warrior. Only himself, his hands, his feet, his rage. He heard stories of distant tribes, Shawnee, Cherokee, Iroquois, and how they were betrayed, drunk, and shot piece by piece by the whites. And he thought to himself: Shit, that's what's going to happen to us too if we're not careful.

But keeping watch wasn't easy. The Mexicans came from the south, the Americans from the east. Everyone wanted land, everyone wanted water,

everyone wanted the right to tell you that your life was worth less than a damn mule.

And there he lay, little Geronimo, wrapped in blankets that smelled of smoke and blood, while outside the dogs barked and somewhere a coyote laughed. Born in the smoke of the cabins, forced to be a fighter from his first breath. No toys, no sweet nursery rhyme. Only the taste of ash on his tongue and the promise that the war would never end.

Geronimo's childhood was no walk in the park, no pleasant fairytale forest full of singing birds. It was an object lesson in pain. If you scream, you won't get comfort. You'll get a blow. The elders said screaming attracts spirits, and spirits are greedier than coyotes. So the children learned to grit their teeth. An Apache baby was allowed to cry, yes—but not for too long. If the lungs were strong, then the soul was strong too. If not, well... then the child simply fell asleep forever. Nobody made a big deal about it. The earth was already full enough of bones.

The first memory Geronimo is said to have retained—so the stories later said—was fire. He saw the flames, heard the crackling, smelled the burning wood. To us, that would sound like a pleasant night's camping. To him, it was the heartbeat of the tribe. Without fire, you were dead. With fire, you had warmth, food, and light against the demons. It was the first religion, before missionaries came with their bearded faces and smelly books. Fire was the first god. And the god was hungry.

The women in the camp knew this. They threw offerings into the embers—a piece of meat, a mouthful of corn porridge, sometimes a few drops of blood from a cut finger. Nothing grand, nothing ceremonial like in a cathedral. Just small signs saying, "Eat, fire, eat—and let us live." Geronimo grew up with this feeling that everything that burned had power. Later, when he himself set fire to huts, torched villages, and set railroad ties ablaze in the dark, he certainly remembered this. Fire is not a tool. Fire is a damned judge.

His father taught him how to hold a bow before he could walk. "You have to feel the wood," he growled. "It's not a toy. It's an extension of you. If you're weak, the arrow is weak. If you're strong, it flies like a damn eagle." The old bastard wasn't squeamish. If Geronimo drew the arrow incorrectly, he'd get a slap on the wrist. No "Well done, son." No, just a sneer and the remark, "That's how you die if you aim like that." Apache-style pedagogy—brutally honest.

There was no childhood in the white sense. No school with letters and numbers, no playing with dolls or wooden soldiers. Everything they did was preparation for battle and hunger. When the children fetched wood, they learned how to track. When they carried water, they memorized where fresh tracks on the bank were. Even playing was training. They ran after each other, threw sticks like spears, and only laughed when someone bled. Blood was no reason to stop. Blood was proof that they were alive at all.

Geronimo's mother was different. She was quiet, tough, but also someone who never forgot to whisper stories to her children. Stories of ancestors, of spirits who dwelt in the wind, and of warriors who fought so hard that even the stars were watching. She was not a Christian, not a saint. She was a woman who knew: men go out, die, and the women stay behind with children who still have to grow strong. Her love wasn't a caress. Her love was a constant urging: "Eat. Grow. Hold on. Be silent if you must. Scream if it helps."

The tribe—the Bedonkohe Apaches—was small. Small, but vicious, like a pack of hungry dogs. They roamed the desert, avoiding large settlements, hunting what they could, and stealing the rest. Cattle, corn, weapons—everything the enemy had could be yours if you were faster, smarter, more brutal. Geronimo absorbed it like milk. From an early age, he knew: possessions are only yours until someone stronger comes along. So it's better to become the one who takes, rather than the one from whom something is taken.

The Mexicans hated the Apaches like the plague. And the Apaches hated them back. It was an endless cycle. The villages in northern Mexico told horror stories of sudden raids, of men being scalped, women who disappeared, children never seen again. In the eyes of the settlers, the Apaches were devils. In the eyes of the Apaches, the Mexicans were thieves who had come long before the Yankees to steal their land. This is how Geronimo grew up: in the shadow of animosity that was older than himself.

But the real mockery was: He still knew nothing about the Yankees. Nothing about Washington, the fat bastard in the East, who signed papers while the earth burned outside. Nothing about railroads crawling through the land like iron snakes. Nothing about preachers who would later tell him his God was false. All he knew was the sun that burns you and the night that freezes you. The rest came later—and it came with thunder, gunpowder, and treason.

Geronimo as a child was no hero. He was a small, thin boy who practiced with bow and arrow, who ran until his feet bled, and who learned how to judge with a single glance whether a man was friend or foe. But somewhere inside him,

this anger was already seething. An anger that didn't express itself in tears or whining, but in a quiet, cold glint in his eyes. The elders said, "That boy never yawns from tiredness. He yawns from boredom. He wants more. He wants to see blood."

And he would see blood. More than any human being should be able to handle. But that was still in the future. Now he was still the child in the smoke, staring at the bones in the dust and thinking, "I won't end up like this. I won't rot silently in this filth. I will scream when I die—and everyone will hear it."

Growing up in the Bedonkohe huts, you learned that the world wasn't fair. Justice was a fairy tale for white Bible-believers who never went to bed hungry. For the Apaches, justice meant: whoever was faster got the meat. Whoever was slower chewed bones. And if you were unlucky, you were the bone yourself.

Geronimo grew up in a time when life growled like a vicious dog right from the start. Children died like flies, and no one cried for long. "The spirits take whomever they want," the elders said. Conveniently, they mostly took the weak. Sounds brutal, but honestly, it was the only way the tribe survived. If everyone had been fed, they would have died out long ago. Instead, only the tough ones survived—those who weren't afraid of hunger or pain.

His father taught him early on the first of all laws: trust is a mistake. "If you trust someone," he growled, "expect them to stick a knife in your back as soon as you're asleep." He didn't just mean Mexicans or Yankees, but also neighboring tribes, even members of his own people. A tribe was a community, yes—but not a family in the romantic sense. When things got tough, blood only counted if you could prove you could fight. Otherwise, you were dead weight.

The nights in the desert were not quiet, glorious hours. They were cold, murderously cold, so that you could see your breath, while somewhere jackals laughed as if they already had your grave in sight. Geronimo often lay awake, listening to the sounds. The howling of coyotes, the crackling of the fire, the snoring of the warriors. Everything was like an orchestra playing only one melody: survival.

And again and again the smoke. It seeped through every crack, settled in your hair, your skin, your dreams. When you fell asleep as a child, you took the smoke with you. It was like an invisible hand shaping you. No wonder the elders said, "Children who grow up in smoke see the world more clearly. They know right away: everything is vapor, everything passes away." Perhaps it was

just a saying, perhaps the truth. In any case, Geronimo breathed in the smoke until he himself seemed like a flame—restless, hot, dangerous.

Sometimes his mother told stories about the "white men." She had never seen them, but she had heard that they built cities that were like monsters—noisy, smelly, full of people who crawled over pavement like ants. For the Apaches, this was an absurd idea. Anyone who lived in such cramped conditions had to be crazy. But she also knew: these men had guns, and their bullets flew faster than any arrow. "Keep your distance from them," she warned. "Their breath stinks of iron."

Geronimo didn't understand. What was iron anyway? For him, the most important thing was the knife on his belt and the bow in his hand. But eventually he would realize that iron was the future—and that iron had no friends.

The children's games in the village weren't games in the European sense. They were preparations for murder and revenge. The boys ran barefoot over thorns to build calluses. They jumped into ice-cold rivers to strengthen their lungs. They beat each other until blood flowed, laughing like little devils. Those who stayed down were mocked. Those who hit back received respect. The law was that simple. No school, no teachers—only the fist for instruction.

Geronimo wasn't the tallest boy, nor the strongest. But he had that look. That cold, silent look that unnerved others. He yawned often, hence his name Goyaałé – "The Yawner." But that yawn wasn't tiredness. It was contempt. A silent message: "You're boring. I want more." And eventually, everyone in the village understood: The little boy wouldn't just become a hunter or a water carrier. He'd become a damned wolf.

The elders watched him. One, half-blind, who had seen more wars than he had teeth, once said: "This boy will either lead us to ruin—or make us immortal." Of course, no one laughed. No one laughs at prophecies in a people who smell death daily.

The women just nodded. They knew that men like Geronimo don't give up. They come like a storm and sweep away everything weak. For a mother, that's a curse; for a tribe, perhaps a blessing.

Geronimo's first blood didn't come in war. It came in hunting. A rabbit, nothing big. But as he drew his arrow and the animal twitched, he saw something in its eyes that struck him: fear. Pure, naked fear. Later, he said fear was the most

honest expression in the world. Every person, every animal, every bastard soldier—they all looked the same in the end. Big speeches, big gods, big armies—everything crumbled when fear broke through. That rabbit taught him more about war than any old warrior could have.

And so he stood there, the boy in the smoke, the blood on the arrow, and smiled a small, cold smile. Not because he was cruel. But because he knew: He could. He could take whatever he wanted. And someday, he would take more than just a rabbit.

You'd think a child grows up with toys, songs, and some form of love. But not in the damned huts of the Bedonkohe. A toy was a stick that would later become a spear, and songs were war chants that you knew before you knew what they meant. Love? Love was about not letting you starve. If your mother gave you the last bite of maize porridge, that was worth more than a thousand "I love you"s from some white priest mother in her stuffy little house.

Geronimo absorbed this world like dust into his lungs. Every day was a test. Getting up in the morning was already a victory. Because the night could kill you—scorpions, cold, a stray enemy creeping through the camp. The children learned early not to be afraid of the dark. Fear was a luxury. They said, "If you tremble in the dark, you're already half dead." So the little ones lay still, listening, and memorizing every sound. And when a shadow came, they reached for a stone. Better to die with a stone than to be eaten like a whimpering puppy.

The camp always smelled of smoke. Smoke was like a blanket covering everything. Geronimo never knew a clear sky, never a fresh scent. For him, the world was always smoky, sooty, charred. It was as if the tribe never fully lived, always half-burned, half-decayed. But that was precisely what made them strong. "We are the smoke," an old warrior once said. "We disappear, but we suffocate the others before we perish." Geronimo listened. He memorized every sentence, the way other children memorize fairy tales.

The first lessons about pain came not on the battlefield, but at home. A boy stumbles, tears his knee—no bandage, no consolation. Instead, a dry "Get up." Pain was not an enemy; pain was a teacher. Those who couldn't bear it never became warriors. So Geronimo gritted his teeth when the blood ran down his legs. He didn't cry, because he knew the others would laugh. And worse: The elders would label you a weakling. A label that weighed more heavily than any cut.

The men of the tribe had their own pedagogy. They beat the boys, not out of hatred, but on principle. A slap with the flat of the hand if you did something wrong. A kick if you were too slow. "Life beats harder than I do," they said, "so get used to it." Brutal, yes. But honest. There were no false hopes, no lies about a bright future. Everyone knew: The future smelled of blood and sweat, and if you couldn't stand that, you didn't have one.

Geronimo learned early on to observe quietly. While other children chattered, he sat there, staring into the fire, memorizing everything: the men's faces, the movements of their hands, the tremor in their voices when one, drunkenly rambled on about the home-brewed corn beer. Observation was a weapon. "The eyes kill first," his father said. "By the time you understand the enemy, he's already half dead."

He learned other things from the women. Not the soft side—that didn't exist—but the toughness. They carried water, chopped wood, carried children on their backs while they wove baskets. They spoke little, laughed rarely, but they never broke. To Geronimo, they were like shadows—always there, tireless, never complaining. Later, when he spoke of his dead, of the wife and children taken from him, it was this pain that truly turned him into an animal. But that was still far in the future. Now he was just the boy who watched and understood: Women are the silent pillars, men are the loud blades. You need both.

He heard his first stories of enemies around the fire. The elders told of Mexican raids—men with guns who came at night, burned down huts, raped women. Everyone in the tribe had lost someone. A brother, a mother, a child. Hatred wasn't a choice; hatred was an inheritance. Just as other children inherit a house, Geronimo inherited anger. He absorbed it without ever questioning it. "The world is full of bastards," his uncle said. "And we're here to remind them of that."

Sometimes small groups would go on raids, and when they returned, the camp was electric. The men boasted, the women listened silently, the children hung on the storytellers' every word. Gory tales were better than any fairy tale. And when a head or a scalp trophy was shown, the children cheered. Not out of sadism, but because it meant: We survived. Today. Tomorrow? I don't know. But today.

Geronimo often sat there, listening to the men laughing while the blood still clung to their hands. He didn't laugh. He memorized the words, the movements, the looks. He learned that war wasn't just about killing. War was

also theater. A good warrior was one who provided stories that nourished the tribe, almost more than the meat of the hunt.

And so he grew up: amidst smoke, noise, and blood. No fairy tales, no perfect world bullshit. Just dust, sweat, hate—and a boy who kept yawning, as if it was all just foreplay. And maybe it was.

The elders said a boy was only worth something if he had already seen death in his eyes before growing hair on his face. Geronimo learned that early on. Not with a great war, not with a heroic act—but with the ordinary, everyday deaths. In the tribe, children died faster than you could count them. A sip of tainted water, a snake at the wrong moment, an illness no one could name. And when it happened, there was no hesitation. No priest, no bells. Just a hole in the ground, a few words, and they moved on.

Geronimo saw a child, barely older than him, burning with fever. No one cried aloud. The mother bit her arm until it drew blood, so she wouldn't make a sound. Because when you cry, they said, you attract evil spirits. Pain had to be silent. Geronimo understood: Anyone who wanted to grow up here had to learn to eat grief like cold meat. No tears, just teeth.

The nights were the worst. He lay awake and listened to the old men tell stories. Not bedtime tales. No, these were horror movies in real time. Of warriors being tortured. Of villages being burned down. Of men returning, tongueless, eyeless. And yet they still said, "This is how it is. This is how it was. This is how it will be." It was as if his whole life was just a preparation for death.

But amidst all the dirt and harshness, there were moments that shaped him. When he stared into the morning sun, burning from the sky like an enemy. When he heard the crackling of dry twigs and knew: someone had left here. Observation became his second wind. He saw things others overlooked. A shadow that didn't fit. A sound that was missing. A smell in the wind that was unfamiliar. That made him different. While other children were still hitting with sticks, he learned to see the invisible thread that connected everything.

Geronimo's father was not a gentle teacher. He beat him, he pushed him, he made him run until he vomited. "A warrior doesn't vomit from fear," he yelled, "he vomits because he runs faster than death." When Geronimo collapsed, gasping for breath, he laughed and kicked him. "You're still alive. So get up." That wasn't cruelty. That was discipline. Those who survived it became indestructible. Those who didn't were simply dead.

The Bedonkohe lived in constant motion. One place was never home for long. The land was too barren, too merciless. They hunted, they robbed, they moved on. Constantly on the run, constantly ready. A village that took root was a dead village. Geronimo learned: home was not a place; home was what you could carry on your back—a bow, a knife, maybe a fur. Everything else was ballast.

The children built their strength through play, but the game was training for war. One against three, all against one. There were no rules except "he who lies loses." Geronimo rarely lay down. When he fell, he got back up. With a bloody lip, with a broken finger, no matter. This getting back up was what silenced the others. They realized: This boy has something beyond muscles. He has this damned defiance.

And again and again that smoke. It was the symbol of childhood. Smoke from huts, smoke from fires, smoke from burning fields when the enemy came. The smoke was like a constant companion. Perhaps that's why Geronimo later became so good at disappearing like smoke—appearing, striking, and disappearing again. Invisible, intangible.

One evening, when he was barely ten, he overheard two men talking about the whites. They said the bastards came with wagons bigger than huts. With cattle that drank entire rivers dry. With weapons that killed more people in a single volley than a warrior could in a year. Geronimo listened, and for the first time, he felt something new: not just hatred, but curiosity. Who were these men who had so much? And why did they want the land that had already nearly killed the Apaches?

He got the answer later. But the thought was already nagging him. While the other children were only thinking about the next rabbit, he wondered: What will happen if those bastards really come? And deep down, he knew: If they come, he won't run away. He would look at them like the rabbit he killed with his first arrow—full of fear, full of twitching—and he would strike.

Some children grow up with lullabies. Geronimo grew up with war cries. The voices of the men in the camp were always harsh, always demanding, always full of anger. It was like a background noise that never went away. From an early age, he heard that there was no future except the one you fought for with blood. No "When you grow up, you'll be a doctor" or "One day you'll build a house." There was only, "When you grow up, I hope you don't die like a dog."

The Bedonkohe lived in a perpetual state of limbo between hunger and raids. One moment it was drought that constricted their throats, then it was the

Mexicans with their guns, then another a neighboring tribe that was just as hungry. Children like Geronimo quickly learned that safety was a myth. The camp was just a stopover until the next danger arrived.

He learned early on that the ground itself could be an enemy. Sand that dried out your throat. Stones that cut your feet. Thorns that tore you open like knives. But all of that was nothing compared to people. People were always worse. People lied, cheated, robbed. People came in the night, and they didn't come to talk.

One evening, Geronimo sat by the fire and listened to the old people talking. They told of the Spaniards who had come long ago, with shining armor that looked like metal turtle shells. They had brought horses with them that at first seemed like monsters. But the Apaches had learned to steal these animals and ride them themselves. "We took their gifts," said an old warrior, "but they took our land." Geronimo didn't understand everything, but he heard the bitterness in their voices. They spoke as if the war had been an unfinished business for generations.

Geronimo's mother was the only one who sometimes pulled him out of this whirlpool. Not with comfort, not with hugs—but with stories. Stories of spirits in the wind, of mountains that had eyes, of rivers that spoke. She told them quietly, while outside dogs barked and somewhere an owl hooted. For Geronimo, these stories were like secret weapons. They made him feel that the world was more than just dust and blood. Perhaps this was precisely what later made him invincible: He believed that even in the chaos, something greater lurked.

The men in the camp laughed at such stories. "Ghosts? What bullshit," they laughed. "The only thing that matters is a quick strike." But these same men murmured prayers when they sat alone by the fire. Geronimo saw this. He saw the contradictions. Men who pretended to be steadfast, but at night begged the gods not to have their guts ripped out in the next battle. He realized: fear consumes everyone. And he swore to himself that when the time came, he would consume fear before it consumed him.

As a boy, he had to learn to hunt animals. No romantic nonsense with whistles and traps. No—brute force. He chased rabbits to death, broke birds' wings, and slit fish's bellies while they were still struggling. It was gruesome, but it was the school of survival. And every time he saw the blood on his hands, he realized: Death is nothing special. It's just there. Omnipresent, inevitable.

His first real shock came when he saw a horse die. A young animal, struck by an arrow. It screamed, a scream that went right through its bones. Geronimo stood beside it, trembling, and felt something change within him. Not pity. Not grief. But a rage that ran deeper than anything he had known before. He swore that one day he would find the men who did such things—and he would make them suffer, longer and louder.

The children in the camp grew together like a pack. They fought, they sparred, but they stuck together against everything from outside. Geronimo wasn't a leader, not yet. But he was the one who never backed down. And that was more dangerous than any leader. Because leaders talk a lot. Geronimo was silent. And silence was often more frightening than noise.

Sometimes, as he lay in the smoke at night, he heard the adults talking about "the bastards in the East"—the Americans who were already beginning to push deeper into the country. They were building roads, cities, and railways. "They're eating their way through the land like termites," one said. "And eventually, they'll be here." Geronimo imagined these men like giant insects devouring everything. And deep down, he knew: This would be the real war. Not against Mexicans, not against neighboring tribes—but against these termites who never get their fill.

He yawned into the darkness, as he always did. But there was no sleep in that yawn. In that yawn lay the silent hunger of a boy who knew: One day I will repay everything. With blood, with fire, with smoke.

The first years of an Apache's life were a constant test for death. Anyone who survived childhood was already half a warrior. Geronimo survived it—not because he was stronger than the others, but because he developed a hardness that wasn't loud, but silent. A hardness that lodged itself inside like a thorn that one doesn't pull out because it reminds one of reality.

He was still a boy when he first heard the word "Mexican" with genuine hatred. Not just as a name for an enemy, but as a curse. "Those bastards," said one of the warriors, "steal our horses, our women, our land. They send soldiers as if we were vermin to be trodden on." Geronimo listened without asking questions. He understood: Mexicans weren't people in these stories; they were a plague. And plagues are fought until nothing remains.

But even in his own camp, life was anything but peaceful. Men quarreled over loot, over women, over honor. And a quarrel was rarely just words. Knives flashed quickly, and if someone fell, the response was, "He was weak." That

was desert justice. Hard, cold, final. Geronimo watched men die, not in war, but in a fight over a horse or a bottle of home-brewed liquor. And he understood: Death makes no difference, whether it makes sense or not.

The boys were drilled until they were nothing but muscle, hunger, and defiance. Running, hunting, fighting—that was their daily routine. They jumped into freezing rivers just to show they could endure it. They ran barefoot over stones until their skin tore. They knocked each other unconscious, got up, and laughed with bloody teeth. All training, all preparation. "A warrior must not be soft," it was said. "He who is soft dies like a dog."

Geronimo's gaze hardened during these years. He saw things other children didn't—the slightest movement in the grass, the trembling of a hand, the uncertainty in a man's eyes. He absorbed everything. Observation was his first weapon. He learned that words were worthless if the eyes said otherwise. The eyes never lied. And he realized: Almost everyone lied.

The women kept the camp alive. Without them, the tribe would have perished long ago. They hauled, they mended, they carried the burdens. Men died, women endured. Geronimo respected that, even if he never said it out loud. He understood early on that men could only shine because women did the shadow work. A bitter knowledge that would later stab him in the heart like a dagger when he himself lost his wife and children. But now he was just a boy who saw and remained silent.

The world around him was changing. Rumors of the Yankees were circulating. Men spoke of railroads crawling across the land like snakes. Of cities growing like ulcers. Of men writing treaties while simultaneously taking the land by force. Geronimo listened, and his anger grew, even though he had never seen the bastards. It was as if he were born to hate them.

And then there was the smoke. Always the smoke. It was the beginning and the end. It was in the huts, in the eyes, in the dreams. Geronimo breathed it, lived it, became it. When other children spoke of the smell of bread or milk, he only knew the taste of ash. And perhaps that was precisely what made him immortal: He wasn't made of flesh and blood alone. He was smoke. It came, suffocated, disappeared—and no one could grasp it.

So his childhood ended not with a song, but with a yawn. Goyaalé – the yawner. A boy who pretended the world was too boring, while in truth, every bone in him vibrated with anticipation. He didn't yet know what was to come. But he did know one thing: He wouldn't go down without leaving a mark.

Born in the smoke of the huts. Marked for a life that knew nothing but blood, dust, and eternal war.

Blood soup on the Scioto

The Scioto was not a friendly river. It pretended to be a quiet, smooth ribbon of water flowing through the land, but in truth, it was a bastard. It stank of mud, rotten fish, and all the tears shed into it. To the Shawnee and their allies, it was more than water—it was a boundary. A line crossed again and again, first by settlers, then by soldiers, then by more settlers. Everyone who came took a piece, and the river grew redder.

The whites called it "frontier," as if it were an adventure novel. But for the people along the Scioto River, it was a mass grave in installments. Each new wagon train brought more hunger, more disease, more strife. Cornfields were trampled down, hunting grounds disappeared because some bastards came with herds of cows that ate everything. And if you complained, they just laughed or reached for their guns.

The children at Scioto knew early on what blood was. Not a cut from playing, but real blood lying in the grass when men bashed each other's skulls in. There was no innocence. If you didn't know what a slashed body looked like lying on the ground at the age of six, you were either blind or dead.

Tecumseh was just a boy back then, but not an ordinary one. While other children threw stones into the river, he looked into the stream as if seeking answers. And the river answered. Not with words, but with images. Images of corpses floating downstream. Images of settlers setting up camp on the banks. Images of battles yet to come. Maybe it was his imagination. Maybe it was a vision. But one thing was clear: The Scioto would leave no one in peace.

The whites had a penchant for forcing rivers into treaties. "Here your land ends, here ours begins," they said, and drew lines on paper. As if water clung to ink. As if a river cared who owned it. But that was precisely the joke: To the whites, a river was just a line; to the Shawnee, it was life. And when you divide life like a pie, there's blood. Lots of blood.

Geronimo was still far away in those days, in the south, a child in the smoke of the huts. But on the Scioto River, what would later befall him too began: the great bastard migration westward. It was like a stream of rats that could not be

stopped. Tecumseh and his brother Tenskwatawa sensed this first on the Scioto River. And their response was not a plea, but a cry.

At some point, the people along the river called it "blood soup." Because after the fighting, the water looked as if someone had boiled a kettle full of meat and then dumped it out. Arms floated in it, legs, sometimes just scraps. Children kept their distance, but they stared nonetheless, the way one stares at fire. And everyone knew: This isn't the end. This is just the beginning.

The Scioto became a mirror. A mirror of the greed of the whites and the despair of the tribes. Those who looked into it saw not clear water, but their own death. And the people didn't laugh about it. They knew: The river consumes everything.

The Scioto River looked peaceful as the sun set over it. Shimmering water, birds on the shore, children throwing stones into the water. A postcard idyll, if you had no idea. But idyll is always a lie, one that only lasts until the first heads float in the water.

The whites came with axes, carts, and Bibles. Three things that together were worse than any smallpox epidemic. With axes they cut down forests, with carts they carried away the land, and with Bibles they explained why it was all just. They talked about God, but God stank of pigs and cheap shoes. For the Shawnee, it was clear: every man who appeared on the Scioto River muttering "Hallelujah" was a harbinger of doom.

Tecumseh was still young, but not blind. He saw how the fields were shrinking, how the game was disappearing, how the settlers were building houses that looked like ulcers on the shore. And he hated it. Not that small, childish "I don't want this" hatred. But that deep, cold fire in your belly that stays even when you sleep. The Scioto didn't bring him peace; he brought him a score. And he wanted to settle it.

The fighting started small. A few men sneaked into the settlers' camp, taking horses, maybe a few rifles. The whites responded with militia. Dirty guys with shotguns who thought they were heroes. In the end, someone was lying in the river. Sometimes a Shawnee, sometimes a settler. The Scioto didn't discriminate. He took everything.

For the children, this was normal. They played on the shore and found bones. Sometimes with flesh still attached. And when a child asked, "Who owns this

leg?" one of the elders would laugh bitterly: "The land. Everything belongs to the land at some point."

The women knew things would get worse. They saw the men's faces when they spoke of the war. There was no hope in them. There was only defiance. A defiance that said, "We're going down, but we'll take as many with us as we can." Geronimo, far to the south, grew up with smoke. Tecumseh grew up with blood in the water. Different rivers, same lesson: The world wants to eat you, so eat first.

The Scioto had seen a lot—traders, trappers, missionaries. But now he saw something new: a wave of settlers that kept coming. It wasn't a drop, it was a flood. Every wagon that came was like another nail in the coffin for the tribes. And the white people had this goddamn optimism. This "Manifest Destiny" grin, as if heaven itself had given them the keys to the land. For the Shawnee, this wasn't fate. It was stealing with a smile.

Soon the river was no longer a hunting ground, but a battlefield. Everyone knew that if you fetched water from the Scioto, you needed a knife, or better yet, a gun. Children learned to carry buckets and weapons simultaneously. Women filled pots while looking over their shoulders. No one trusted the river. It was no longer food; it was a trap.

And when corpses floated in the water again after a battle, people would simply say, "The blood soup is boiling again." A sentence that sounded almost casual. But everyone knew: The Scioto is a cooking pot, and we are the ingredients.

The Scioto was no neutral spectator. It absorbed everything as if it were endlessly hungry. Horse blood, human blood, sweat, entrails—the river took it, mixed it, and carried it on. Anyone standing on the bank knew: This isn't water, this is a drink you would never willingly drink. And yet they had to. Because thirst is harder than disgust.

Tecumseh had learned his lessons directly from this river. When he looked into the water, he didn't just see his reflection. He saw the faces of those who had already been eaten. Friends, brothers, strangers. All the same, once the water had them. And he swore to himself, he wouldn't end up a nameless lump of flesh in the Scioto. If he had to die, it would be with a scream that echoed through the damned hills.

The settlers on the river were as stubborn as cockroaches. For every one the Shawnee killed, two more came with wagons, cows, and children. Entire families who thought the West was their picnic. But picnics end quickly when warriors sneak through your camp at night. Arrows in your back, fires in the huts. Children screamed, women screamed louder, men died silently when the blades found them. And in the morning, the camp lay silent, the Scioto smelled sweeter than usual. Sweet as fresh blood.

The whites told their own stories afterward. "Cruel savages," they wrote in letters to the East. "All we wanted was land and peace." Bullshit. They wanted cornfields, hunting grounds, rivers, and damned peace, while they took everything away. For the Shawnee, it was clear: peace was just another word for "choked in one's own blood."

Tecumseh didn't just grow up on the river, he grew with it. Every raid, every act of retaliation, was a new scar on his soul. He heard of the treaties being signed somewhere in distant cities—papers on which white people drew lines, as if they could slice the land into pieces like a pie. To the Shawnee, that was ridiculous. A river cannot be divided. A sky belongs to no one. But the white people believed in their lines. And they believed that bullets were stronger than stories.

On the Scioto, Tecumseh began to understand that war wasn't fought solely with arrows and tomahawks. It was also fought with paper. With sleazy treaties that destroyed more than any cannon. But paper killed slowly. Blood in the river was faster, more honest. That's why the warriors loved fighting. A dead enemy in the water was more visible proof than any seal on a treaty.

The women of the tribe washed their children in the Scioto River, even knowing the water tasted of death. What choice did they have? They scrubbed skin while the river carried bones by. Sometimes a child would grab an arm still floating in the water. A slap on the fingers, a growl: "Let go. It belongs to the river." This is how the children grew up: They learned that even water took possession.

And in the midst of it all stood Tecumseh, not yet the leader everyone later feared, but already a boy who absorbed the world like the river itself. He observed, he memorized, he forgot nothing. When a settler laughed, he memorized the teeth. When a warrior fell, he memorized the sound. Everything was material, everything was preparation.

Nothing was pure on the Scioto. No water, no air, no soul. Everything was mixed together—blood, smoke, sweat. And that's precisely what made it the perfect school. Those who grew up here learned that purity was only an illusion. The truth was dirty, smelly, red. The Scioto wasn't a river. It was a damn soup pot, and everyone got mixed into it eventually.

The whites loved to sell the Scioto as a beautiful landscape. Drawings in newspapers, reports in letters: "Fertile land, rich in water and game." What they didn't mention: rich in corpses. Because anyone who wanted to put down roots here had to first shed blood. Lots of blood.

The settlers' carts rumbled through the mud, children with greased curls sang hymns, and the men looked proud, as if they had a monopoly on the sky. But at night, when the dogs growled and shadows scurried through the grass, the song quickly died away. Then the Scioto River was no longer beautiful. Then it was black, cold, and ready to swallow even more dead.

Tecumseh wasn't a man of many words, not back then. He was a boy who looked while others looked away. He saw a settler slain, his head split open like a damned pumpkin. He saw women fall into the water with arrows in their backs. And he saw the river take everything without question. No funeral, no priests, no hymns. Just the slurping of the water, drinking its fill.

The Shawnee had no illusions. They knew they couldn't fight the endless stream of whites if they stood alone. But they had something else the whites didn't: an unquenchable rage. Every raid wasn't a tactic, but a message: "You are not welcome." The message was written in blood, washed directly into the river.

The whites called it a "massacre." If ten settlers died, it was a massacre. If one hundred Shawnee died, it was a "victory." Words were weapons too, and the whites had them as sharp as their rifles. But the Shawnee laughed bitterly at such words. "Massacre, victory—all the same if you've ripped open your stomach," growled an old warrior.

Women cooked on the riverbank while the smoke rose into the sky. Corn porridge, meat, sometimes fish—if there was any left. But the soup always smelled different, heavier, metallic. Because the river couldn't resist adding its own ingredients. Blood in the water, blood in the pot, blood in the stories. That's why they called it blood soup. A cynical joke that no one really found funny, but everyone understood.

Here, Tecumseh learned not only how to kill, but also how to think. He saw that every victim who fell into the river was part of a larger game. A game that wouldn't end at the Scioto. The river was merely a prelude, a prologue. The real battle lay far to the west, but the taste of the soup would never leave him.

The children who survived on the Scioto River all had the same look. A look that said, "I've seen too much to ever be naive again." Tecumseh had that look, and it grew harder with each passing year. While the settlers fed their children Bible verses, the Scioto River fed the Shawnee children blood. And quite frankly, blood was the more honest food.

The river didn't laugh. The river didn't preach. The river promised nothing. It took, it gave, it mixed everything together. And whoever survived that was stronger than any Bible verse. Tecumseh understood that. He wasn't just a boy on the river. He became a student of the Scioto. And the Scioto taught only one lesson: "Everything that lives is eventually an ingredient."

The Scioto River was like an open wound. The more time passed, the more pus flowed into it. Every battle, every raid, every alleged "peace agreement" made the water darker. Peace agreements on the Scioto River were a joke anyway. Whites would sit down, scribble their names on treaties, give a few bottles of whiskey and a case of rifles, and the next day they would break everything again. For the Shawnee, this wasn't diplomacy, but a gamble where you always lose.

As a boy, Tecumseh heard the elders cursing about the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, about the boundary lines being drawn on paper somewhere far to the east. Lines none of them had ever seen. White people had this knack for compressing the world into lines and boxes. A river as a border? A line on a map? Ridiculous. A river flows, changes, transgresses itself every day. But to the palefaces, that was the law. To the Shawnee, it was just another lie that would be paid for in blood.

The blood soup on the Scioto River boiled particularly fiercely when the militia arrived. Men in dirty uniforms, half farmers, half soldiers. They had no discipline, only hatred. Every Indian they saw was an enemy to them. Whether warrior, woman, or child. And when they struck, they struck hard. Houses burned, fields trampled, bodies ripped open. Afterward, they stood laughing on the banks, washed their hands, and drank to their "victories." Tecumseh watched them act like gods, their boots reeking of blood. He swore that one day they would vomit at the mere mention of his name.

The Shawnee responded with ambushes. No open combat, no heroic battlefield. They knew the river, they knew the woods. They waited until the militias were drunk or their lines broke. Then they struck. Fast, brutal, without mercy. Men fell into the water, screaming and gurgling, heads splashed, blood stained the current. And every time one of the white men sank, the old men said dryly, "The soup's boiling again."

Children heard these sentences like songs. Not lullabies, but songs of murder. Tecumseh absorbed them like smoke. He knew that words had power, but blood even more. He saw the women in the camp quietly sharpening their knives while outside the men talked of new raids. He understood: war was not an exceptional situation. War was everyday life. And the Scioto was the book in which everything was written down—not with ink, but with flesh.

Once, the elders recounted, so many corpses floated in the river after a battle that the fish began to eat them. For weeks, the water stank of death. Children refused to drink, and women had to force them. "It's just water," they said. But everyone knew: it was soup. And every sip was a reminder that no one here remained innocent.

Tecumseh saw this and remained silent. He was never one for many words. Even then, his gaze was like a knife, unseen until it's in the flesh. The other boys boasted, shouted, played the hero. He did none of it. He waited, he listened, he learned. The Scioto was his teacher, and the river taught patience. Patience and anger, a deadly combination.

The settlers may have believed they could conquer the river by building bridges, erecting mills, and surveying the land. But they didn't understand: the Scioto could not be conquered. It took their bodies just as it did those of the Shawnee. It was not an ally; it was an omnivore. And Tecumseh knew: whoever underestimates the river will perish.

The name "blood soup" was more than a mockery. It was a truth that no one could deny. Everyone who lived along the Scioto River drank it at some point. And once they had tasted it, they never forgot the taste.

The Scioto had a damned habit: He betrayed no one. He was silent, merciless, and he kept everything to himself. Whether Shawnee or settler—whoever disappeared into the water was gone. No witnesses, no heroes. Just a gurgling sound, then silence. The river was the perfect accomplice.

Tecumseh understood early on that the Scioto War would never end as long as the bastards kept coming. For every dead man, two more came. For every burned village, a new settler camp sprouted somewhere, like mushrooms out of shit. And the whites had this damned knack for selling their own dead better than anyone else's. A dead settler was a tragedy. A dead Shawnee was a footnote. This infuriated Tecumseh.

The tribe's children continued to play on the bank, even when bones were stuck in the mud. They built small dams, laughing as the river swept them away. That was the lesson they learned: Everything you build will sink sooner or later. And they laughed anyway. Cynicism was instilled in them, long before they even knew what the word meant.

The militia marched like drunken oxen. Heavy, loud, with flags and drums. They thought that would scare someone. But the Scioto laughed at drums. The Scioto swallowed their marches and only returned the splash as their corpses fell into the water. For the Shawnee, this was music: the dull splash of a body tipping into the water, accompanied by the hiss as blood mingled with the current. An orchestra that was only played on the river.

Tecumseh grew up with this orchestra. He memorized the melody of violence. Every death was a note, every scream a drumbeat. It wasn't music you could dance to. But it was music that shaped you. Music that cut into your flesh and reminded you that life and death weren't opposites, but just two sides of the same coin.

The women knew the Scioto would never spare them. They washed their hands in the water and knew: Perhaps I'm washing the blood of a neighbor off me. Perhaps my brother's. Perhaps my child's. But they said nothing. They continued scrubbing, continued cooking, continued giving birth. That was their strength: They turned blood into everyday life.

The white people thought the Scioto was a river that could be crossed. The Shawnee knew it was a curse that could not be shaken off. Everyone who settled there became part of it. Everyone. There were no exceptions. Tecumseh, too, had long been part of the river, even while he was still alive. The Scioto was within him, in his gaze, in his voice. He was more than a boy; he was already a mirror of the river: deep, dark, deadly.

And as the river continued to flow, no matter how many corpses it consumed, one thing was clear: the war wasn't over yet. The Scioto was just the beginning.

The blood soup continued to boil—and Tecumseh was already stirring the spoon.

The Scioto River became dirtier with each passing year. Not because the river itself had changed—water is water—but because the stories surrounding it became increasingly bloody. Every time someone died on the banks, a new layer of memory was laid over the stream. Until the Scioto River was no longer just a river, but an archive. An archive full of screams, full of broken promises, full of burned huts.

Tecumseh stood on the bank one morning, still a boy, his feet in the mud. Two dead horses floated by beside him, bloated, their eyes gouged by fish. An old man beside him spat into the water and said dryly, "The river eats more than all of us combined." No pathos, no babble—just a sober statement. Tecumseh nodded. He understood: The river was bigger than people, bigger than tribes, bigger than nations. Anyone who thought they could control it was a fool.

The whites talked about "progress" in their towns. Roads, bridges, trade. They imagined the Scioto as a transportation route, a cheap highway made of water. But progress on the Scioto reeked of blood. Every log they drove into the water, every mill they built, stood on a foundation of corpses. Tecumseh realized: They won't stop. They will keep building, keep cutting, until there's nothing left.

The Shawnee were tired, but not broken. They knew they couldn't win like in the stories—with a single blow. But they could bite. Again and again, harder, deeper. The Scioto was not their fortress; he was their partner. He took their enemies when they fell. He disguised their movements as they crept through the woods. He was cruel, but just.

And yet the price remained high. Every battle on the river claimed lives on both sides. Children lost fathers, women lost husbands, brothers lost brothers. The soup continued to boil, and no one escaped unscathed. It was a meal everyone was forced to partake in, whether they were hungry or not.

On the Scioto, Tecumseh learned not only how to fight, but also why he fought. Not for glory, not for revenge alone. But because giving up meant the river would swallow everything—even his memory. And he swore to himself: His memory would remain. His name would remain. Not in whispers, but in thunder.

The "Blood Soup on the Scioto River" was not a single event, not a date for history books. It was a condition. A permanent state of violence, hunger, and anger. And it was precisely this condition that shaped the generation that later shook the entire continent.

When someone asked at the fire, “Why is the river boiling?” the old men simply answered, “Because it is hungry.” And the young Tecumseh thought:*One day I'll be the one to feed him.*

The bones of the old crack in the ground

The earth was full. Not with corn, not with wealth, but with bones. Everywhere you dug, you found them. Children's bones, warriors' bones, horse bones. The ancients said, "The soil lives from the dead." A macabre thought, but true. Every step across the field was a step over a grave. No wonder people thought they heard bones cracking at night.

The Shawnee, the Creek, the Cherokee—all had their stories. They told how the earth took revenge. That every fallen warrior didn't lie still in the ground, but looked back. "The bones remember," the elders whispered as the wind rustled through the grass. For the children, this wasn't a horror story. It was reality. When you slept in the woods at night and heard something crack, it wasn't a branch. It was the elders staring at you.

Tecumseh understood this immediately. For him, every bone was proof. Proof that this land had always lived on war. You didn't need libraries, no priests—just the soil. It told you more than any book could. The soil stank of history. Not that clean, oiled shit the whites wrote down, but real history. History of flesh and blood, of dust and ash.

The settlers who moved to this land didn't understand that. They plowed the earth as if it were neutral, as if it would belong to them as soon as they put up a fence around it. But every time the plow crunched, it was a bone. A skull, a rib cage, a piece of the past that refused to die. Some settlers laughed about it, collecting skulls as trophies. Others had nightmares. They saw the eye sockets in the night and knew they were merely guests here. Bad guests who acted as if they were the masters.

Geronimo, far to the south, grew up in a different kind of earth. But there, too, lay bones. His people told the same story: "The elders speak in the soil."

Different tribes, the same truth. The entire continent was a mass grave. Every river, every forest, every damned steppe was saturated with the dead. The earth crunched not because it was dry, but because it was full of skeletons who did not forget.

The children played with skulls like balls. They built towers of bones as if they were building blocks. For them, it was nothing special. It was their everyday life. But in truth, it was the school of death. Anyone who played with bones from an early age was no longer afraid of them. Tecumseh was such a child. He kicked skulls like stones, but deep down, he knew: Any of these skulls could be him, in a few years.

The whites built cemeteries with crosses, as if they could bring order to death. For the tribes, this was ridiculous. Death couldn't be ordered. It was everywhere. It crept under every footstep, it creaked every night. "We sleep on our ancestors," the elders said. "And they sleep restlessly."

The cracking of bones wasn't just a sound, it was a promise. A promise that no one would disappear without a trace. Tecumseh heard this cracking and swore:*My bones won't lie still. They'll crack until those bastards learn what they've done.*

The ancients said the earth had a memory. Not a neat, tidy memory like the books of the white people, but one full of holes, blood, and screams. If you lay in the grass at night and heard it crack, it wasn't a branch, but a rib cage moving. "The bones talk to us," they murmured, "but you don't listen."

Tecumseh listened. Even as a boy, he sometimes knelt in the fields where the corn grew and pressed his ear into the ground. He swore he could hear voices. Not clear, not like words. More like the buzzing of bees. A murmuring that passed through him. It wasn't delusion. It was the echo of centuries that the ground had not forgotten. Every fallen warrior, every murdered woman, every burned child—they were all still there. And they wanted to be heard.

The settlers didn't notice. They had their plows, their Bibles, their fences. For them, the earth was dirt, raw material, possession. They hoed, plowed, and cut. But every cut they made in the earth was another slap in the face of their ancestors. The bones creaked louder the more fences grew. It was as if the earth itself were protesting. But the whites were deaf.

Sometimes they came across skulls while plowing. Children found teeth in the sand. And instead of awe, there was laughter. Some placed the skulls on their

fences, as trophies, as macabre garden gnomes. The tribes saw this and knew: These bastards understand nothing. They build houses on graves and then wonder when the wind howls.

Tecumseh took these signs seriously. For him, the cracking wasn't a ghost. It was a memory. And memory was duty. Every bone he saw was a command: Fight. Don't let us lie here in vain. The earth itself was his ally, not out of love, but out of anger.

The women in the tribe told the children stories: how the bones in the ground rose at night when no one was looking. How they walked through the woods without meat, only clattering, and how they searched for the names of those who had betrayed them. The children laughed, but they laughed nervously. Because in the dark, when the fire crackled and the sounds came, everyone knew: Perhaps it was more than just a story.

The whites built churches to soothe their souls. The tribes had the bones. No Bible could speak as clearly as a skull grinning from the earth. Tecumseh sensed that one day he himself would be among those voices. But until then, he wanted to make sure his enemies left their bones in the ground, too. Bones that would crack until even the earth screamed.

Sometimes it was as if the ground itself groaned when the rain came. The mud soaked in, and then it cracked beneath their feet. Not just branches, not just stones – bones. Bones again and again. The children enjoyed stepping on them, like other children would squash bubble wrap. "Do you hear that?" they laughed. But everyone knew: laughter was just camouflage. Behind it lay fear.

Tecumseh knew early on that the earth was not a neutral foundation. It was a mass grave, constantly eroding. Every war left layers, and each new generation had to add its bones. The earth collected like a maniacal merchant. No gold, no coins—only skeletons.

The old people said that the bones talked to each other at night. They rattled, they gave orders, they reminded one of guilt. If someone couldn't sleep and there was a cracking sound outside, they would say: "Those are the old people. They're asking you to do something." And what was this "something"? Fight, kill, take revenge. The ground itself demanded blood, just as an addict demands alcohol.

The white people never understood this. They placed crosses over their graves and thought that was the end of it. A piece of wood, a few words, and the soul

was redeemed. But the earth laughed at them. The soil knew no redemption. It knew only weight. The more bodies, the heavier the guilt. Every fence post the settlers drove into the ground dug into old wounds. No wonder the wind sometimes howled like a wounded animal.

Tecumseh saw settler children finding skulls and playing with them. To them, it was nothing more than a stone with eyeholes. To him, it was an order.*Don't forget. Don't let it happen.*Every bone was a witness. Proof that the war had been raging longer than any priest had opened his Bible.

The bones crack—that wasn't just a saying. It was reality. The corn grew above them, but it wasn't innocent. Every grain that was harvested grew from blood. The women knew this when they held the cobs in their hands. They whispered to the children: "Eat. But don't forget who you owe it to." Eating was always cannibalism in slow motion.

Tecumseh carried this thought within him like a thorn. When he sat by the fire and heard the cracking in the ground, he swore:*My bones will not lie still. If I fall, I will crack until even the bastards in the East hear me.*It wasn't a pious vow. It was a curse. And curses carried weight.

When the wind blew across the fields, it sometimes sounded like a whisper. Not a friendly whisper, but a hissing sound that crept down your neck. The old people said, "Those are the bones. They're talking." And sometimes it was hard not to believe it. Especially when you were alone at night and there was a cracking sound beneath you, as if something wanted to rise up.

Tecumseh knew those nights. He lay on the ground, staring up at the sky, and the cracking beneath him kept him awake. Other boys shuddered, pulled up their blankets, murmured prayers. Not him. He listened. He wanted to hear what the bones had to say. And at some point, he thought he understood:*We are not dead. We are waiting.*

The white people were blind to such things. They stamped across the ground as if it were empty. As if the earth were merely a carpet to be rolled out. But every blow of the plow, every kick of their cattle, awakened the old people more. "The earth takes revenge," the women said when someone fell ill, when a child burned to death in a fever. They didn't blame God, nor the spirits in heaven, but the bones in the ground.

Sometimes they found entire pits full of skulls. Old battlefields reopening. For the tribes, these weren't archaeological finds. They were unfinished business.

Every skull was proof that history wasn't over. That it was just waiting for someone strong enough to continue it.

Tecumseh looked into those cave eyes and swore that his own bones would not be silent. When he fell, it would not be like cattle to be forgotten. But like a drumbeat that echoes forever. He was still a boy, but he already bore the burden of an army. Not of flesh and blood, but of bones that creaked as he walked.

The settlers feared the forests, the darkness, the warriors. But they never feared the bones. For the Shawnee, that was proof they were idiots. For the real war wasn't above, but below. The earth itself fought along. It cracked, it murmured, it sent signs. Those who ignored it paid the price.

At night, when the fire burned and the corn boiled in the pot, the children heard the stories. Of bones that stretched arms out of the ground. Of skulls that laughed when someone signed a contract. Of ribs that broke as soon as a liar stepped onto the ground. They were more than stories. They were warnings. And Tecumseh took them seriously.

The ground wasn't a foundation. It was an army waiting. An army without flesh, but full of anger. And the anger crackled with every step.

It was said that the bones in the ground had more patience than the living. The living raged, fought, and died. The bones lay still and waited. And when the wind blew across the plains and there was a cracking sound, that was their laughter. Not a happy laughter, but that dry, bitter cracking sound that told you, "You're next."

Tecumseh grew up with this laughter. For him, it was normal. He was amazed when white people were frightened when they came across old skeletons. For the Shawnee, it was everyday life. "Of course there are bones here," they said. "What did you think? That the earth was clean?" Everyone knew that the continent was a graveyard. Not just for animals, but for generations of people who had bashed each other's skulls in.

The children played with the leftovers. A skull became a ball, a femur a stick. Nothing taboo. Quite the opposite: It was training. Because if you're no longer afraid of a skull, you won't be afraid of splitting one open later. That was the logic. Brutal, but honest.

The elders told stories to keep the children awake. "The bones hear you," they said. "When you cry, they laugh. When you are strong, they remain silent." So the children remained silent when they were in pain. Even a broken finger was better than the laughter of the dead. Thus, a generation grew up that did not fear death, but treated it like an old neighbor.

The settlers, on the other hand, were afraid. They built cemeteries as if they could squeeze death into squares. Crosses, fences, rows. Order for chaos. But order doesn't work when the ground itself is unsettled. They could erect a thousand crosses—the bones still cracked. Sometimes louder than before, as if they wanted to mock the strangers.

Tecumseh heard the cracking like other children hear music. It accompanied him everywhere. When he ran through the woods, it cracked. When he stood by the river, it cracked. When he lay in his dreams, it cracked. And every crack was a beat, a rhythm that shaped him. It was as if the elders were singing him a melody, a war anthem that never ended.

And at some point he swore:*If I fall, I'll become part of this orchestra. I'll crack until the earth itself bursts. And the bastards in the East shall hear that I won't remain silent.*

The bones in the ground weren't the past. They were the present. And they were waiting for someone to finally understand that they weren't silent—but loud, damn loud.

Sometimes the cracking wasn't just in the ground, but also in people's heads. If you live long enough in a land full of skeletons, you start to hear things. Men woke up drenched in sweat and swore they heard voices. Women said the bones whispered their names. Children played and suddenly froze, as if someone had breathed in their ears. The old people just grinned toothlessly and said, "Get used to it. The ground never forgets."

Tecumseh didn't get used to it—he listened more closely. Where others were afraid, he sensed clarity. The cracking wasn't a ghost to him; it was a memory. A memory that wouldn't fade. Every sound from the ground told a story: of battles, betrayals, burned villages. And he understood that he had to become part of this story. Not a spectator, but a new entry in the archive of bones.

The white people had their own ghosts, but they were different. They feared hell, demons, the wrath of their god. Invisible horrors, somewhere far away. The Shawnee, on the other hand, feared nothing invisible. Their horror lay

directly beneath one's feet. It crackled when one walked, it laughed when one fell. Not a distant purgatory, but a close, constant reminder.

The settlers later liked to say that the Native Americans were "superstitious." Superstitious because they heard bones, took the voices in the wind seriously. But what is more foolish: believing in bones you can feel, or in a God no one has ever seen? Tecumseh knew who the real fools were. The bastards with Bibles in their hands, who thought a cross would appease the earth.

There were nights when the ground shook. Not an earthquake, not a natural phenomenon—just the cracking, which grew louder when the fires went out. The elders said, "Then the ancestors are restless." And each time, shortly afterward, there would be a raid, a massacre, a battle. As if the bones themselves heralded doom. Tecumseh learned: Listen to the ground. It knows more than any prophet.

Children learned not to ask questions. If you found a skull, you put it back, as quietly as possible. No jokes, no pranks. Respect. Not out of romanticism, but out of sheer fear that the old men were watching you. Tecumseh adhered to this—but he went further. He used the bones as weapons, not just as warnings. Every crack was a command, every whisper a summons.

The earth was a battlefield, but also a drum. Every step a beat, every crack an echo. Even as a boy, Tecumseh marched to the rhythm of this drum. And deep within him grew the certainty: When the bones of the elderly crack, it is not the end. It is the beginning.

The ground was never still. Even when there was no wind, even when the river was silent, it cracked. Sometimes softly, sometimes like a blow. Sometimes in a dream, sometimes in the middle of a conversation. It was as if the old people never shut up. Every bone in the ground wanted to speak, wanted to be remembered.

Tecumseh grew up in this choir. He needed no books, no teachers. His teachers were the dead. Every step in the field was a lesson. Every skull he found, a chapter. And he understood the message:*We're not gone. We're here. Keep fighting.*

The settlers built their fences and acted as if they were the first on this land. But the bones laughed at them. Every fence post bored into an old skull, every plow sliced through rib cages. And the bastards talked of "new land." As if land lying on a thousand corpses could ever be new.

The women of the tribe told the children: "If you hear something cracking in the night, don't be afraid. It's the elders testing you." So the children learned not to tremble, but to listen quietly. Even fear became a test. And those who failed were mocked by the bones.

Tecumseh took this lesson literally. He swore that his own bones would never be silent. If he fell, they would crack until the bastards in the East heard his voice. Not as a hero, not as a martyr—but as a part of the earth that never gives rest.

The whites thought they could write history with treaties and guns. But the real history lay in the ground. Invisible, but audible. It cracked, it rumbled, it remembered. Tecumseh knew: No treaty can stop bones. No paper can silence the ground.

And so every step became a promise. Every sound in the ground a vow.*We're here. We're staying. We'll crack until you disappear.*

The bones of the old people crack in the ground – and the boy who listens carries their echo like a weapon.

Whiskey for the settlers, hunger for the savages

Whiskey was the devil in a bottle, and the bastards in the East knew exactly how to use it. For the settlers, it was medicine, comfort, party, and business all rolled into one. For the Native Americans, it was poison. A slow poison that killed faster than bullets because it devoured the mind before the heart stopped beating.

The traders came with carts full of bottles. They called it trade, but in reality it was fraud. A rifle for a horse? Expensive. A sack of corn for a hide? A rip-off. But a bottle of whiskey? Cheap. Easy to get. And that's precisely why it was the most dangerous commodity. Because a bottle blinded men, and blind men made bad decisions.

The Shawnee, the Creek, the Cherokee—they all had the same story: drunken warriors who shouted at their own men, women who were beaten because their heads were full of alcohol, entire villages who forgot to hunt because they preferred to drink. The whites called it "civilizing." In reality, it was war with bottles instead of bullets.

Tecumseh saw this early on. He hated whiskey even before he was old enough to drink it. He saw men who had once been warriors now lying drooling by the fire, their empty eyes staring into the flames. He saw women silently gritting their teeth while their men raged in their drunken rage. And he swore:*Not with me. Not with my people.*

The settlers, on the other hand, loved the drunk. For them, it was a daily ritual: a drink in the morning to ward off the cold, a drink at midday to combat boredom, and a drink in the evening to combat fear. Without whiskey, they would have fled long ago. With whiskey, they felt like heroes, even though in reality they were just cowardly peasants shivering behind their fences at night.

The traders knew exactly how to do it. A few barrels here, a few barrels there, always for land, for furs, for anything that would ultimately be worth more than the damned broth. And once a tribe was hooked, they could be sold like cattle. Whiskey was the cheapest army the whites ever had.

Tecumseh understood: Bullets kill bodies. Whiskey kills nations. And he hated this death more than any battle. Because you can fight a bullet. Against whiskey, you fight yourself.

Whiskey was more than just a drink. It was a weapon, smelling sweet and ending bitterly. The merchants knew exactly how to do it: give it first, then sell it. One sip to taste, a second to convince, and you had men who yesterday proudly carved their arrows, today staggering towards the next bottle.

The settlers called it "trade." But what kind of trade was it, when a fur that saved a winter's life was exchanged for a few hours of intoxication? It was theft disguised as business. And the bastards laughed themselves silly about it. They knew whiskey was cheaper than bullets—and often more effective.

The women in the tribe saw what was happening. They saw warriors who once walked with their heads held high now lying vomiting in the dirt. They saw children starving while their father traded the last buffalo hide for two bottles. And they hated it. But what could they do? If a man was raging in a frenzy, he was worse than any enemy. You could kill an enemy. Not your own husband.

Tecumseh grew up with this bitterness. He saw that whiskey destroyed more than any militia. Because it destroyed from within. A village could defend itself against soldiers. But what do you do when your best warrior would rather look into the bottle than into the eyes of the enemy?

The whites told themselves their own stories: "The Indians can't handle alcohol." A cheap joke that shifted the blame. They poured the poison, and then laughed at those who died. It wasn't a law of nature, it was deliberate. A plan as simple as it was ingenious: Make the enemy dependent, and he'll take care of himself.

Tecumseh swore not to touch this poison. For him, whiskey wasn't a drink, but a dagger. One that cut from the inside out. Every sip was a step closer to betrayal, to starvation, to ruin. And he felt that if he ever became a leader, he would have to forbid firewater. Not out of morality, but out of sheer survival instinct.

The children watched their fathers stagger. They memorized every detail. The slurring, the hitting, the falling. For them, whiskey wasn't funny. It was a monster devouring their families. Tecumseh was one of those children, and the hatred he swallowed back then burned longer than any liquor.

Whiskey for the settlers, hunger for the savages – that was the plan. And it worked. Every barrel lid that was opened was another nail in the coffin.

Whiskey turned men into children and children into ghosts. Those who drank enough of it forgot they were warriors. They forgot that an enemy lurked outside. Instead, they babbled by the fire, swore stupid oaths, and struck the wrong people: their own wives, their own sons. No gun, no sword did as much damage as this swill in the barrels.

The traders grinned as if they had the best business idea ever. And maybe they were right. Why waste bullets when a few glasses will do the same thing? Why burn a village to the ground when you can simply give it a buzz? The men sold their land, their furs, their dignity for a few hours of head fog. A murderer without a sword—that was whiskey.

The women cursed quietly. They hated the bottles, hated the bastards they brought, and hated the nights when their drunken husbands raised their hands. But what else could they do? They held the children tight, waited until the intoxication was over, and hoped that the hunt would return the next day. But more and more often, the hunt never came, and hunger remained.

Tecumseh saw it, and he seethed. He understood that a people who drink are no longer a people. They are cattle going to the slaughter. A man who hides in a bottle is a dead man who is not yet buried. For him, whiskey was worse than

an army, because he couldn't win a battle if his own warriors had already fallen before the first shot was fired.

The settlers knew this game. They always gave enough to keep the thirst quenched, never enough to quench it. That was the trap. Always a drop too little, always a barrel too expensive. And while the savages starved, the settlers ate. Cornbread, meat, butter – while in the village, the warrior watched his children fall asleep with sunken stomachs. Hunger was the bill written on every empty barrel.

Some warriors rebelled, vowing never to touch another bottle. But thirst lurked. The smell of smoke, the sound of the cork popping—and they were sitting by the fire again, drunk, while the next deal was made. It was a vicious cycle, and the bastards laughed.

Tecumseh didn't drink. Never. He didn't touch the bottles. For him, abstinence wasn't an ideal, wasn't moral bullshit. It was a war strategy. He knew: Those who stay sober see clearly. Those who drink, die. The formula was that simple.

And in his eyes, when he saw the barrels, lay a hatred that ran deeper than any gun. Because bullets only kill the body. Whiskey kills the soul.

Whiskey made everything easier—for the wrong people. For the traders, it was a damned miracle cure. One bottle for land. Two bottles for a horse. Three bottles for the dignity of an entire village. They didn't have to send armies, they didn't have to roll cannons. All they needed was a barrel, a dirty smile, and a few kind words.

For the tribes, it was a slap in the face. Every bout of intoxication meant less hunting, less corn, less defense. Men who were invincible when sober lay drunk on the ground, snoring, while militia might already be lurking outside. Children chewed roots while their fathers stared into the embers, too drunk to hear the screaming of their stomachs. Hunger was no accident. Hunger was the second weapon in play.

Tecumseh understood this. He saw how whiskey and hunger worked together, like two brothers sharing the work. One clouds the mind, the other eats away at the stomach. In the end, all that remains is weakness. And weakness means defeat. For him, it was clear: whoever takes the bottle also gives the enemy a piece of land.

The settlers had no shame. They sat at lavishly laid tables while outside the tribes fought over a piece of meat. They talked of "hard work" and "progress" while their pockets clinked with stolen contracts and empty bottles. It wasn't just hypocrisy. It was war by other means.

The women suffered doubly. They bore the hunger, they bore the beatings, and they bore the children who slept on empty stomachs. But they were also the ones who offered silent resistance. Some hid supplies from their men. Some poured whiskey into the fire, even if it meant trouble. Some whispered in their sons' ears: "Watch. Don't become like that." Tecumseh heard these whispers, and he swore he would never become like that.

Some said whiskey was a gift. A gift from the whites, a sign of "friendship." But everyone knew that gifts you couldn't pay for would eventually put you in debt. And debt to the whites meant death.

Tecumseh treated every barrel like a bomb. To him, it was more dangerous than any cannon. He could endure the hunger. He could endure the bullets. But he couldn't bear to see his own men disintegrate before the enemy had even fired a shot.

Whiskey for the settlers, hunger for the savages – that was the silent strategy that no one wrote down, but that everyone understood. And hunger growled louder than any battlefield.

Whiskey wasn't a drink. Whiskey was a contract, poured into a glass. A contract that always boiled down to the same formula: Some drink, others collect. And in the end, the price was always land.

The traders knew that hunger loosens the tongue. If a man hasn't eaten for three days, he'll take the bottle, even if he knows it will kill him. He'll take it because the intoxication will at least fill the hole in his stomach for a few hours. Whiskey as a bread substitute – perverse, but effective.

The settlers brought not only whiskey, they also brought hunger. They hunted buffalo, cut down forests, and devastated fields. The game disappeared, the harvest was meager. And just when stomachs were screaming the loudest, they came with the barrels. "Drink, brother, drink," they said, laughing behind their teeth.

The women hated these moments the most. They saw their husbands pull the cork, heard the gurgling as the whiskey flowed into the bowl. They saw how

thirst was stronger than all reason. And they knew: Another night of babbling, another morning of hunger. They saw the children with sunken eyes and bit their lips until they drew blood to keep from screaming.

Tecumseh burned with rage. He wanted to break the bottles, strangle the traders, and dump the barrels into the river. But he was still young, not yet in a position to give orders. So he just watched, absorbed everything, and swore that one day he would banish the poison from the villages. Not with pleas, but with threats.

The whites knew exactly what they were doing. They gave enough to make the thirst grow, never enough to quench it. That was the system. The bottle wasn't an end, it was a beginning—the beginning of dependence, of hunger, of defeat.

Whiskey and hunger were a dancing pair. One made your head spin, the other your stomach. Together they made you weak. And weakness was exactly what the bastards wanted. Because weak tribes sign faster, sell more easily, and fight worse.

Tecumseh realized: The true enemy doesn't always carry a gun. Sometimes he carries a barrel and a smile. And sometimes that hurts more than any bullet.

Whisky came like a plague. It had no flags, no drums, no roar of cannons. It rolled in silently in barrels, clinked softly in bottles—and yet it was an army. An army that didn't attack head-on, but crept into the heart.

Tecumseh saw men who stood upright yesterday stagger today. He saw the fire in their eyes go out, how they only saw the next bottle. He hated that look. Not because he didn't understand it, but because he knew full well that it was more deadly than any bullet.

The traders were like rats. They crawled into every warehouse, set out their barrels, and let people taste. "Just a sip, brother." And once the first sip was in, the second, the third, followed, until their hands trembled without a bottle nearby. Dependence—a word the whites didn't use, but masterfully understood.

The women cursed when they were alone. They saw the supplies dwindling, the children growing thinner, the men weaker. But they said it quietly so the drunken men wouldn't beat them. Sometimes they took the whiskey and secretly poured it into the fire. The smell was sweet, pungent—and dangerous.

For when a man realized his bottle was missing, there would be screams, sometimes blood.

Hunger came on gradually. Not a sudden shock, but a slow growl that grew louder every day. Less game, less harvest, more bottles. In the end, children sat by the fire with sunken cheeks while their fathers snored on the ground, the smell of whiskey on their breath. Hunger and drunkenness – the deadliest combination.

Tecumseh understood: This wasn't an accident. This was a tactic. The whites weren't just sending soldiers, they were sending barrels. And sometimes the barrels were more dangerous than the guns. Because you could shoot back at guns. Not at whiskey.

He swore to himself that he would never end up like that. No bottle, no drunk, no puking in the dirt while the children starved. For him, this wasn't a matter of pride. It was survival. Anyone who drank was dead before they fell.

Whiskey for the settlers, starvation for the savages – that wasn't just a saying. It was the law of the land. A law Tecumseh was willing to break, even if it meant setting fire to every barrel.

Whiskey was the cheapest war white people ever fought. No marching orders, no trumpets, no cannons. Just a barrel, a smile, and a few words: "Try it." More land was lost than was ever conquered by bayonets.

The ancients said it was worse than smallpox. Smallpox killed quickly, whiskey slowly. Smallpox took bodies, whiskey took wills. And a man without a will was worse than a dead man—he was a burden to everyone.

Tecumseh saw it with his own eyes. He saw proud warriors end up drunk, villages starving while traders counted their profits. He realized: This wasn't a side effect, it was intentional. Whiskey wasn't a trade; whiskey was a plan. A plan as silent as it was deadly.

The women bore the war twice over. They bore the hunger, and they bore the men who became enemies in their intoxication. They whispered to their sons: "Don't drink. Be strong." And these whispers were seeds that grew. From them grew the anger that later ignited the wars that would shake the bastards.

Meanwhile, the settlers celebrated their feasts. Barrel upon barrel, laughter, singing, and fights among themselves. They called it "socializing." For the tribes,

it was poison. Two worlds coexisting—one of abundance, one of hunger. Whiskey was the bridge between the two, and it was built of blood.

Tecumseh made his decision early on. No bottle, no drink, no intoxication. For him, survival was more important than any brief moment of peace in his mind. He was sober—not because he was holy, but because he knew that only sobriety made war possible. And war was inevitable.

Whiskey for the settlers, hunger for the savages—that's what the unspoken words said in the barrels. But one man listened more closely. One man swore that he would reverse the hunger, that he would pour the whiskey back down the bastards' throats until they choked. His name was Tecumseh, and he was sober enough to understand the equation.

Boys who are beaten into warriors

A boy wasn't born to be a child. A boy was born to be beaten until he was strong enough to stop crying. That was the law of the tribe. No sweets, no toys, no "you can be who you are." Instead: beatings, hunger, cold nights. Whoever survived that was a warrior. Whoever didn't was forgotten before sunrise.

The elders said, "Soft boys die like dogs." So they made the boys tough. No room for tears. Anyone who cried received more blows until they stopped. Pain wasn't punishment—it was training. Every kick, every blow was a lesson:*You are nothing. Become something.*

Tecumseh knew this from an early age. His father beat him not out of hatred, but out of conviction. A blow to the back when he stumbled. A punch to the face when he hesitated. A punch to the ribs when he showed fear. The boy learned that pain was not the end, but the beginning. Pain was like a teacher—brutal, impatient, but necessary.

The children didn't play games. Their games were fights. One against one, one against three, all against one. No pity, no rules. When blood was shed, the older ones laughed and said, "Good." A broken arm wasn't a drama, but a trophy. "Now you're on your way," they would say.

Geronimo, far to the south, grew up similarly. He, too, learned that a boy isn't protected. He is shaped like a knife in fire. Only when the steel cracks do you

know if it's any good. A boy was nothing more than a piece of steel in the forge—either he would be sharp or he would become scrap.

The nights were trials. Sleeping outdoors, with barely any blankets, sometimes in the snow. Those who were alive in the morning were praised. Those who died were not mourned. "He was weak," they said. No tears, no songs. Death was not a drama; it was a statistic.

And so they grew up: beaten, molded, forced. Boys who were beaten into warriors, not with words, not with sermons, but with fists and hunger.

A boy didn't get a childhood, he got training. Training in pain, training in endurance. Every day was a test: Can you still walk when your feet bleed? Can you still stand when your ribs burn? Can you still remain silent when the tears press down? If you answered yes to all the questions, you were one step closer to becoming a warrior. If not, you lay in the dirt.

Tecumseh learned early on that a boy gets no quarter. When he stumbled, the elders laughed. "Stand up, or death will kick you." And when he cried, they gave him a blow. "Tears are for women. Men bleed." The rulebook was that simple. No consolation, no caressing. Only harshness.

The children's games were like little wars. They ran against each other, hit each other, and pulled out each other's hair. If one fell, the others jumped on them. No one was allowed to look weak; no one wanted to be the one laughed at. Blood on the lips was normal. A broken finger was proof that you'd tried hard.

The adults watched, but they didn't intervene. They wanted the boys to toughen themselves up. "A warrior isn't born in the womb," they said, "he's made in the dirt." And there was plenty of dirt. Dirt, blood, smoke. Those were the three ingredients from which men were made.

Geronimo heard the same sayings in his childhood. He, too, learned that pain was not an enemy, but a friend. Hunger was not a failure, but a test. Beatings were not abuse, but a gift. A twisted logic, but it worked. The boys grew up to be men who could endure more than any white man with his soft hands.

The nights were trials without warning. Suddenly, they were told: "Out. No blankets. No fire." Then they had to sit outside, in the wind, the snow, the rain. Those who came back shivering in the morning were ridiculed. Those who were quiet were respected. Those who didn't come back were simply too weak.

Tecumseh realized that it wasn't strength alone that made a warrior, but the ability to endure pain and move on. Pain was like bread. You had to chew it, swallow it, and digest it. Those who couldn't do that starved.

So boys became warriors – not because they wanted to, but because they had no choice.

A boy wasn't asked if he wanted to become a warrior. He was beaten into it. Arguments were futile. No one said, "Slow down, you're still young." Instead, they said, "If you're soft now, you'll be dead tomorrow." Period. No discussion.

Tecumseh experienced it every day. His brothers, his cousins, were all dragged through the same fire. In the morning, they ran barefoot over stones until their soles bled. At midday, they were forced into fighting games where friendship played no role—only who stood their ground. In the evening, they sat exhausted by the fire, with bruises, scraped knees, and swollen lips. And the next day, it started all over again.

Sometimes the elderly stood by, arms crossed, and uttered only one sentence: "Weak." Nothing more. But that word was worse than any blow. No one wanted to be called weak. Weak was the death sentence everyone feared. So they fought like animals to avoid hearing that word.

Geronimo went through the same process. Among the Apaches, there was no mercy either. A boy was given a stick and sent against his elders. There was no chance of winning. The elders beat him down, again and again. And when he stood up, he received respect. If he stayed down, someone kicked him until he stood up again. That was the discipline—raw, brutal, but effective.

Pain became a habit. There wasn't a day without scratches, without new scars. The children didn't even know what it was like to be without pain. For them, pain was like a constant companion, a shadow that never left. And eventually, they laughed about it. Not because it was funny, but because laughter was the only response that didn't reek of weakness.

The settlers would have spoken of mistreatment, of cruelty. But they didn't understand. For the tribes, this wasn't abuse; it was survival training. The world out there was cruel, so you had to be cruel before it swallowed you whole. If you couldn't survive the drill, you wouldn't have survived the enemy either.

Tecumseh learned that every wound was a lesson. A graze meant: Be faster. A broken rib meant: Be tougher. A bloody lip meant: Keep quiet and keep

fighting. And little by little, that shaped him. Not into a child, but into a blade ready to be sharpened.

The pain never stopped. It wasn't a guest, it was a roommate. The boys woke up with bruises and went to sleep with swollen joints. Everything in between was a test. No playground, no break, just an endless obstacle course of hunger, beatings, and mockery.

Tecumseh understood early on: This wasn't a training of muscles, but of will. A weak will was worse than a weak arm. A broken bone would eventually heal. A broken will would not. Therefore, they didn't just beat the bodies, they beat the fear out of their minds.

There were exercises that felt like torture. Standing in the ice-cold river for hours until your legs went numb. Touching burning coals without flinching. Taking blows without making a sound. Those who screamed got more. Those who remained silent received respect. That's how simple the tribe's mathematics was.

The old men were merciless. If a boy flinched, they laughed. If he fell, they spat on him. No pity, no words of comfort. "The world out there won't spare you," they said. "Why should we?" It sounded harsh, but it was the truth.

Geronimo grew up in the South under the same hardships. He, too, had to carry fire, drag stones, and endure beatings. It was as if the tribes had independently invented the same school: the school of pain. Different languages, the same lessons.

The children compared their scars like other children compare toys. "Look, I got this from spear training." - "This one from my uncle, when I was too slow." Scars were testaments. Not of bad luck, but of progress. Anyone who had many was already half a man.

Tecumseh knew there were no shortcuts. No child was protected, no one was "spared." Every blow was a duty, every training necessary. He hated it sometimes, yes. But he also knew: The world didn't laugh at weakness, it devoured it. And he didn't want to be devoured.

This is how boys became warriors. Not in dance, not in rituals, but in dirt, in pain, in silence.

The path to becoming a warrior was a constant test, without rest, without grace. Every day could break you, and that was precisely the point. The

ancients wanted to see if you would stand firm or break. Breaking meant uselessness. Standing firm meant perhaps you'd survive the next winter.

Tecumseh got his first real scars before he was ten. A laceration above his eye, a broken finger, a burned hand. No doctor, no ointments, just cold water and a wry saying: "It'll heal you or it'll kill you." To him, that was normal. He didn't know that somewhere out there, children had dolls or slept in beds. His world was blood, smoke, and the stench of sweat.

The elders didn't beat out of sadism, but out of calculation. They wanted the boys to no longer be afraid of pain. Fear slowed you down, and slowness was fatal. So every boy was beaten until he stopped twitching. Tears weren't a sign of weakness, but an invitation for more beatings. Silence was the only shield.

Geronimo went through the same trials. In his village, they said, "A boy who doesn't bleed isn't a man." So they made sure he bled. Sticks, fists, fire. And when he stood up, he received respect. Not love, not affection—respect. That was the only currency that mattered.

The boys' games were small wars. With stones instead of arrows, with fists instead of knives. But they ended the same way: with scratches, bruises, and blood. No one pulled up the weaker one. Those who were on the ground stayed there until they got up themselves. That was the lesson: Help yourself, or no one else will.

Tecumseh absorbed all this like fire. He noticed that he was becoming harder. Harder than many others. And he knew that was precisely the difference: the one who held out the longest became the leader. Not because he was chosen, but because he hadn't fallen.

The boys were beaten, but not broken. At least not all of them. Those who survived stood at the end with a look in their eyes that spoke louder than words:*I'm ready. Send me to war.*

A boy didn't learn by being told how the world worked. A boy learned by being thrown in. Into the river, into the cold, into the pain. Words were cheap. Blows were honest.

Tecumseh was forced into these lessons. His teachers were fists, sticks, hunger, and frost. If he was slower than the others, he immediately felt it in his ribs. If he was inattentive, he received a blow to the face. The world didn't wait. So he couldn't wait either.

The elders said, "A man who has never been broken is worthless." So they broke the young—but only to see if they would get up again. That was the real test. Not the pain itself, but the moment afterward. Will you stand again? Or will you stay down?

Geronimo heard the same phrases as a child. He, too, got back up, again and again, until his knees were covered in scars. The Apaches called it "hardening the bones." Because a man without hard bones will break before the enemy even strikes.

The games among the boys became increasingly brutal the older they grew. Wrestling, choking, biting—not fun, but training. If blood was drawn, it wasn't a reason to stop. On the contrary, it meant: "Now things are getting serious." And whoever gave up first was the laughing stock of the day.

Tecumseh grit his teeth. He realized that pain eventually becomes dull. A blow is only a blow if you give it weight. So he took the weight off them. He simply got back up. And that's exactly what made him dangerous. Because a boy who's no longer afraid of blows is no longer afraid of bullets either.

The whites would have called this life "barbaric." They would have spoken of child abuse. But what did they know? Their children slept in beds while men fell outside. Their children learned to read, while here boys learned how to survive. Two worlds—and only one produced warriors.

And Tecumseh knew: whoever is not beaten to become a warrior will be beaten later – by the enemy, by fate, by death.

There was no final exam, no solemn ceremony with drumming and dancing. The final test was simple: Either you were still there—or you weren't. Those who didn't survive the drill weren't mourned. A short sentence: "He was too weak." Then the earth was over him, and life went on.

Tecumseh stood by the fire one evening, his lip split, one eye swollen, his hands covered in blood—most of it not his own. An old man came to him, stared at him for a long time, and said simply, "You're still standing." That was all. No praise, no pat on the back. But those two words contained everything. He had passed. Not officially, not with song—but simply by still breathing.

The boys who made it had something in their eyes that the world immediately recognized: toughness. No more childlike curiosity, no more soft sparkle.

Instead, that fixed gaze that said, "I've eaten pain, and I want more." That was the true diploma of this school. No certificates, just eyes that no longer blinked.

Geronimo experienced it the same way. At some point, he, too, was no longer a boy, but a blade. Not because someone told him so, but because he knew it himself. When blows no longer meant anything, when hunger was just another guest at the table, then you were ready.

The elders were content. They hadn't raised sons, but warriors. Men who didn't ask questions, but did. Men who didn't complain, but struck. Men who didn't fear death because they had felt it on their backs since childhood.

During this time, Tecumseh swore something that would stay with him forever:*I will not fall like the weak. If I fall, it will be with a smile on my face and an enemy in my grasp.*It wasn't a childish dream, it was an oath. An oath that later turned him into what the white people uttered with fear in their stomachs: Tecumseh.

Boys being beaten into warriors—that wasn't just a saying. It was an entire system that had operated for generations. Brutal, merciless, effective. And it turned boys into men tougher than the railroad tracks that would one day be laid across their land.

A river full of curses

Rivers carry everything with them—fish, boats, timber, corpses, and stories. But some rivers carry more. The Scioto, the Wabash, the Tippecanoe—they weren't just waterways, they were archives of blood. Every drop that clung to their banks carried a curse. And those who drank tasted it.

Tecumseh grew up on such a river. For the white people, it was a waterway, a transport route for goods, whiskey, and cannons. For the Shawnee, it was a mirror of history—and in this mirror, horror grinned. The elders said, "Listen when the river roars. Those are the voices of the dead." And when the river really did get louder at night, many swore they heard screams in it.

Sometimes a horse carcass floated by, sometimes a human, swollen, with fish in its eyes. No one was surprised. Rivers were graveyards, and graveyards stank. Children didn't ask questions. They knew that every body in the water had a story—a story best not told too loudly, lest it be summoned.

The settlers saw only water. For them, a river was a tool. It could be dammed, navigated, and exploited. They heard no curses. Perhaps because they were too deaf. Perhaps because they thought curses were only for the weak. But Tecumseh knew better: A river remembers everything. And it returns it when the time is right.

The rivers were full of broken promises. Every treaty the whites signed and then betrayed continued to flow in the water. Every murder that went unpunished trickled into the current. It was as if the rivers did the bookkeeping while the people forgot. And the rivers never forgot.

Geronimo, far to the south, knew other rivers. But they too bore the same curses. The difference was only the landscape, not the truth. Rivers flowed all over the continent, and everywhere they murmured the same songs of hunger, betrayal, and death.

A river full of curses—that wasn't an image, that was reality. And Tecumseh learned that you can't cheat the river. You can dam it, you can cross it, but in the end, everyone pays their price.

The river was no friend. It was a greedy bastard, taking everything that came near it. Boats that capsized, people who stumbled, entire settlements when it overflowed its banks. And every time it swallowed something, the old people spat out the same phrase: "The river collects its debts."

Tecumseh heard this often. To him, the river was like an accountant. Every shot, every betrayal, every betrayed promise was recorded in its waters. There was no forgetting, only waiting. And if you stood on the bank at night, you could hear the murmuring—like flipping through a damned ledger.

The children threw stones into the water and waited for a return. Sometimes it was just an echo. But sometimes a skull floated to the shore, grinning as if to say, "Yes, I'm still here." No fairy tale, no imagination—bones really did float. The river was full of them, and no one was surprised.

The settlers had no idea. For them, water was neutral. It flowed, it served. They built mills, they put boats in it, they calculated currents like numbers. But they didn't realize they were building on cursed ground. Every beam of their bridges creaked because the dead still lay in the water below, never finding peace.

Geronimo heard the same stories on the Gila River. There, too, the rivers cursed when blood dripped into the water. There, too, the elders swore that

the current carried voices. It wasn't a local superstition. It was the fundamental law of the continent: Where there is water, there is memory. And memory is never kind.

Tecumseh grew accustomed to accepting the curses as a part of everyday life. When he drank, he tasted iron in the water. When he swam, he felt hands on his ankles. And when he slept on the bank at night, he heard the gurgling, as if the river were threatening him. But he wasn't afraid. He knew: The river demanded respect. And respect meant not underestimating it.

A river full of curses—that wasn't a poetic image. It was the sound you hear when you wake up in the middle of the night, not knowing whether it was the wind or the dead laughing from the water.

The river was an open wound. It never stopped bleeding, and everyone who lived along its banks knew it. The water sometimes looked clear, sometimes murky, but beneath the surface swam memories. They stank of iron, gunpowder, fear.

Tecumseh grew up with this stench. For him, it was normal for the water to smell of death. Sometimes, when he swam with other boys, bone fragments floated past them. No one screamed, no one ran away. They pushed the bones aside like driftwood. Because what can you do when your playground is also a cemetery?

The elders said that the river not only swallowed the dead, but also preserved their voices. Some nights, it roared not like water, but like a chorus of lamentations. One could hear screams, commands, sometimes even laughter. A river full of curses—not just metaphor, but damned reality.

The settlers laughed at this. "Superstition," they said as they lowered their mill wheels into the water. But they too sensed something, even if they didn't want to admit it. Why else did their wives tell each other that corpses in the currents haunted the guilty? Why else did some of them never like sleeping on the banks? Because they too knew: The river is no friend.

Geronimo heard the same music in the South. Other rivers, the same voices. The Río Grande, the Gila—they, too, were full of curses that wouldn't wash away. It was as if the entire continent were a chain of rivers, each one murmuring the same damned message:*You will pay.*

Tecumseh saw the connections. Every river was a border, and every border was drawn in blood. The dead lying in the water weren't there by chance. They were scores that still had to be settled. Treaties that had been broken, families that had been wiped out. And the river recorded it all, like a bank statement that no one could tear up.

Anyone who lived by a river knew: sooner or later, you would become part of it. Either you drank it, you drowned in it, or you floated in it as a corpse. No one was left untouched.

And Tecumseh thought:*When my day comes, let the river scream my name. Louder than any other curse it has ever heard.*

The river was a goddamn memory no one could erase. Every wave was like a finger pointing at you. Every whirlpool was like a mouth whispering your name. People said, "The river never forgets." And if you stood on the bank long enough, you'd believe it.

Tecumseh often crouched there, his chin resting on his knees, staring into the water. Sometimes he swore he saw faces. Not clear, not alive—just blurry shadows beneath the surface. And always the same. Men he didn't know, women, children. All with their mouths open, as if they were still screaming.

The ancients explained it this way: "These are the curses that have not yet been fulfilled." Every betrayal that remained unpunished, every murder that was never avenged, sank into the river. But it didn't stay silent. It waited. And if you were unlucky, it would climb into your dreams and gnaw at you until you did something.

The settlers heard the same sounds—they just wouldn't admit it. Some of them built their huts near the water because it was convenient. But they never lasted long. Soon they moved further inland, using excuses like, "Too humid, too many mosquitoes." But the truth was: they couldn't stand the whispering. They just didn't say it out loud, because otherwise they'd have to admit their own fear.

Geronimo heard similar stories on the Río Grande. There, too, the elders said the current carried voices. It wasn't a Shawnee superstition, not a tribal tale. It was a continent that had poured its guilt into the rivers, and the currents carried them like letters without addresses.

Tecumseh took these curses not as a threat, but as a command. When the river whispered, it wasn't a warning. It was a command:*Stand up. Fight. Pay back the debt.*He understood that he wouldn't fight the bastards in the East alone. The river itself was his ally, full of anger, full of voices, full of old scores.

A river full of curses wasn't a picture you could paint in poetry. It was a battlefield that never rested. And everyone who lived there knew: sooner or later, you yourself would become part of it. Either as a curse, as a corpse, or as a voice in the gurgle of the current.

The river was like a mouth that was never satisfied. Every war fed it, and it belched out the bones when it was bored. Children found skulls on the banks as if they were shells. Women gathered wood and came across rib cages. Men fished out nets that held more human flesh than fish. All normal. The river gave, the river took—but it never gave without a price.

Tecumseh learned that one had to have respect. No mockery, no careless laughter. Anyone who mocked the river disappeared. Sometimes it drank people right in front of the others. One would stumble, one would slip, and the current would sweep them away. No body was ever found. The river ate them, and that was the end of it.

The ancients said, "Every river bears the guilt of its banks." And with this one, the guilt was great. Too many lies, too many murders, too many broken treaties. No wonder it was never quiet. Every night it gurgled, as if it were still arguing, still holding judgment on the living.

The settlers didn't want to hear that. They said, "It's just water." But their wives told other stories at night. Stories of screams from the current, of hands reaching for them as they stood on the bank. Some men laughed—until one day they themselves didn't return. Then they said, "An accident." But the old men knew better: The river had collected its debt.

Geronimo heard similar things on the Río Gila. There, too, it was said that the river demanded sacrifices. Sometimes it was a child, sometimes a warrior, sometimes an animal. But always it was someone they didn't want to miss. The river didn't consume the weak. It took those whose loss hurt the most. This is how it kept people small, this is how it kept them humble.

Tecumseh approached the river like a teacher. Not kindly, not patiently, but relentlessly. He learned that nothing comes for free in this world. Every booty,

every victory, every bite of meat had its price. And often it was paid on the banks.

A river full of curses—that wasn't just a saying, but a daily ringing in one's ears. Everyone knew it, only the white people didn't want to admit it. But they too would learn when their time came.

The river had no friends. It wasn't romantic, not cleansing, not healing. It was a bastard with a memory, and it collected everything: blood, tears, lies. Anyone who thought they could wash something away in the water understood nothing. The river kept it, multiplied it, and eventually spat it back.

Tecumseh knew this. He saw men washing themselves on the banks, after fights, after murders. They scrubbed until their skin was red, but the river just laughed. It took the blood, carried it a little further, and laid it at someone else's feet. A curse on the move.

The ancients said, "A river is a messenger." Whatever it carries, it eventually brings back. Sometimes immediately, sometimes years later. But it brings it back. That's why they feared it. They put offerings into it—corn, feathers, sometimes even dogs. But it didn't help. The river took what it wanted. Always.

The settlers ignored this. They built bridges as if they could tame the river. They dumped their shit into it as if they could humiliate it. But the river waited. And when the flood came, it swept away their mills, drowned their children, and swallowed their horses. They called it a natural disaster. The tribes called it justice.

Geronimo heard similar stories in his homeland. There, too, water was never neutral. Every river had a story, every river had a score to settle. And those who lived along it had to pay, sooner or later.

Tecumseh took this to heart. He knew: You can't outsmart the river. You can't trick it, you can't persuade it. All you can do is respect it—or it will eat you. For him, the river was an ally, but only as long as he remained strong. Weakness made you prey.

A river full of curses was no place to dream. It was a tribunal that met day and night. And everyone who was alive was automatically a defendant.

The river had patience. More patience than people, more patience than tribes, more patience than nations. It simply flowed on, no matter how many bodies it

swallowed, no matter how many villages burned along its banks. But its patience wasn't a gift—it was a threat.

Tecumseh understood this. He understood that the river forgets nothing. It's like an old warrior who says nothing but sees everything. Every broken promise, every stolen woman, every massacre—the river records it like a diary. And when the day comes, it reads it aloud again, whether you want to listen or not.

The old people said: "Those who drown in the river continue to curse." Not in heaven, not in a spirit world, but precisely where they fell. Their voice blends with the murmur, forever. That's why, on quiet nights, one heard not only water, but words, screams, laughter. The river was an archive of voices that never found peace.

The settlers believed they could tame it. They built bridges, used ferries, and dreamed of conducting trade across the current. But every accident, every sunken boat, every flood was a mockery. The river played with them like a cat with a mouse. They called it bad luck. The Shawnee called it the curse.

Geronimo grew up by different waters, but he heard the same truth: No river is innocent. Every river consumes. Every river gathers. Every river remembers. Different landscapes, same curse.

Tecumseh swore that if he fell one day, he would be part of that chorus. Not silently, not as one among many, but loudly. He wanted the river to bear his name, so that the bastards in the East would hear him when they drew water.*Tecumseh*, whispered in the gurgle, screamed in the flood.

A river full of curses—so it lived, so it died, so it remained. No water, no current, but an endless accusation. And everyone who stood on its banks knew: sooner or later, they themselves would become part of this curse.

The bastard called progress

Progress. A word that sounded like a sacred formula in the settlers' huts. For them, progress meant roads, fences, houses with chimneys, fields in rows, mill wheels in the river. For the tribes, it meant only one thing: less land, less game, less future. Progress was a bastard that devoured everything and pretended to bring gifts.

Tecumseh learned the word early on, even though it came from a foreign tongue. The white people spoke of it as if it were their god. They said, "Progress brings order, progress brings prosperity." But order was coercive, and prosperity was always on the wrong side of the fence. For some, full barns, for others, empty bellies.

The old people spat when they heard that. "Progress means we're supposed to die," they said. And they were right. Every time the whites talked about progress, a piece of forest, a piece of river, a piece of freedom disappeared. Progress smelled of smoke, of iron, of the dung of the oxen that pulled the wagons. A stench that ate into everything.

The settlers celebrated progress by measuring land. They drove stakes into the ground, stretched ropes, and drew lines. For the tribes, this was ridiculous. How will you divide the sky? How will you measure the wind? But the whites laughed and said, "Now it's ours." Progress was not only a bastard, it was also a thief.

Geronimo saw the same thing in the South. New roads, new cities, new mines. Everything was called progress, everything consumed life. And no matter whether it was desert or forest, progress always left the same imprint: dust, hunger, corpses.

Tecumseh understood that progress could not be stopped as long as the whites believed in it like a religion. But he vowed that he would slow it down. Every dead settler, every burning house, every smashed mill was a stone in the bastard's path. And the more stones he laid, the harder the path would become.

Progress was the bastard who ate everything. But Tecumseh swore he would at least knock out a few of his teeth before he had eaten his fill.

Progress never came alone. It brought with it its companions: iron, gunpowder, hunger, and greed. A whole troop of bastards who invaded the forests like rats in a granary. They devoured everything and called it "civilization."

Tecumseh saw it long before others wanted to understand it. The first traces were small: a few felled trees, a clearing where a settler's house stood. Then came the fence. Then the second. And soon the forest was a grid of wood and wire. For the settlers, that was order. For the Shawnee, it was a knife in the gut.

The old men cursed. "They're taking our land away." But land wasn't just earth. Land was hunting, land was home, land was spirit. Whoever lost the land lost themselves. Progress meant becoming a beggar on your own soil.

The settlers, dressed in their Sunday best, talked about God's plan. "He wants us to cultivate the land," they said. And every time they said that, a forest died somewhere. Every time they bellowed "God's will," a deer fell somewhere because it no longer had room to live. Progress smelled of Bible pages and burnt wood.

Geronimo later learned that it was the same everywhere. Whether in the North, South, or West, progress always came with the same face: shovels, saws, guns. And always with the same grin that said, "It's for your own good." But it was only for their own.

Tecumseh began to see progress as a disease. A disease that devoured forests, polluted rivers, and weakened people. But he also knew: Diseases can be fought. With fire. With blood. With resistance.

The bastard called Progress didn't sneak. He marched, with drums and banners, with Bibles and treaties. But Tecumseh swore he would trip him up. Even if he couldn't stop him, he would kick him in the legs until he bled.

Progress didn't smell of roses or oil. Progress smelled of nails, hot metal, old leather, and the disgusting sweat of men who believed they had to put the world in order. It smelled of sweat because it was always men who had to toil to realize the dreams of others—and in the end, the dreamers had the land, while the creators were left with only scars.

The bastard was clever. He disguised himself. He was charming in the publishers' ads, at the negotiating table, in the sermons of men with Bibles. He spoke of roads that would connect people. He spoke of mills that would secure meals. He spoke of possibilities—and behind his back, you could already smell the wood being felled, the ground being torn up, and the animal dying because there was no more room for it. Words like "civilization" and "progress" were sprayed like perfume onto the brutal logic of land grabbing. The mask only fell when the saw was applied.

Tecumseh observed all this. He saw men in tailored jackets, exchanging maps like compliments, drawing borders as if lines drawn in blood were no problem. He saw men signing treaties, shaking hands, and laughing in the evenings in inns while dogs starved in the villages. He understood: progress was not an

abstract enemy. It was bodies being turned into tools—and decisions being driven like splinters into the flesh of the land.

The worst part was the self-righteousness. Progress came with a moral cudgel: "We bring order, we bring justice." Law, the paper on which the world was redistributed in elegant handwriting, while fires crackled in the huts outside. With every signature, the land grew smaller, but the certainty of the signatories grew. The more land they allowed to swell on maps, the thinner the voices of those who actually lived there became. The seeds of the bastard germinated in government offices, not in the fields—and yet lives died in the fields.

For Tecumseh, this mix of cynicism and hypocrisy was like poison. He began to understand that the battle he would be waging would have to be fought with more than just arrows and tomahawks. It was a battle for interpretation, for stories. Progress wrote stories people were meant to believe: "We're bringing you education." "We're bringing you civilization." And the naive soul of one desperate man or another held the pen while outside the forest fell. Whoever controls history, Tecumseh knew, controls the land—for whoever names the future can judge it.

And so he began to teach the opposite. Not in elaborate speeches, but in simple, biting sentences around the fire: "You don't believe them. Listen to the ground. It will tell you what is true." He spoke of promises that ended bitterly; of teachers who taught children to read, only for the writings to later become the songs of the invaders; of schools that were so often built so that boys could learn English names while their mothers crawled into the fields, starving and cursing the corn.

Progress disrupted the rhythm of the land. Rivers were channeled, forests were split, vast hunting grounds shrunk to the squares that fit on maps. Horse breeding changed, herds gave way to crops, nomadic trails transformed into roads that led in only one direction: away from the ancients and toward new settlements. Everything became measurable, and everything that couldn't be measured—stories, gods, respect—was diagnosed as a "deficiency."

But the bastard also knew the small loopholes. He didn't just come in big strokes. He came in quiet gestures: in a loan that could never be repaid; in a winter night when supplies for a village were delivered late; in a promise redeemed with a cork. Progress was a millionaire in gloves, doing his work in drops, so no one noticed the fields slowly drying up.

Tecumseh began to collect these drops and think in terms of chains. A settler arrives, hunting dwindles, traders bring whiskey, the men drink, the women endure hunger on their own, the village negotiates—and one day, a treaty is signed. It wasn't an accident; it was machinery. And machines can be sabotaged. So he stopped just watching. He began to destroy, not blindly, but purposefully: mills that benefited the whites, fires that ignited camps, repelled attacks—small punctures in a standing mastodon hide.

The tactic wasn't noble; it was necessary. Progress was a thief with lawsuits, and the only way to stop the work was to break its tools. Tecumseh knew: A destroyed fence taught local people more than a thousand speeches against property. A broken mill made hunger visible—and hunger taught people whose throats to put their fists in. This was the archaeology of a counterattack: Instead of writing in libraries, he wrote with fire into the night.

But violence alone wasn't enough. Tecumseh knew that the bastard also lived in the hearts of men and women who were undoubtedly already weary. Some of the old men simply wanted to be left alone; others were ancient pragmatists who thought you could live with progress if you got a little of it. He had to reach them, had to show that "a little progress" was only a beginning. So he talked to people, crunched their stories, and turned their anger into a strategy. He connected anger with meaning.

Progress brought new tools, yes. But it also tore apart old alliances. Tribal boundaries that had held for centuries were weakened by hungry carts and promised handouts. The bastard pushed rivals against each other and then laughed when the work was done. But Tecumseh was looking for the needle in the haystack: allies who still understood that their interests were greater than their pride. He knew a united blow would hurt louder than a hundred separate screams. Progress was adaptive, but also arrogant—and arrogance is a vulnerable spot.

Thus, in the shadow of the Bastard, a movement grew. No polished army, no perfectly oiled force—just men and women with fire in their hands, with lists in their heads, counting their losses and planning countermeasures. They didn't steal out of greed. They stole back. They made small but precise pinpricks in the machinery: burned supply depots, blocked routes, sabotaged supplies. Technology against technology, but with a different goal: not to create possessions, but to recapture them.

Progress was powerful, but not immortal. It was just a system—and systems have flaws. Tecumseh learned about them. And while the bastards still sat in

their theaters pontificating about civilization, he laid traps in the woods. Not just traps for feet, but traps for the idea: If you have, I'll take; if you take, I'll cut off your hand. No mercy, no songs—just efficiency. The bastard didn't like that.

At the end of the day, when the men returned home in jackets and top hats, progress still smelled of burnt wood. The saw worked, but every now and then it whined. Where the bastard smiled most twistedly, Tecumseh met him with bare feet: not to stop progress, perhaps not to destroy it entirely, but to inflict pain. Pain that remains. Pain that tells a story. Pain that becomes history.

Progress had the face of a drunkard who never got his fill. Once fed, he wouldn't stop. A fence here, a field there, a house there – and the whole forest was gone. It didn't come like a storm, it came like a cavity, rotting everything tooth by tooth until nothing remains but pain.

Tecumseh saw the bastards chopping wood as if it were a toy. They weren't just sawing trees, they were sawing through the backbone of the country. Every tree that fell meant one less animal, one less hunting ground, one less shady spot. The white men saw only beams, houses, and barns. Tecumseh saw corpses. And the bastard named Progress laughed at both images because he knew he was winning either way.

The settlers had a favorite word: "usefulness." Everything had to be useful. A forest wasn't beautiful; it was "useful wood." A river wasn't sacred; it was "useful energy." A piece of earth wasn't home, but "useful land." And if something had no use—like an ancient shaman, like a dancing bear, like an untouched hill—then it was wiped out. Progress didn't accept beauty, only utility.

Geronimo, far to the south, saw the same film. Spaniards, Mexicans, Americans—all with the same tools, the same hunger, the same bastard at heart. Progress changed language, but never its face. Sometimes he spoke Spanish, sometimes English, sometimes French. But no matter what, he smelled of iron and dirt.

The ancients warned: "He who trusts in progress sells his soul." But some didn't listen. They were lured by metal tools, by fabrics, by glass that gleamed in the fire. "It makes life easier," they said. And they didn't realize that the easier life was also the shorter one. Comfort is a slow, self-tightening rope.

Tecumseh swore that he would not worship the bastard. No tools, no shining promises, no Bibles. For him, progress was a disease, and he was the knife that would cut it open. Maybe not cure it, but at least make it bleed.

The bastard called progress had many faces. But Tecumseh had only one: the face of a man who no longer smiles. And sometimes that's enough to make an entire army nervous.

Progress was nothing sacred. Progress was a sleazy business deal, handled with kid gloves. It came with cards and quills, with a handshake and an official seal—and therein lay the raw malice: How do you reliably bring dignity to death? You wrap it in paper, you call it a contract, and suddenly everything feels clean. Your hands stay white, your hands remain unharmed, while elsewhere people are bled dry as if they themselves had ordered the evil.

Tecumseh learned the language of the bastard: she was polite, waited until mealtimes, and then, when everyone was full, she cut the pieces. Contracts called "land transfers" were nothing more than paper rats that crawled into the pantry at night. A stamp here, a signature there—and an entire riverbank disappeared from people's lives as if it had never existed. That was the cruelty: You don't lose by fire, you lose by bureaucracy. And bureaucracy is a clean-sheet animal.

The bastard liked to give alms, only to present the bill later. A sack of corn, a knife, a box of cloth—small gifts that cut deeper than arrows because they sowed hope. Hope is dangerous; it makes you cooperative. A people who depend on alms sell their acre for a bowl of soup. Tecumseh saw how the old men sometimes gave in, how they nodded and said, "Just this once." And that one time added up, became a pattern, became an avalanche.

Progress often smelled of kerosene lamps and new shoes. The men who brought it wore elegant hats and spat polite phrases like "civilization" and "legal order." They knew words whose meaning had nothing to do with the land they stood in. And yet—these words were weapons. When you control the narrative, you control the value of the land, you control perception, and you control who is seen as the legal owner. Property—a cloak that protects the hands of robbers.

Tecumseh began to debunk this language. He responded not with poetry, but with examples: "Look, they bring you knives, and tomorrow they bring laws that will take your fields. Don't believe them while you still breathe." He turned

suspicion into a weapon. And suspicion was useful in a time when blind trust proved fatal.

The bastard knew how to sow division. Progress cultivates dividers: chieftains who wanted a piece of the pie, villains who waved treaties at night, young men who were convinced that a handful of silver counts more than a hundred years of memory. If you break the community, the resistance breaks. So progress offered small bonuses, played men off against each other, assigned roles, until no one knew who to trust anymore. That was his cleverest tool: once people were divided, it became easier to steal the world from them.

Tecumseh countered this tactic with the simplest method: He told stories. He sat by the fire, spoke clearly, and repeated what happened, without sugarcoating it or making promises. He laid bare the patterns: who gives, takes; who writes, steals; who smiles, plots. Stories are more powerful weapons than guns, he thought. Because a lie, if believed loudly enough, becomes law—but the truth, if repeated repeatedly, breeds suspicion. Suspicion is protection; suspicion can save people.

Progress also brought infrastructure, of course. Roads, bridges, mills—things that made the white people proud and that briefly made life easier for the tribes, until they realized that the road didn't lead to them, but past them. The mill grinds, whoever pays; the bridge doesn't connect hearts, but the trade routes of strangers. And in the end, you pay with your hunting grounds. Yes, these things have their uses. But the uses have to be considered in the context: Who benefits? If not you, then almost certainly someone else does.

There were also those who welcomed progress—not out of betrayal, but out of weariness. Living under constant threat diminishes one. A little stability, they thought, is better than daily gnashing of teeth. Tecumseh understood this; he felt compassion—and he had no time for romantic savior roles. His struggle was pragmatic. If some wanted to go, he let them; if they came back, he had to work with them. His rule wasn't built on pure anger; it was built on efficiency: secure food today, survival tomorrow, resistance the day after.

The Bastard also used technology—never to be underestimated. You lay a few tracks, install a few mills, and suddenly the landscape is valued differently economically. Technology raises the price of the invader, making him more productive. But this productivity was like a drug: it made the whites stronger, the tribes weaker. Tecumseh saw that the response didn't have to be solely military. Sometimes he broke technology where it made the difference: destroyed mills, burned warehouses, dug up railroad tracks. Minimal effort,

maximum effect. The Bastard had many teeth; he still bled when you punched him.

Progress loved order. And order was its therapy against chaos. But order devours life when it is blind. Tecumseh demonstrated this. He showed how order kills diversity: animals, customs, paths—everything soon seemed useless, simply because an administrator decided it didn't fit on his map. He made it clear that maps are lies as long as they only show the lines of the winners.

In the end, progress was a project—a project that people paid for so they wouldn't have to think anymore: bureaucracy, speculation, long speeches, and ultimately, selling the country at a high price. Tecumseh turned resistance into a project with a short agenda: prevent, disrupt, and strike, so that what remained was still breathable. Not all of his actions were noble. Many were bloody. But the alternative was cowardice—and cowardice meant giving up.

So the bastard continued to cut his routes, while Tecumseh answered with broken hands and clear eyes. Progress wasn't a demon descending divinely; it was a bundle of people, habits, and mechanisms. And mechanisms have weak points. He liked to hit them. Not to destroy the world, but to make it a little less terrible for those who still wanted to stay.

Progress was like a damned locomotive, even though those things barely existed back then. It rolled along slowly, belching smoke, squeaking on its first rails – but anyone who looked closely knew: once it got going, nothing would stop. You can't negotiate with it. You can only decide whether to lie down on the tracks or unscrew the bolts.

Tecumseh chose the latter. For him, progress was a beast that could only be tamed with traps. No pleas, no compromises. A broken wagon, a torched warehouse, a ambushed caravan—small cuts that made the bastard bleed. Not great battles, but pinpricks that crippled the monster.

The settlers then cried "vandalism." A word that sounded so clean that one almost forgets that they had previously burned forests, blocked rivers, and plundered villages. They called it "progress." But when Tecumseh hit back, it was suddenly "barbarism." Hypocrisy dripped from every sentence, heavy as pitch.

Geronimo later experienced exactly the same thing. His men burned supplies, stole horses, and smashed mills. And the whites howled like children whose

toys had been taken away. They didn't understand that the toys were standing on stolen land. Progress was never neutral; it was always one-sided.

The ancients said, "You can't stop a storm, but you can take its houses." Tecumseh took that to heart. Progress was a storm of wood, iron, and lies. But if you take its houses, if you burn its bridges, if you steal its food—then it stumbles. And a stumbling bastard is vulnerable.

But progress had one advantage: patience. It could wait. One settler village falls? Then two new ones appear. One road burns? They build three others. Progress was like a cancer you can only delay, never fully cure. And that was precisely the damned thing: The bastard laughed even when he bled, because he knew he had more supplies than you.

Tecumseh knew this. He fought anyway. Not because he believed he could kill the bastard, but because he knew standing still was worse. Every blow, every burned mill, every dead horse was a sign:*We won't give in. Not without showing our teeth.*Progress should know that it does not march through alone.

The bastard called Progress had no soul. But Tecumseh did. And sometimes that's enough to at least slow down a monster.

Progress wasn't a sword, a gun, or a flash of lightning. Progress was slower, meaner, more consistent. It came like rats crawling into the pantry at night. No one hears them, no one sees them – until the grains are gone in the morning. Progress didn't devour you in one fell swoop; it gnawed you away, bit by bit.

Tecumseh knew this. He understood that the bastards didn't just win in open battle, but at night, at the table, in trade. Progress was a thief who always came back, even after you'd chased him away. And that's precisely why he could never be left unattended.

The ancients said the world had seen many bastards: diseases, storms, famines. But this one was different. He came with a smile. He came with shiny shoes and Bibles under his arm. And that was precisely what made him more dangerous. He who sees a sword can block it. He who hears a sermon lets it enter his heart.

Decades later, Geronimo saw the same plague. And he, too, understood: progress was just another word for dispossession. For hunger. For the death of the old who buried their songs in the dust. The bastard was the same

everywhere, whether in the North, South, or West. He just wore different masks.

Tecumseh swore that he would not fall victim to this masquerade. No treaty, no handout, no promise of salvation would soften him. He would declare war on progress—not as an enemy to be defeated eventually, but as a disease that must be fought again and again, even if one knows it will return.

In the end, progress wasn't just a bastard. It was the biggest bastard the country had ever seen. But it was also vulnerable. Every village that burned, every horse that was stolen, every road that was blocked—all of these were scratches on its face. Scratches that said, "We're still alive."

And if Tecumseh should one day fall, then progress should at least bear his bloody marks. Not clean, not elegant. But like a dog that has been bitten and never forgets.

Miles of stench and iron

Iron didn't smell of victory; it smelled of rust, blood, and burnt wood. And when you hammered it into the earth in long rails, it smelled of doom. The bastards called it progress, called it connection, called it the future. To the tribes, it was just one thing: a scar eating through the skin of the land.

Tecumseh first knew iron in the form of weapons. Guns, blades, axes. But now it came in a different form: as a line that cut through forests, tamed rivers, and split valleys. These were no longer roads that followed the rhythm of the earth. These were straight lines, brutal, unyielding. Lines that said: "We now determine the path."

The rails came with a stench. Not just from the smoke of the locomotives, but also from the men who built them. Sweat, manure, whiskey, and the smell of horses collapsing under the weight. Entire hordes of workers who didn't love the land, but hacked it to pieces. They came, built, drank, died, disappeared—leaving behind only the stench of iron.

The settlers cheered. "Now we're connected! Now we're modern!" They didn't understand that every mile of rail meant a mile less freedom. Because iron wasn't neutral. Iron always belonged to someone. And that someone was never

the tribe by the river, never the woman with the children, never the old man with the stories. Iron belonged to the bastards with money and flags.

Geronimo, far to the south, heard the same sounds. The screech of metal, the hiss of steam, the pounding of engines. It was a new song, and it was ugly. Not a song of the earth, not a song of the wind—a song of stench and iron. A song no soul knew.

Tecumseh saw that this was more than just a metal road. It was a knife slicing open the future. Every mile was another wound. And wounds left untreated fester. The land would fester, the tribes would fester, until nothing remained but scars.

Miles of stench and iron. This wasn't the future. This was a death sentence, shining pretty in the sun.

Iron roads, that's what the bastards called their tracks. As if a piece of metal laid across the country was a road. But roads disappear again if you don't use them. Iron remained. Iron was like a tattoo that no one wanted, but that everyone had to wear.

Tecumseh saw men hammering pieces of iron together at dawn. Each blow sounded like a curse. Dong. Dong. Dong. A rhythm that drowned out the heart of the forest. It was as if the land itself was slowly being welded shut until no more breath could escape.

The settlers clapped. "This is the future! This is connection! Soon comes trade, soon comes happiness!" But for whom did happiness come? Certainly not for those who lost their hunting grounds because a locomotive cut them right through. Certainly not for the women who had to watch their children play between the tracks until the thunder of the engine swallowed them up.

The stench of the Iron Road was disgusting. Smoke, coal, sweat. It didn't just stank of labor, it stank of domination. Every locomotive was moving proof that the bastards no longer divided the country, but ruled it. The stench clung to your hair, your clothes, your skin. It was like a stamp: whoever smelled it knew they were defeated.

Geronimo later heard the same thunder in the south. Black colossi tearing through the landscape as if they themselves wanted to reforge the sky. Every kilometer of track was a lost kilometer of freedom. Every train station was a

fortress. And every stop was another nail in the coffin of those who lived here before the Bastard came.

The old men spat when they saw the rails. "The land has no lines," they said. "Only rivers, only forests, only sky." But the bastards laughed. "Lines are power," they said, and kept hammering. Iron knows no song, no prayer, no ancestors. Iron only knows direction. And the direction was always: west, west, west.

Tecumseh understood that you can't fight iron with your bare hands. But you can disrupt it. Tear out rails, burn bridges, jam locomotives. He knew that a single missing bolt could cripple an entire mile. Iron was strong, yes. But it was also vulnerable.

Miles of stench and iron—that wasn't progress. It was a cancer with a chimney.

The rails ate their way through the land like a steel caterpillar. Straight ahead, without consideration. Rivers were bridged, hills pierced, forests cleared. There was nothing "too sacred," nothing "too wild," nothing "too beautiful." Anything could be torn down if it stood in the way.

Tecumseh watched the men who built it. Strangers who sweated, hammered, and cursed day after day. They had no connection to the land, no reverence. For them, it was just work, just wages. They drank, they dug, they died. And if one of them remained lying in the dirt, he was pushed aside as if he were just another stone. The stench of iron mingled with the stench of corpses, and no one bothered to tell the difference.

The settlers didn't see the sacrifices; they only saw the shining rails sparkling in the sun. They talked of "connection," of "market," of "wealth." But what good was wealth if it was built on the bones of those who had sustained the land for centuries? Every blow of the hammer was a blow to the ancestors, to history, to the soul of the soil.

Geronimo later felt the same tremor in the south. Machines crawling through the desert as if they wanted to transform it into a city. No more room for nomads, no more room for rivers to meander freely. Everything was to be tamed, everything was to fit in time and according to plan. And if something didn't fit, it was torn apart.

The old men said, "Iron rusts. But our stories don't." But the bastards laughed. "Your stories don't bring us any profit." They didn't understand that one story

can have more power than a thousand rails. But Tecumseh also knew: Stories alone aren't enough. You must sabotage iron, not sing its praises.

He began to make plans. Wherever a bridge was weak, where a screw was missing, where a locomotive was overladen—opportunities lurked everywhere. It wasn't just a war against men, it was a war against machines. And machines could stumble. One small mistake, one tiny flaw, and the whole bastard train would derail.

Miles of stench and iron – for the whites a road to the future, for the tribes a track into the abyss.

The rails weren't just metal. They were a damn statement:*Here we rule.*Every meter was a boot in the face of the land. They carved valleys in two, chained rivers, nailed forests until even the wind sounded caged.

Tecumseh often stood on the sidelines when the bastards were hammering. He saw men with sweaty shirts, with faces that no longer had any features, just work. Their hammers fell in time, as if the entire country had been reduced to a drum. Dong. Dong. Dong. Every beat a heartbeat of the monster.

The stench was unbearable. Oil, smoke, horse manure, sweat, and the incessant hiss of the machines. It was as if hell had been relocated to Earth, but without demons, just with accountants keeping score.

The settlers acted as if it were a celebration. They lined the tracks, waved to the first trains, and cheered as if the devil himself were throwing them sacks of gold. For them, the iron was a promise. For the tribes, it was a judgment. No promise, no progress—just the end of the line.

Geronimo witnessed the same scenes in the South. Steam horses roaring through deserts, wagons packed with soldiers, traders, and priests. Iron was more than transportation. Iron was war. War on rails, war with pipes and coal. A war that never slept, because the machines never slept.

The old people cursed and spat into the fire when they heard the screams of the locomotives. "That's not a song," they said. "That's a scream. And it doesn't stop." They knew that the noise would drown out the songs of their ancestors. That someday children would no longer know the rustling of the forest, but only the hiss of steam.

Tecumseh swore he'd at least make the monster stumble. He wanted the bastards to understand: iron can shine, iron can scream, iron can drive—but

iron can also break. A bent beam, a destroyed piece of rail, and the entire monster lies on its side, shrieking like a wounded animal.

Miles of stench and iron—gleaming in the light, stinking in the shadows, and deadly to all who stood in their way.

The tracks weren't paths, they were chains. Long, gleaming chains that stretched across meadows, through forests, and across villages. Anyone who stood between them immediately sensed: freedom was no longer welcome here. The tracks told you where you could go—and where you would die.

Tecumseh understood this faster than many others. He saw children being pushed off the tracks because the Thunder Train was coming. He saw animals crushed as if they were toy figures. And he saw the bastards clapping and cheering anyway, as if it were all a great gift.

The stench grew stronger the longer the lines grew. Oil, smoke, foul water from the steam boilers, sweat from workers who never bathed. The ground itself began to smell of iron, as if the metal were squeezing the life out of it. Even the rain tasted of rust.

The settlers talked about "connection." They said, "Now the land is one." But that was a lie. The rails didn't connect, they separated. They created borders where there had been none before. They split tribes, destroyed hunting grounds, and turned villages into islands. The land was no longer one—it was torn apart, crisscrossed by shining scars.

Geronimo later saw the same scene. Trains full of soldiers, full of weapons, full of whiskey. The tracks were blood vessels for everything that made the bastards stronger and the tribes weaker. Every train brought less life and more death. Every train spat out iron and took souls with it.

The ancients said, "Railways are like worms." And they were right. They devoured the ground, unstoppable, insatiable. No prayer, no sacrifice could stop them. They were mechanical worms, devouring everything in their path.

Tecumseh swore that he would at least injure the worms. A stone in the gears, a missing nail, a fire on the bridge. Small acts, but each one a stab in the flesh of the monster. Iron could shine, yes. But it could also bleed.

Miles of stench and iron—this wasn't a web of the future. It was the spider web of a bastard who just ate until nothing was left.

The rails were more than metal. They were laws that no one had chosen. Once laid, their dictates prevailed. Everything had to conform to them. The animals fled, the rivers were tamed, and people were forced to live differently. The rails said:*This way. Always this way. Everything else is forbidden.*

Tecumseh hated this constraint. For him, freedom was movement, flow, direction without boundaries. But rails had no curves, only rigid lines. They turned living land into a map where nothing breathed.

The stench was endless. Steam, coal, burnt oil, sweat, blood. It wasn't a normal smell; it was a spell that hung over everything. Even the wind smelled of iron, even the forests tasted of rust, even the water turned bitter when a locomotive swallowed it and spewed it out as smoke.

The settlers called it "progress." They said, "Now comes trade, now comes wealth." But trade was always one-sided, and wealth flowed only into the pockets of those who had never worked a piece of land with their own hands. The rails weren't roads for the people—they were arteries for the bastard in Washington and his traders.

Geronimo experienced the same thing. In the South, trains hissed across the land like devils, each bringing more soldiers, more cannons, and more hunger. For the tribes, the sound of the locomotive wasn't a song, but a death sentence on wheels.

The old people cursed. "The land is losing its breath," they said. And they were right. For where the rails came, the songs fell silent. No more nights with the rustling of the forest, only the hiss of the engines. Children no longer learned to listen to the stars, but to the whistle of the steam engines.

Tecumseh swore he would disrupt the Song of Iron. With fire, with stones, with blood. Every disrupted line, every blocked train, every bent piece of rail was a cry against the bastard. He knew he couldn't stop the train. But he could make it stumble. And sometimes one stumble is enough to rip an entire bastard train off its tracks.

Miles of stench and iron—that wasn't the future. It was the chain odor of a death march, and everyone who smelled it knew: Soon it would be your turn.

The tracks were like scars that would never heal. Even if the trains were to fall silent one day, even if the iron rusted, the lines across the land would remain.

Wounds, once inflicted, never disappear. They tear open, they fester, they remind you that you were beaten.

Tecumseh knew this. He saw that the fight wasn't just against men, but against an idea that lived in iron. The bastards called it "connection." But it was chain work. They didn't want to connect the land; they wanted to own it. Every rail was a nail in the coffin of freedom.

The stench never stopped. Even when the wind changed, you could still smell the mixture of oil, smoke, and blood. The stench ate into your skin, your hair, your dreams. Even children who had never seen a train knew the smell didn't bode well.

The settlers continued to rejoice. They saw wealth, power, and order in the rails. But they overlooked the cost. For every mile of iron meant a mile less forest, a mile less water, a mile less life. For them, it was progress. For the tribes, it was the end.

Decades later, Geronimo felt the same pain. He heard the trains coming, heard the whistles, heard the thunder. And he knew: with every locomotive came a wave of death. The South burned, as the North had burned. Iron made no distinction. It devoured everything, whether prairie, forest, or desert.

The ancients said, "All iron eventually rusts." And they were right. But by then, many would have fallen. Rust comes slowly, and the bastard was quick.

Tecumseh swore he wouldn't remain silent. If he couldn't prevent the country from being bound by rails, he at least wanted every damned locomotive to feel the resistance. No train should travel without feeling the breath of those buried beneath it. No train should thunder without a hand somewhere loosening a rail.

Miles of stench and iron—they might shine, they might resonate, they might demonstrate power. But in the rumble of the trains lay another sound: the whisper of those who never forgot.

Shots at dawn

The morning was not a new beginning. It was an executioner with a cold breath. At dawn, death came quietly, almost politely, before driving a leaden hammer into the chest. No one expected mercy when the sun was just creeping over the hills. The first rays were bullets, the first birds were cries.

Tecumseh knew that battles rarely began at sunset. The bastards loved dawn. They came when people were still asleep, when the fires were only faintly burning, when the night's hunger was still in their bones. They didn't come like warriors. They came like thieves. Shots at dawn weren't accidental. They were a tactic.

The elders had stories of it. Entire villages wiped out before the first rooster crowed. Children who didn't even have time to cry. Women strangled while they still thought they were dreaming. Morning was the bastard of night—it didn't bring hope, it brought gunfire.

The settlers told the same story, but in reverse. "We were ambushed, we were surprised." It was always the same old story. But the truth was, they themselves invented the game. Whoever shoots first writes history. And those who fall last no longer have a voice to correct it.

Geronimo later experienced the same thing. Even in the south, the shots thundered, when the sky was still red with first light. There, too, they emerged at dawn, like rats emerging from holes. And each time they said: "It was necessary." Necessary for whom? For those who survived, not for those who died.

Tecumseh learned that morning was no friend. When the fog crept over the river, when the grass was wet, when the world still seemed silent—then one had to be alert. Because that's when the bastards came. And they didn't shoot because they were brave. They shot because they were afraid. Afraid of a people who wouldn't submit.

Shots at dawn – that was the true song of the new world. Not a song of freedom, not a song of justice. Only the roar of guns, the cracking of bones, and the silence that followed.

It was always the same sound. A first bang, then a second, then a whole damned avalanche. Those who were lucky died instantly. Those who were

unlucky woke up with fire in their huts, bullets in their legs, screams in their ears. Morning wasn't an awakening, it was an execution in the twilight.

Tecumseh had seen it as a boy: smoke rising above the trees, men with rifles advancing in ranks, dogs barking. No battlefield with rules, no call to honor, just the merciless gunning down of the sleeping. It was the bastards' style—shoot first, lie later. "Self-defense," they called it later, as blood still seeped across the ground.

The ancients put it differently: "The sun is no longer ours." For when the light came, so did death. Every morning could be the last. Every rooster's crow could be the prelude to gunfire. Anyone who still had faith in the day was a fool.

The settlers loved timing. They said, "At dawn we will have God's favor." But God was just an excuse for cheap tricks. Behind the pious talk lay pure fear. Fear of men who lived without rails and treaties, fear of peoples who didn't need paper gods. Fear of freedom. And fear always strikes first.

Decades later, Geronimo saw the same cowardice. Soldiers who waited like hyenas until the village was asleep, then struck. Always with the same result: smoke, corpses, screams. And always with the same excuse: "It had to be done." But only one thing was necessary: their hunger for land.

Tecumseh swore he would never trust the morning again. For him, darkness was more honest. At night, you knew danger lurked. But dawn? It pretended to bring hope while piercing your heart. Morning was a whore who smiled before drawing your knife.

Shots at dawn—that wasn't a coincidence, not fate. It was a system. It was the bastards' clockwork, and it always ticked to the rhythm of the guns.

The worst thing about the dawn shots wasn't death itself. It was the surprise. The death that caught you in your sleep, that didn't let you fight, that struck you down like cattle. No dance, no shout, no last cry—just a hole in your chest, while the fog hadn't yet lifted.

Tecumseh hated this cowardice. For him, a fight was only real if both sides had a chance to prepare. But the bastards thought differently. For them, war was mathematics. If you shoot at dawn, you'll kill twice as many, half the risk, and take full advantage. Simple math. No honor. Just profit.

The elders said that some spirits never found peace when shot at dawn. Because they weren't prepared, because they couldn't choose their own last

breath. They wandered around, like smoke that doesn't know where to go. The land became full of such smoke spirits, and every shot at dawn blew new smoke into the world.

The settlers knew the stories. They laughed about them. But they also whispered at night as they sat around the fire. Because deep down, they knew: Those who murder like that will eventually be haunted even in their sleep. The shots they fired echoed back—not always immediately, but one day.

Geronimo later said, "The sun is our greatest traitor." Because it heralded what was to come: the banging, the burning, the crying. It was as if even the heavens were helping the bastards. As if the light was only there to make the targets more visible.

Tecumseh swore he would reclaim the dawn for himself. If they shot at dawn, he would strike back at dawn. No shame, no reluctance. If the sun was a knife, he wanted to be the one to plunge it into the gut first.

Shots at dawn—they were no coincidence, no exception. They were the country's new heartbeat. A heartbeat of lead.

The fog was always thicker than the smoke. At least at first. When the sun hadn't yet fully hung over the trees, the land lay silent as if asleep. But as soon as the first gunfire cracked, the smoke mingled with the fog—and no one knew whether they were seeing the breath of the morning or the groans of the dying.

Tecumseh often pictured it: a village still asleep, while outside, men stood in ranks, rifles raised, fuses burning. They didn't wait for a shout, not for a signal. They waited only for the right moment, when the silence was at its deepest, when the first child yawned, when the dogs hadn't yet barked. Then they shot. And the world was torn apart.

The ancients said, "At dawn, the soul is naked." And perhaps that was why they were so easy to strike. No armor, no song, no preparation. Just naked bodies collapsing in the fire. Morning wasn't just the beginning of the day. It was the moment when you were most vulnerable. And the bastards knew that.

The settlers liked to portray themselves as heroes. They told stories in their inns about how they had "surprised the village at dawn," how they had "bravely fought against the savages." But in truth, it wasn't heroism. It was the slaughter of sleeping people. It was butchery with the sunrise.

Geronimo heard similar stories in the South. There, too, the bastards had learned that morning was the easiest battlefield. No resistance, no chaos—just targets. He called it "The Hour of the Cowards." And he was right.

Tecumseh vowed not to give up the morning without a fight. He posted sentries before the sky even lighted. He had men lying in the grass, arrows ready, before the settlers even thought they had the advantage. He wanted them to learn: The morning can also shoot back.

Shots at dawn—they weren't fate, but a choice. And Tecumseh was determined not to leave them to the bastards alone.

It was said that at dawn you hear death more clearly. Perhaps because the world is still silent, because the birds are just beginning to sing, because the wind is still asleep. Every scream echoes twice, every shot resonates like thunder in the bones. In the morning, people die louder—and longer.

Tecumseh had the image burned into his mind: women running out of huts, children in their arms, and then a crack, and they fell like wood struck with an axe. Men half-asleep, reaching for weapons, but the bullet was faster. No fight, just falling over, like cattle at the slaughterhouse. And the smoke crept over the rooftops as if it were the new god of the morning.

The bastards later told these stories in books. "Brave officers who charged at dawn." They forgot to add that their courage came from the sleep of others. No exchanges, no risks—just slaughter. But history belongs to those who survive, not to those who fall.

The elders cursed: "The sun has betrayed us." And that's how it felt. Every morning that came brought not hope, but fear. A child who heard the first shot learned for the rest of his life that the light did not mean joy, but danger.

Geronimo later recounted that he became uneasy at the very first bird call. Because he knew: If it's coming, it's coming now. And he was right. Cowards loved the moment when everything seemed innocent. The dogs were silent, the people dreamed, the fires smoldered. One cut, one bang—and it was all over.

Tecumseh swore he wouldn't let this trick go away again. If the sun was a knife, he would learn to wield it. He was preparing men who wouldn't sleep at dawn, but would lie in wait. He wanted to shove the bastards' own cowardice back down their throats.

Shots at dawn—they were the heartbeat of the new war. But Tecumseh turned them into an echo. And echoes can rebound, sometimes louder than the first shot.

Sometimes the echo was worse than the first shot. The bang faded, but the tremors remained in the bones. Dogs whined, children screamed, and the elderly muttered curses louder than any prayer. At dawn, everything echoed twice: the pain, the fear, the dying.

Tecumseh often stood in the midst of this echo. He heard not only the bullets, he heard the questions no one asked aloud:*Why always us? Why always here?*Questions that no tomorrow would answer. The only consolation was that the echo reached the bastards as well. For they too heard it, they too sensed that their bullets gave birth to spirits that followed them like shadows.

The settlers tried to justify the echo. "It was God's will," they said when they saw corpses. But even God would have vomited if he had seen them gunning down sleeping children. The echo wasn't a blessing; it was a curse that filled the valleys.

Geronimo later recounted that he not only heard the gunshots, but also tasted them. Iron on his tongue, bitter as blood. Each shot left an aftertaste that no water could wash away. It was as if the morning itself were turning rusty.

The ancients said, "He who falls at dawn remains eternally trapped between night and day." Perhaps that was just a story, but Tecumseh believed it. For he felt the restlessness when he stood in the places where battles raged at dawn. No bird sang right there, no wind blew freely. Everything remained suspended, as if time itself had been shot to pieces.

But Tecumseh swore he would use the echo. If the bastards thought they had the morning to themselves, then their echo would haunt them. Every shot they fired would echo back to them twice over. Every corpse would become a shadow that haunted them in their dreams.

Shots at dawn—that wasn't just an attack. It was an echo that never died. And Tecumseh made it his weapon.

Dawn was not a beginning, it was a judgment. No rooster's crow could drown it, no prayer could avert it. When the sun cast its first ray across the land, it was not golden, but bloody. A light that cut across your face like a blade.

Tecumseh knew that dawn could no longer be viewed innocently. Too many times it had been awakened by bullets. Too many times it had been the hour of cowards who would rather shoot sleeping people than fight standing up. Every new day was a risk. Every sunrise a trap.

The ancients said, "The day belongs to the bastards, the night belongs to us." But Tecumseh thought differently. He wanted to take back the morning for them. If they believed the sun was their ally, then it would also become their enemy. So he set traps at dawn, stationed men waiting, arrows drawn, muscles still as stones.

The settlers who once laughed suddenly found their own tricks turned against them. They attacked, but this time they came crashing back. No more easy slaughter, no more certain killing. Sometimes they stumbled in the fog, sometimes darkness consumed them, sometimes they died in the very dawn they sought to conquer.

Geronimo later recounted that at dawn he swore never to sleep. That he turned the hour of cowards into the hour of resistance. For whoever fears the morning loses. And whoever disturbs it at least gains respect.

In the end, dawn was neither friend nor foe. It was merely a mirror. It showed who was brave and who was not. It showed who died with their eyes open and who with theirs closed. Tecumseh saw in it not just the shots—he saw proof that war was never honorable. War was blood in the fog, gunshots in sleep, screams in the first light.

Shots at dawn—they became a rhythm, a song, an echo. But they also told the story that even in the hour of greatest cowardice, a heart could beat that fired back. And that heart belonged to Tecumseh.

The great bastard Washington never sleeps

Washington wasn't a place. Washington was a mouth that was always open. A mouth full of officials, traders, generals, preachers. They devoured papers, spewed laws, chewed treaties, until nothing remained but sheer hunger. The bastard had no body, but he had a thousand hands. Hands that grabbed everywhere. Hands that never tired.

Tecumseh knew that his true enemy wasn't just the settlers on the river. It was Washington—that great bastard in the East who never slept. Even when peace returned to the villages, when the forests were silent, when the rivers merely murmured—in Washington, candles burned, and some scumbag wrote new rules, new lies, new lines on maps.

The ancients said, "We used to fight men. Now we fight a ghost." Because Washington was invisible. He wasn't a warrior you could strike down with a tomahawk. He was a system that suffocated you while smiling in your face.

The settlers spoke as if Washington were their god. "The capital has spoken," they said, as if an oracle were whispering commands to them. But in truth, it was just other men with other stomachs, just as greedy. Washington was not a temple. It was a brothel where power was the only currency.

Geronimo later experienced the same bastard. Different presidents, different uniforms, different flags—but the same face. Washington never slept, Washington always ate, Washington wanted everything. And when he was full, he vomited wars.

Tecumseh swore he would throw stones into that mouth. Every dead soldier, every burned fort, every broken treaty was a stone. Maybe he couldn't close the mouth. But he could make it cough until blood came out.

The great bastard Washington never sleeps. But sometimes he coughs. And that was precisely Tecumseh's goal.

Washington was a beast with many faces. Sometimes it bore the face of a president, sometimes of a general, sometimes of a merchant with a fat wallet. But it always spoke the same language: land, land, land. As much land as possible, and everything in its way should be taken away. People, forests, rivers—it didn't matter.

Tecumseh understood that Washington couldn't lose a battle because Washington himself was never on the field. When one general fell, Washington sent another. When a treaty fell apart, Washington wrote a new one. The bastard could lose a thousand times and still pretend he'd won. Because he always had a supply of men, weapons, and lies.

The old days said, "Washington is a heart of paper." And they were right. Treaties, decrees, letters—all these were weapons more powerful than

gunshots. A piece of paper could kill more than an entire cannon. Because paper changed borders, paper stole land, paper turned murderers into heroes.

The settlers loved these papers. They held them high like holy writ. "It's written here in black and white," they said, believing that this already balanced the world. But paper is only as strong as the force that backs it up. And Washington had enough force to seal every piece of paper with blood.

Geronimo experienced the same bastard. New treaties, new signatures, new broken promises. Washington promised peace and delivered bullets. Washington promised land and took it back. Washington promised a future and gave only graves. It was a carousel of lies, and it never stopped turning.

Tecumseh swore he would not be part of this merry-go-round. No signature, no kneeling, no paper to replace his voice. For him, Washington was not an opponent to be reasoned with. Washington was a tumor that could only be treated with fire.

The great bastard Washington never sleeps. But sometimes he stumbles when someone has the nerve to bite his leg. And Tecumseh was just that kind of dog who wouldn't let go, no matter how hard he was beaten.

Washington wasn't a human being, so you couldn't negotiate ambition with him. Washington was a machine, made up of votes, papers, and money. If you had a problem, Washington sent a messenger with a form. If the form wasn't enough, Washington sent soldiers. If the soldiers weren't enough, Washington sent generals. Always one level higher in escalation—until the country fell silent and the maps were redrawn.

Sometimes, Washington stood for something that sounded heroic: order, unity, a republic. That sounded good in assemblies, in theaters, in the newspapers, which perfumed themselves with English words like "Progress" and "Destiny." But behind those words lay something else: a starving apparatus that knew no mercy. The capital could decide who would live and who would be marginalized—not morally, but practically: those who were profitable were protected; those who stood in the way were removed.

Tecumseh soon understood that many of Washington's decisions didn't fall from the sky. They were made in rooms with long tables, where men filled pipes, drank whiskey, and examined maps. They signed papers and considered the results law—a curious superstition. Whoever held the paper had power;

whoever didn't sign was just a name on a list, later forgotten. And Washington filled these lists with the names of those who gradually disappeared.

One example took shape long before it ended in battles: Governor Harrison and his treaties with Native American tribes. Harrison liked deals: pay a few valuables, sign the paper, take the land. Behind the veneer, things often looked different—coercion, deceit, vague "agreements" where a dagger-like pressure lay beneath the table. Washington sent the bureaucracy, Harrison set his pen, and in the end, a piece of land became "American," even if it had been the heart of a people.

Washington's true power wasn't just his army. It was his ability to weaponize laws. A law here, a decree there—and anyone who opposed it was considered a troublemaker. The people in Washington had the rare gift of institutionalizing injustice. They created regulations that sounded so dry and bureaucratic that no one seriously questioned them. The form lent legitimacy to injustice. That was their greatest crime: the transformation of robbery into law.

Tecumseh spoke out against this machine. He understood that his weapon was not only the arrow and the tomahawk; his weapon was the truth at the fireside. While Washington printed his feather-plane tales in newspapers, Tecumseh collected stories, pooled grievances, and enlightened people. He didn't just say, "We shall not sell." He said, "You shall not sell what is not yours." It's a harder argument than the prettiest piece of paper—but it's enough if enough people repeat it.

Washington didn't respond with arguments. Washington responded with action. Forts were built, militias were formed. And when words weren't enough, weapons were shipped. The capital knew: paper is powerful, but paper must be enforced. A treaty is only as good as the gun that protects it. So they sent the gun, and the law gained teeth.

This left Washington cold: it was statistics, not morality. An accident here, a "necessity" there—and the land quietly disappeared. They didn't understand that the people whose fields were taken away still breathed, sang, and loved. Washington counted land. Tecumseh counted people. Washington spoke of nationhood. Tecumseh spoke of life.

But there was also vanity in Washington—and vanity is foolish because it makes mistakes. Men who acted big in offices often misunderstood the world outside. They wrote strategies on maps that loved straightforwardness. And they forgot that the world is irregular: rivers, forests, spirits. The capital loved

control; it despised resistance. And that was the mistake Tecumseh and his allies exploited: The capital calculated in lines and dollars, the tribes reacted in rhythm and guerrilla warfare. Washington was powerful—but inflexible.

When Washington fired up his machinery, his coolness was evident: troop movements into the border districts, supply lines, lines of communication, all orchestrated like a concert. It was a monument to planning—and precisely because of this planning, his Achilles' heel could be struck. A broken line, a broken supply train, a burned magazine: small things that disrupt grand plans. Tecumseh knew this and acted, not out of a desire for destruction, but out of calculation.

But not everything coming out of Washington was malicious. Some men there actually believed they were doing the right thing. Patriotism is a powerful drug; they slept badly with it, but by day they dared to do inhumane things—because it was done "in the name of the whole." Tecumseh despised this hypocrisy. "In the name of the whole" sounded nice if you didn't know the victims personally. But when you see the field where children are buried, that "whole" sounds like just a cold pile of numbers.

The capital also had the ability to celebrate itself. It erected monuments, named rivers, and erected memorial plaques—especially for its dead who had fallen in battle, whose images were displayed as heroes in the evenings. The other country's dead, stretched out in their villages, were not given marble pedestals. This is the injustice of the victor: He has the right to commemorate. The vanquished are forgotten.

Tecumseh saw this. He knew he didn't have the resources to crush Washington head-on. But he had something the capital was reluctant to acknowledge: the connection of a people to their land. He mobilized longing, anger, history—things no pen could create. And he bound people into a narrative more powerful than ink: the narrative that says you are not for sale.

The Great Bastard Washington never slept. But sometimes, in the wee hours, as the officials preened their pens and the generals folded their maps, one of them might think, "What if we were wrong?" Such thoughts quickly vanished because the machine kept running. Yet once in a while, there were mistakes—a bad alliance, a wounded commander, a failed campaign. And into those cracks, Tecumseh stepped forward, not as a demon, but as a man with calculation and heart.

Washington derived his power from institutions. Tecumseh derived his power from people. It is no coincidence that one system was slow and steady, the other fast and improvised. Both had advantages and disadvantages. At times, Washington prevailed. At others, he stumbled. And in those stumbles lay hope.

In the end, the problem wasn't just Washington. It was the idea emanating from Washington: land is property, and property is right. As long as that idea reigned, there was no peace. Tecumseh didn't just want to reconquer—he wanted to attack the idea itself. Not with rhetoric, but with action, with alliances, with teeth. He met men with brains, he talked with chiefs, he laid out strategies like maps—and then he carried them out.

Washington never slept. But Tecumseh gave him nightmares. And sometimes a dream loud enough to briefly make the machine's teeth chatter. That was his goal: not to completely destroy Washington—that was delusional—but to show him that there were boundaries that couldn't be covered with paper.

Washington was a machine that wheezed loudest when it could devour the most. Money flowed like sweat, brochures were printed, men in uniforms were paid, and somewhere in the files it said: "We must secure the frontier." Translated: We're going to take the country. And because that sounded so official, everyone who turned the machine could call themselves cowards without blushing.

Tecumseh learned early on: Shouting won't help against a machine. You have to stop the gears. And gears have habits. They expect supplies through roads, through bridges, through ports, through mail routes. Damage the roads, and Washington starts coughing. That wasn't philosophy, that was calculation. You don't take the capital, you take its pace.

The bastards could pass laws, but they needed men, horses, and ammunition—and all of that moved on rails, in wagons, and across rivers. A burned magazine is a piece of paper without teeth. A sabotaged supply train is a messenger with broken legs. Tecumseh understood that one was fighting not just soldiers, but the logistics that fed the imperial mouth. He turned his small troops into what Washington detested: unpredictability.

The capital reacted as any colossus reacts: with excess. If a post was looted, troops came. If a fort burned, more came. Washington was fearless in running up debt; his response to disruption was always more violence. That was convenient—for accountants. For people on the ground, it was a matter of

numbers: more men, more weapons, more dead. But Washington could absorb losses. That made him dangerous.

And yet, the machine had blind spots. Men in shirts and hats could read maps, but they couldn't measure the depth of contempt harbored by a people losing their ground. They underestimated the silence that arises when mothers whisper among themselves. They believed words still buy honor. They forgot that a community with nothing to lose suddenly becomes terribly efficient. Tecumseh had become that animal: efficient, merciless, precise.

Washington was proud of his symbols. Flags, forts, names—they served to mark possessions. But symbols are only as strong as the people who defend them. If people were tired, hungry, drunk, or worn down, no shield would help. Tecumseh knew this: he targeted morale. A battered outpost was less a military problem than a psychological one. For every small victory Washington forced, a well-timed setback could destroy confidence in power.

The Bastards loved books. They collected reports, wrote memoirs, and arranged victories in gilt frames. They thought history could be nailed to paper. But paper is perishable. Flesh remembers longer. Tecumseh relied on memory: campfire stories of betrayal, lists of the names of those who had been sold out, and clear, constantly repeated messages: "Don't buy, don't sign, don't give the land." Stories are contagious. They don't need permission from the Bastard; they spread like fire.

Washington had another weakness: bureaucracy sputters. An order must flow through channels, stamps must be set, money must be released, transportation organized. Every step is an opportunity for delay. Tecumseh turned delay into tactics. Delay means you're not just destroying material, you're destroying time—and time is the raw material of power.

There were men in the East who knew how dangerous Tecumseh could be. Some whispered that it would be wiser to respect him; others wanted to capture him. Washington sent a governor, Harrison, with his paper smile and boasts of maneuvers. Harrison wanted glory, medals, perhaps an election campaign. Tecumseh didn't want a medal—he wanted life. And so two forms clashed: political calculation versus the anger of a people organized like clockwork.

Diplomacy between Washington and the tribes was often a play directed by the bastards. Tea, gifts, polite words—then the signature, then the dagger. Tecumseh saw through this: gifts are advance loans. Treaties are forward loans.

And debt is paid in blood. That's why he mistrusted the gifts, and he never lost the composure that made Washington nervous.

Washington was impersonal, but his representatives ran amok with vanity. A governor expanding his power dreamed of promotion; a general craved glory; a merchant sought new markets. These personal biographies harbored opportunities. Tecumseh didn't just target institutions, he targeted egos. An offended governor makes mistakes. An overheated general attacks rashly. Vanity is an explosive device—and Tecumseh learned how to detonate it.

The capital could send armies, and it did. But military power is expensive. Every expedition consumes men, horses, and supplies. With every setback, patience diminishes. Tecumseh knew that perseverance was a tool. If he got the bastards to summon their strength again and again, Washington would eventually ask, "Is it worth it?" Questions like these have a strange habit of coming up in rooms where counting is taking place—and sometimes counting changes the course of events.

At the end of the day, Washington was big, cold, and covered in paper—but not infallible. Tecumseh didn't have to smash the entire machine. He just had to make it grind its teeth. A few burned mills, a blocked supply line, a defeated general—that was enough to jam the cogs. And when Washington coughed, the men in shirts stopped smiling.

The great bastard Washington never slept. He kept writing, he kept stamping, he kept commanding. But every night, when his pens rested, Tecumseh thought of the bills Washington couldn't pay: memory, anger, humanity. Papers may create law. But they don't create love. And a people who are supposed to give up their love will eventually take it back—with hands, with teeth, with fire.

Washington was like a hydra. Cut off one of its heads, and two more grow. A general falls from grace? Another takes his place. A governor fails? Another takes his place. The beast had no soul, only endless stomachs waiting to be filled. Each stomach devoured land, and the chewing never stops.

Tecumseh understood: You couldn't kill Washington. But you could wound him, make him cough, make him stumble. Every small victory—a raided fort, a shattered supply party—was like a blow to the beast's ribs. It twitched, it growled, but it didn't die. But sometimes it's enough to poke an animal long enough until it bites its own tail.

The bastards in the East talked about the "American Dream." But this dream was just a nightmare for everyone who stood in its way. Freedom meant to them:*our freedom to displace you.*Equality meant:*our equality to run you over.*The great bastard Washington could spit out fine words, but they were nothing more than perfume over a corpse.

The old men said, "Washington speaks with two tongues." And they were right. Peace on the outside, war on the inside. Laws on paper, blood on the ground. One man in the capital promised protection to a tribe, while at the same time another official prepared land auctions. The one smile was always camouflage for a knife.

Geronimo later recognized the same duplicity. Different presidents, different speeches, but always the same: sugar in the mouth, poison in the hands. Washington wasn't tied to a particular era; Washington was a curse, constantly reinventing itself.

Tecumseh swore he would expose this duplicity. He called treaties by their name: lies. He called laws by their name: theft. He stripped the bastards of their disguise by saying to chiefs, to warriors, to mothers: "Look. They want to buy your heart. And if you sell it, they'll stab you in the face."

The bastards in Washington didn't just hate Tecumseh because he resisted. They hated him because he spoke the truth loudly. A truth that destroyed the masquerade. A man who tears off the mask is more dangerous than a man with a gun.

The great bastard Washington never sleeps. But sometimes he blinks—and it's precisely at those moments that someone like Tecumseh strikes.

Washington had a talent: he could sleep with his eyes open. On the one hand, he yawned at the preacher who ranted about justice. On the other, he laughed with the merchant who already had maps in his pocket. He played both sides until no one knew what was real and what was a lie.

Tecumseh saw through the game. He saw that Washington always used two hands: one that gave, and one that took. The hand that gave held glass beads, blankets, a few rifles. The hand that took reached for rivers, forests, villages. And the bastards truly believed no one would notice that the giving hand was just a distraction.

The old men said, "Washington is a belly without a heart." A belly that eats but is never satisfied. They were right. Even if a treaty gave away an entire valley to the settlers, it wouldn't take ten years before the next piece of land was being discussed. Washington was greedy for the future. It wanted everything—not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon.

The settlers cheered every time new territories were "opened." They acted as if they had created the land themselves. But they were only standing on the shoulders of the bastards in the East who were beating the land free for them, waving their flags and singing hymns. The Great Bastard Washington wrote the score, and the settlers danced to it—with boots trampling the land.

Geronimo experienced the same dance decades later. Always new maps, always new lines, always new promises. Washington had learned that maps were weapons. Lines on paper could be deadlier than bullets. Because a bullet kills a man. A line kills a people.

Tecumseh swore that he would accept no lines. No border drawn by a bastard in an office should determine where a people lived or died. He saw maps not as land, but as shackles. And he intended to break every shackle, with blood, with fire, with words if necessary.

The great bastard Washington doesn't sleep. But he dreams—and his dreams are nightmares for all who don't want to disappear into his belly.

Washington wasn't just a city. It was a monster without bones, a body of paper and voices, but with claws of iron. It didn't sleep because it couldn't sleep. Every breath was a law, every movement a decree, every sound a new piece of land being lost.

Tecumseh knew you couldn't kill something like that. No knife, no arrow, no gun could rip open a capital. But you could make it hungry. You could make its soldiers eat until they grew tired. You could humiliate its generals until they doubted. You could set fire to their treaties until they crumbled to ash. The monster would live on, yes. But it would limp, cough, bleed.

The elders said, "Washington is like a storm. You can't stop it, but you can hide in the trees and throw stones at it." That's exactly what Tecumseh did. No retreat into the void, no silent endurance. Every stone was an attack, every trap a slap in the face, every alliance a thorn in the belly of the beast.

The bastards in the East didn't understand this. They thought a capital city was untouchable, a god made of marble and ink. But even gods stumble when they eat too much. Washington devoured land, devoured peoples, devoured his own lies. Someday, Tecumseh hoped, it would choke on its own grub.

Geronimo later recognized the same pattern. Different men in the presidential chair, different faces at the desks – but the mouth remained the same. Always open, always hungry. A bastard who never sleeps.

Tecumseh swore that his name would be a splinter in Washington's tooth. Not a tooth that could simply be pulled out. One that ached every time the monster began to feed again. A splinter that reminded the monster: Not all land is free to be had.

The great bastard Washington isn't sleeping. But he's in pain. And sometimes pain is enough to make a monster tremble.

Brothers in the Dirt – Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa

Brothers are no guarantee of harmony. Brothers are like knives, sometimes lying side by side, sometimes sharpened against each other. Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa grew up in the same soil, but they saw the world through different eyes. One was a warrior, the other a prophet. Two sides of a coin that repeatedly landed in the dirt.

Tecumseh was the fist. Clear, direct, without beating around the bush. He believed in actions, in alliances, in strategies based on blood and reason. Tenskwatawa was the mouth. He spoke, he preached, he painted visions in the sky. Some called him wise, others called him crazy. He called himself "the Prophet."

The ancients said that brothers were two rivers that flow from the same source but often flow in different directions. Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa were just that. One wanted to save the country through war. The other wanted to save the soul through purity. Together, they made a mixture so explosive that even Washington became nervous.

Tenskwatawa had a rough start. He wasn't strong, wasn't brave, and wasn't a warrior. He was the one people laughed at when he failed at archery. But he had a voice, and eventually, that voice was heard. He said the gods spoke to

him, that the Old Spirits gave him orders. For many who were desperate, this sounded like salvation. For Tecumseh, it was a double-edged sword.

The bastards loved prophets. Not because they believed them, but because they knew: prophets divide. A warrior unites, a prophet tears apart. Tenskwatawa's words were a comfort, but also a danger. Tecumseh had to learn to live with this power—to use it when it helped, to rein it in when it led to chaos.

Geronimo later had no prophets at his side, only warriors. But he knew the principle: words can sometimes rally more people than weapons. And sometimes they lead entire nations astray.

Tecumseh loved his brother, but he didn't trust him blindly. Brothers in the dirt didn't mean you left the same footprints. It just meant you walked the same ground.

Tenskwatawa was a broken tooth in the mouth of his tribe. No one expected greatness from him. He was the one who drank too much, who stumbled, who fell into his brother's shadow. While Tecumseh stood at the front, his muscles flexed, his eyes clear, Tenskwatawa often lay by the fire like a wretched heap. The one was feared, the other ridiculed.

But sometimes the loudest voices rise precisely from shame and ridicule. Tenskwatawa began to speak of visions. He told of spirits that haunted him at night, of gods that gave him orders. At first, they laughed at him again. Then some listened more closely. Because in times of despair, even nonsense sounds like hope.

The ancients said, "When a man lies on the ground, he hears voices that others fail to hear." Perhaps that was Tenskwatawa's advantage. He was on the ground, deep down, so far down that at one point he believed he was speaking directly to the earth itself. His words were full of anger, full of purity, full of contempt for everything that came from the bastards.

Tecumseh saw the effect. Suddenly, people who had previously been aimless gathered around his brother. Women, men, warriors, children—they listened to the voice of the prophet. They believed they must return to the old ways, reject everything foreign, and sanctify everything their own. No alcohol, no white goods, no betrayal of blood. For Tecumseh, this was beneficial—but also risky.

Because words are like fire. They warm you when you control them. They burn you down when they get out of control. Tenskwatawa burned brightly, sometimes too brightly. He wasn't a strategist, he was a fanatic. And fanatics are unpredictable.

Geronimo knew the pattern: people who had visions could enrage entire villages. But rage makes a poor general. It strikes quickly, but it doesn't think. Tecumseh knew that. He didn't just want fire. He wanted order.

Brothers in the dirt – one built with steel and will, the other with smoke and vision. Together they were strong, but also extremely dangerous.

Tenskwatawa began to swell like a toad after rain. He was no longer just the drunkard, the failure, the brother in the shadows. He was now "the prophet." Men came from far away to hear him. Women brought him offerings, children looked up at him with wide eyes. And he savored it all, as if he had finally found what he had always lacked: meaning.

His speeches were sharp, full of hatred for everything that came from the whites. "Their goods are poison! Their alcohol is devil's blood! Their ways are death!" People listened because they sensed there was truth in them. They had seen how alcohol destroyed their men, how glass beads replaced land, how treaties devoured their lives. Tenskwatawa said it out loud—and in doing so, he was a savior to many.

But Tecumseh listened more closely. He knew that truth and madness often coexist. Tenskwatawa didn't just cry out against the bastards. He also cried out against neighboring tribes, against chiefs who didn't believe in him, against warriors who doubted too much. His purity was a sword that also wounded his own people.

The elders warned: "A prophet who condemns everyone will soon stand alone." But Tenskwatawa wasn't alone yet. His reputation grew, his village became a place of pilgrimage. People came to be "purified," to find new strength. Some called it "revival." Others called it "madness in sheep's clothing."

Tecumseh seized the moment. He saw that his brother's movement was a wave he could ride. More people in the village meant more warriors. More faith meant more resistance. As long as Tenskwatawa rallied the people, Tecumseh could transform them into an army. But he also knew: a wave can carry you—or drown you.

Geronimo later had no prophets, only tough men with weapons. But he understood what it meant when words moved entire tribes. Sometimes it was good. Sometimes it was deadly.

Brothers in the dirt—one held the sword, the other the word. Together they formed something stronger than either alone—as long as they didn't tear each other apart.

Tenskwatawa was no longer a shadowy figure. He was the damned center. People called him "the Prophet," as if he were having breakfast with the gods. He delivered speeches that reverberated through the camp like whiplash. "Not another drop of whiskey! Not a piece of iron from the hands of the bastards! No betrayal of our ancestors!" And the people cheered, as if these words could clear their minds.

Tecumseh watched, half proud, half suspicious. His brother had transformed from a drunken nobody to a spiritual leader. But what kind of leader? One who gave strength—or one who sowed fanaticism?

The elders watched with divided eyes. Some nodded, for they had seen firsthand how alcohol destroyed villages, how trade with the whites took more than it gave. Others shook their heads: "A man who was lying in the dirt yesterday is supposed to be a prophet today?" But the camp grew. People came, listened, and believed. Faith is contagious, especially in times of despair.

Tenskwatawa began to introduce rituals: purifications, dances, fasting. Men threw their bottles into the fire, women cut other people's clothes into shreds, children swore never to emulate the white bastards. The village transformed into a kind of fortress of faith. But a fortress that also built walls around reason.

Tecumseh used it tactically. More men meant more warriors. More faith meant less fear. But he also knew: faith is a double-edged sword. It can forge an army—or lead it blindly into the fire. And Tenskwatawa was no strategist. He spoke of visions, not plans.

Geronimo would have laughed at that. He trusted in courage, not in prophets. But he would also have understood: If words make men stand, words are as sharp as blades.

Brothers in the dirt – Tecumseh held the reins, Tenskwatawa the drum. And sometimes the drum was louder than the reins. That was the danger. For a drum that beats too loudly drowns out even the clearest mind.

Tenskwatawa was now a fire that no one could extinguish. He preached day and night. His words burned into people's skulls like embers that never went out. He spoke of visions in which the ancestors came to him. They said the world must be cleansed, the blood must be pure, the bastards must disappear. The people listened—and they believed it.

The camp transformed into a stage. Men danced ecstatically around the fires, women shouted hymns of praise, children gazed at the "prophet" with glowing eyes. What had been a drunkard in the dirt a few years ago was now the mouth of the spirits. And no one dared to interrupt him anymore.

Tecumseh observed everything. He was proud because his people had renewed hope. But he was also vigilant because he knew that hope that turns into fanaticism consumes more than it heals. Tenskwatawa didn't talk about alliances, strategies, or diplomacy. He spoke only of purity, of faith, of destruction. That was good for setting hearts ablaze. But bad for winning wars.

The elders whispered, "Prophets are like flames. They warm you—or they burn your house." Some remained silent, others warned Tecumseh, "Your brother might push you into the fire without realizing it."

Geronimo would never have tolerated such fanaticism. For him, war was sweat, blood, and cunning—not smoke and visions. But Tecumseh knew he needed his brother's drum. Without the prophet's noise, his army would be only half as large.

Tenskwatawa enjoyed the intoxication. He basked in the faith of others. Every scream, every sacrifice, every ecstatic night made him greater—at least in the minds of his followers. But another question grew in Tecumseh's mind: How long until the fire gets out of control?

Brothers in the dirt – one holding the spear, the other the torch. And Tecumseh knew: A torch at the wrong moment could burn down an entire camp.

Tenskwatawa's voice was now louder than any war horn. The people listened to him more than to chiefs, more to him than to their own elders. He promised them visions, promised them purity, promised them a future without bastards—but he promised no strategy. And that was precisely what made Tecumseh nervous.

Tecumseh wanted to forge alliances, grand coalitions between tribes. He knew that only a united front could make Washington sweat. But Tenskwatawa

preached not unity, but separation. He said: "He who is not pure, he who drinks whiskey, he who touches the bastards, he does not belong to us." With such words, he cut off precisely the tribes Tecumseh needed as allies.

The elders saw the danger. "A prophet who builds walls turns friends into enemies," they said. But the crowd didn't listen to the elders. They listened to the one who spoke of the spirits with a voice like thunder.

The bastards watched the spectacle with satisfaction. They knew that division was their best ally. A prophet who excluded other tribes played into their hands more than any general. While Tecumseh wanted to build bridges, his brother tore them down—without realizing it.

Geronimo would have reacted immediately. He would have disarmed the prophet or chased him away. But Tecumseh couldn't do that. Blood is blood, a brother is a brother. And he knew that Tenskwatawa's words also gave strength. Too many men had been roused from their lethargy by these visions. Simply silencing a prophet would have torn the entire nation in half.

Tenskwatawa truly believed he was the voice of the gods. He didn't listen to warnings or reason. When Tecumseh took him aside, when he spoke quietly, the prophet would answer loudly—so all could hear. For him, any criticism was a betrayal, any hesitation a weakness.

Brothers in the dirt – one building, the other setting fire. And Tecumseh knew: If he wasn't careful, his brother's fire would burn down not the bastards, but his own movement.

In the end, they stood there like two dogs on the same chain. Tecumseh with his teeth in the enemy's flesh, Tenskwatawa with his eyes on the sky, his hands raised in thunder. Two brothers who bore the same blood, but had different gods in their heads.

Tecumseh saw clearly: Only with alliances, with planning, with patience could one prevail against Washington. He spoke with chiefs, sought unity, and sought a front. But Tenskwatawa stood up and thundered: "All who doubt are traitors! All who drink are damned! All who do not follow are enemies!" With every speech, his influence grew—and with every word, he cut pieces of Tecumseh's dream.

The elders watched, perplexed. They knew both were needed. The warrior for battle, the prophet for faith. But they also knew that two men marching on opposite paths could tear the people to pieces.

Geronimo would have had it easier. He would have said, "The Prophet is just a man with a big mouth." But Tecumseh couldn't be that cold. He still saw his little brother in Tenskwatawa. The failure who had picked himself up. The man who had turned shame into a voice.

But love is blind. And blood is a curse. Tecumseh held on to his brother, even when he realized that the prophet's words were seeping through the people like poison. Without Tenskwatawa, he would have had fewer warriors. With Tenskwatawa, he had more warriors—but also more madness.

So they continued: brothers in the dirt. One with a sword, one with words. One with strategy, one with vision. Together stronger, together more dangerous—and together on a path that carried as much hope as it did doom.

The bastard Washington never slept. But he grinned when he heard of his brothers. For he knew: No enemy is easier to defeat than one who divides himself.

The false prophet vomits visions

Tenskwatawa spat out visions like a drunkard after a night of too much cheap whiskey. People called it divine, but to Tecumseh, it often sounded like the babble of a man vacillating between megalomania and despair. He screamed, he trembled, he fell over, and when he got up again, he said the spirits had spoken through him.

The people were delighted. Finally, someone who could hear the spirits again! Finally, someone who would bring back the old ways, preach purity, and curse the bastards. For many, it was a comfort, an anchor in a world that was tearing them away more every day. They needed a voice stronger than the lies of the white people. Tenskwatawa was that voice—even if it came from a diseased throat.

The elders were skeptical. They whispered, "A man who lay in the dirt yesterday cannot be a mouthpiece for the spirits today." But the people didn't

listen to skepticism. They listened to roars. And Tenskwatawa roared louder than all.

Tecumseh knew this was dangerous. Visions blind. They make men believe they're invincible; they make women believe they can grasp spirits with their bare hands. Visions are sweet, but sweet is often poison. He needed his brother, yes—but he didn't need an army of madmen who believed a prophet could deflect bullets with words.

Geronimo would have laughed at the false prophet. He knew that bullets could only be answered with courage and cunning, not with saliva and prayers. But Tecumseh was caught between brotherly love and political advantage.

Tenskwatawa continued to vomit visions. Every night, every ritual, every fire. And the people drank this vomit as if it were sacred nectar. Brothers in the dirt, yes—but now the prophet began selling the filthy water itself as wine.

Tenskwatawa was now more of a show than a person. He vomited visions into the dust, and the crowd fell to their knees as if God himself were speaking through his crooked mouth. He rolled on the ground, his eyes wide open like a madman, trembling, screaming, and when he rose again, he claimed, "The spirits have spoken."

People loved it. They needed spectacle, they needed thunder in their ears and fire before their eyes. In a world where Washington was stealing their land day after day, it was sweet to have at least one man who was giving them back heaven—even if he preached it with foam at the mouth.

Tecumseh stood beside him, arms crossed, face hard. He knew: this sort of thing attracts people like carrion attracts flies. But he also knew: flies don't make an army. He needed discipline, he needed order, he needed clear heads. And instead, he was getting visions that made people believe they could stop bullets with their bare hands at dawn.

The elders warned: "A prophet who shouts too loudly will eventually hear only his own echo." But Tenskwatawa heard no one but himself. The more people cheered, the more firmly he believed the gods had truly chosen him.

The bastards in Washington laughed. They knew that a people who rely on vision are easier to crush than one who have a strategy. They heard the Prophet say, "Our bullets hit, their bullets bounce!"—and they rubbed their hands together. Fanaticism is a useful enemy: predictable, arrogant, stupid.

Geronimo later knew similar men—shamans who talked too much, performed too many rituals while the army advanced outside. He never trusted the words of men who basked in their own vomit.

But Tenskwatawa truly believed what he spat. He was possessed. He was convinced that the spirits were showing the way through him. And that made him dangerous—not only for the bastards, but also for Tecumseh. For an army that believes in a false prophet marches blindly to destruction.

The nights in the camp were now more theater than life. Tenskwatawa stood in the circle of fires, his eyes rolling, foaming at the mouth, vomiting his visions into the people's faces. "The spirits have spoken! They say: He who is pure will be invulnerable!" And the people screamed, danced, howled like wolves.

Tecumseh saw the faces. Men who had been tired and broken yesterday now gazed into the flames with glowing eyes. Women who had wept yesterday now sang as if they themselves were part of an ancient prophecy. Children drummed sticks on the ground as if summoning thunder. The prophet had driven them to a frenzy stronger than any bottle of whiskey—and just as dangerous.

Because intoxication makes you blind. If you believe the spirits have made you invulnerable, you walk bare-chested into the fire. If you think your prophet has promised you immortality, you won't hesitate for a moment to walk into a trap. Tecumseh knew this. He saw how his brother enchanted the people—and how he simultaneously led them into the abyss.

The elders murmured, "This is not a prophet, this is an actor." But no one dared to object aloud. The mob was too loud, too intoxicated, too convinced. Anyone who spoke out against Tenskwatawa risked being branded a traitor themselves.

Washington laughed to himself. A people who relied on dreams was as easy to break as a rotten piece of wood. They knew: a man with vision is no match for a man with guns.

Geronimo would have immediately dragged the prophet away from the fire and forced him to chop wood with an axe until he knew what reality was again. But Tecumseh couldn't do that. Blood was thicker than reason. Brotherly love is a curse.

And so Tenskwatawa continued to vomit up visions. Every night, every ritual, every fire. The people drank them like wine, and Tecumseh watched as his

brother became a god in the dirt—a god more dangerous than any enemy because he stood in his own camp.

The fires now blazed like hell's mouths, and Tenskwatawa stood in the middle of them like a man possessed. He screamed, he trembled, he vomited visions until his body trembled. "The spirits say: The white man's bullets won't harm you! Your skin will be like stone, your hearts like iron, your blood like fire!" And the people cheered as if he had poured immortality down their throats.

The men pounded their fists against their chests as if they were already made of granite. Women shouted at their children to be strong, and the little ones drummed on the ground as if they were already warriors. It was a collective frenzy, a mass hypnosis, an orgy of faith.

Tecumseh watched this with cold eyes. He knew that no word, no shout, no dance would stop bullets. He knew that his brother wasn't giving them the truth, but a poison that tasted sweeter than any white man's beer keg. He could have intervened, but he also knew that if he did, he would turn not only his brother, but an entire people against him.

The elders murmured, "Such things end in blood." They were right. Fanaticism never ends in victory, but always in slaughter. But no one dared to stop the prophet. He was too loud, too holy, too untouchable.

The bastards in Washington heard about the visions and grinned. "A people who believe bullets ricochet off them? That's a gift." They knew what was coming: men running blindly into fire, women encouraging their men to walk into traps. An enemy who doesn't think rationally is an easy enemy.

Geronimo would have said, "Prophets lie. Iron does not lie." But Tecumseh remained silent. He had to remain silent so as not to divide the people. He hoped he could channel the madness in a useful direction. But deep down, he knew: his brother's fire would no longer be redirected.

And so the prophet stood, vomiting visions and blinding a people with faith. Tecumseh knew: blood would soon flow—not because the bastards were stronger, but because his brother made them weaker.

The first consequences came faster than Tecumseh had feared. Men who had let Tenskwatawa vomit all over them went out like fools. They marched fearlessly, chests bared, their eyes raised to the sky. "The spirits protect us! No bullet will hit us!" they cried, and then they ran blindly into the bastards' guns.

The result was a massacre. Bullets knew no ghosts. Iron knew no visions. The men fell like bushes in a storm, one after another, and their blood soaked the ground that should have been their protection. The Prophet had promised them invulnerability, and all they got was death in the dust.

Tecumseh stood by, angry as a wolf. He knew that discipline, cunning, and patience would have been necessary. But instead, the Prophet had driven them into a frenzy that robbed them of their senses. And as the bastards laughed and reloaded, some still believed they were divinely protected. Blindness is deadlier than any weapon.

The ancients said, "A false prophet doesn't send you to paradise. He sends you to the grave." And that's exactly what happened. Men died not because they were weak, but because they believed a lie.

The bastards exploited it mercilessly. They sent scouts to spread the stories of the visions. The more tribes heard that the Shawnee believed in invulnerability, the more tribes doubted—Tecumseh's sanity, his movement, the sincerity of the alliance. Washington didn't need bullets to sow division. The Prophet did it for them.

Geronimo would have beaten him out of the camp long ago. He would have said, "A man who preaches lies is more dangerous than a soldier with a gun." But Tecumseh couldn't. He was bound by blood, by brotherly love, by the knowledge that many of his warriors fought only because the Prophet had pulled them out of their holes.

And so the deception ate deeper into the people's flesh. Every death was seen not as proof of the lie, but as a sacrifice to the spirits. Every loss reinforced the madness instead of breaking it. The prophet continued to vomit up visions, and the people drank until they poisoned themselves.

Tenskwatawa had blood on his hands, without ever having wielded a sword. And yet his arrogance grew. The more men died, the more he cried that the spirits had demanded sacrifices. The more corpses lay in the dust, the more he claimed it was proof of his visions. Madness has the strange quality of being strengthened by failure.

Tecumseh was furious. He had lost warriors, not to the enemy, but to madness. Men who could have survived and fought lay dead because they had believed his brother's words. But how could you convince the people that the prophet was lying if they interpreted every defeat as a divine test?

The elders whispered, "The Prophet will burn us all." But they didn't dare challenge him openly. Too many eyes were burning, too many ears were deaf. Anyone who criticized the Prophet was considered an enemy, and in the worst case, he himself ended up on the ground—not by bullets, but by the fury of his own people.

The bastards in Washington continued to laugh. A people that divides itself is a people that only needs a touch to break. They didn't need great battles, no superior plans. They just had to wait until the prophet had spread enough poison.

Geronimo wouldn't have allowed this madness. For him, a warrior who believed he was invulnerable was a dead man on two legs. But Tecumseh was caught between brotherly love and necessity. Without Tenskwatawa, he would have fewer warriors. With Tenskwatawa, he would have more warriors—but also more fanatics who ran blindly into the fire.

Tenskwatawa himself felt untouchable. He no longer spoke to Tecumseh as a brother. He spoke to him as a tool. "You fight, I lead," he said, as if he were the head and Tecumseh merely the arm. For a man like Tecumseh, who planned everything with intelligence and strategy, the poison was pure. But he remained silent. Blood ties the tongue.

The false prophet continued to vomit visions, and the camp now reeked of madness. Tecumseh knew: One more false step, one more ill-advised ritual, and the bastards would bury them all in laughter.

In the end, Tenskwatawa was a man who drank his own vomit and passed it off as wine. He was still standing by the fire, still screaming, still trembling, still spewing visions. But those who looked more closely didn't see the ghosts. They saw only a man who had put himself at the center of attention because he was afraid of falling back into insignificance.

Tecumseh saw it clearly. His brother was not a prophet; he was a mirror for the people's despair. They wanted someone to tell them that their suffering had meaning. They wanted someone to put their fear into words. They wanted someone to promise that everything lost was not in vain. Tenskwatawa filled this hole—not with truth, but with noise.

The ancients said, "A prophet who is convinced of himself eventually no longer hears gods, but only his own echo." That's exactly what happened.

Tenskwatawa no longer spoke to the spirits. He spoke with his own voice, amplified by the crowd, who treated him like a god.

The bastards in Washington loved it. Every false prophet was a gift. Because while Tecumseh tried to forge alliances, Tenskwatawa was tearing those very alliances apart. While Tecumseh was building strategy, the prophet was sowing madness. A people that poisons itself is a people that is easily defeated.

Geronimo would never have called him "brother." To him, he would have been a traitor, worse than any soldier in a blue uniform. But Tecumseh was bound—by blood, by love, by the hope that perhaps there was still some truth in the visions.

But in his heart, he knew: Tenskwatawa was no prophet. He was a false dog who vomited up visions because he had nothing else. A man who didn't save his tribe, but weakened it. A man who screamed louder the emptier he became.

The false prophet vomited visions. And the people drank. But at some point, Tecumseh knew, the intoxication would end—and then, in the cold morning, the people would see that they were not divine, but merely deceived.

Cornfields in flames

The corn was more than just food. It was life, patience, community. Every plant that sprouted from the earth was the result of the hands that planted it, the rain that fell, and the songs sung over the seeds. Corn was blood that grew green. And that's precisely why the bastards targeted it.

The settlers knew: Kill the crops, and you kill the people. Burn the fields, and you break not only the stomach, but also the will. War wasn't just bullets and tomahawks—war was fire in the corn.

Tecumseh saw it with his own eyes: entire fields engulfed in flames like beasts. Women screamed, children wept, men stood helpless because a grain of corn couldn't fight bullets. The smoke hung heavy, sweet and bitter at the same time, like the death of a god.

The old men said, "He who burns the corn burns the future." They were right. For without corn, there is no winter, without corn, no strength, without corn, no hope. Washington knew this. Harrison knew this. And so they sent soldiers

not just to fight, but to destroy. Every flame in the field was a weapon that hit harder than a rifle.

Geronimo saw the same thing decades later. His people were losing corn, beans, and squash—and in doing so, they were losing more than just food. They were losing roots. A starving people fights less well. A starving people doesn't think about freedom, but only about the next bite.

Tecumseh swore he wouldn't accept this. He saw in the flames not only destruction, but also a message: If the bastards bring fire, then we will bring fire back. Not fields, but their forts, their homes, their roads. If they destroy the earth's sustenance, then their own iron will rust.

Cornfields in flames – that wasn't just an act. It was a symbol. The war was now total. Not just against warriors, not just against soldiers, but against the heart of a people.

Hunger is a silent killer. It doesn't fire like a gun, it doesn't roar like a warrior. It crawls. Slowly but surely. It first drains the strength from the legs, then from the arms, then from the eyes. It makes children grow thin like dry branches, it silences the elderly, it drives mothers to despair. Hunger devours a people from within, without a single shot being fired.

The bastards knew this. That's why they set fire to the cornfields. It wasn't just destruction, it was strategy. They didn't want to kill everyone—they wanted the survivors weak, mellow, ready to give up. A hungry man negotiates faster than a satiated warrior. A hungry village is more likely to sign a treaty it hates in its heart.

Tecumseh hated this tactic more than pitched battles. A battle was honest—blood against blood, courage against courage. But setting fire to cornfields was cowardly. That was war against women and children, war against life itself. It was the bastard Washington who, with a cold pen in an office, decided: "Destroy the crops." And outside, men stood with torches and carried it out.

The ancients said, "Hunger bends the spine faster than a bullet." They were right. Entire villages that were once proud collapsed because their children cried. You can persuade warriors to shed their own blood—but not to stand idly by while their children die of hunger.

Geronimo later experienced the same thing. His fields were also destroyed. His people also starved. He, too, had to watch as hunger killed more warriors than any battle. He knew: hunger is a weapon, and one of the cruelest.

Tecumseh swore that he would repulse this weapon. If the bastards fought with hunger, he would fight with fire. Not against fields, but against their storehouses, their forts, their supply routes. He would empty their stomachs just as they had done to his people.

Cornfields in flames—that wasn't just the burning of crops. It was proof that the bastard Washington was waging war against the future. And Tecumseh knew: those who fight against the future deserve no mercy.

Hunger had no smell—and yet it hung like smoke over the villages. Not the scent of cooked corn porridge, but the silence of empty pots. No more songs while cooking, only the growling of stomachs, the wailing of children, the sighs of the elderly. Hunger wasn't loud, but it was omnipresent.

Tecumseh heard the wailing like blows to his heart. He had seen men continue fighting with arrows in their chests. But he also saw men collapse on empty stomachs before a shot was fired. Hunger was the true enemy. An enemy that could not be slain. An enemy that could only be fed or starved.

The bastards in Washington knew it. They sent no heroes, they sent no philosophers. They sent soldiers with torches. And these soldiers did what cowardly warriors do: They fought not men with weapons, but plants in the ground. A cornfield cannot defend itself, but it dies silently, and its death echoes longer than a gunshot.

The ancients said, "He who burns a field also burns the spirits that dwell there." Perhaps that was just a saying, but Tecumseh believed it. He saw the flames as a desecration, not just a loss. A field in flames represented a slain ancestor, a murdered god. No wonder the people wept as if they were burying a relative.

Decades later, Geronimo experienced the same tears. He, too, saw fields burning, he, too, heard children crying. He, too, knew that no gun was as cruel as the emptiness of a stomach.

Tecumseh vowed that he would not leave this hunger unanswered. If Washington took their corn, then he would take away their security. If they used hunger as a weapon, he would return fear as a weapon. Fields were

burning? Then their forts would burn too. Supplies dwindling? Then their magazines would rot too.

Cornfields in flames – that was more than a defeat. It was a turning point. The war no longer had any borders. It wasn't just a man-to-man fight. It was a fight against the earth itself.

Hunger taught faster than any warrior. It needed no words, no sermons. It ate into the bones and wrote its lessons directly into the body. People suddenly understood what war truly meant: not just blood, not just gunfire, but also the rumbling in their stomachs that wouldn't go away.

Tecumseh looked at it coldly. He knew that desperation was a poor ally. But hunger could also breed something else: rage. Men who fought on an empty stomach had nothing left to lose. And that was precisely what made them dangerous. Hunger sometimes turned weak men into the most brutal fighters.

The ancients said, "A full belly fights for honor, an empty one for life." And Tecumseh realized that Washington was making the mistake of letting the people starve. For hunger could also breed revenge. A man who fights for his own stomach can be broken. But a man who fights for the stomachs of his children becomes an animal who no longer knows fear.

Washington thought hunger would bend the people. But Tecumseh wanted to bend hunger until it became a spear. Every burning field was a call to revenge. Every empty pot was a promise of blood. Every dead ear of corn was a dead bastard in the East.

Geronimo later understood the same mechanism. Hunger broke his people, yes. But hunger also turned them into wolves, sneaking silently at night and strangling their enemies in their sleep. Hunger was poison, but sometimes poison was also medicine—if you knew how to dose it.

Tecumseh began to see hunger as a teacher. He told his people, "Look what they're doing. They're not just killing you. They're killing the soil. Will you accept this?" And the people cried, "No!" Hunger transformed lament into revenge.

Cornfields in flames – it wasn't just destruction. It was proof that war was now consuming everything. But it was also the seed of something new: a hatred that was stronger than fear, a will that could no longer be broken by treaties.

Fire devoured corn. But fire could also devour houses. Tecumseh quickly realized: If the bastards thought they had a monopoly on flames, then they should see their own roofs burning. Not a village silently observing the embers in the field, but a flame that blazed back in the direction from which it came.

The first attacks were simple. A poorly defended fort set ablaze in the night. Storehouses whose roofs blew up like torches. Settlers who ran from their huts in the morning to find only ashes where their supplies had been stacked the night before. The bastards had believed fire was a one-way street. Tecumseh showed them it was a boomerang.

The ancients said, "He who sows fire should not be surprised when the wind changes." And the wind did change. Settlers began to get nervous. Soldiers not only had to fight, but also keep watch—day and night, fearing that every crackle in the dark could be a flaming arrow.

Hunger was a weapon, but so was fear. Tecumseh learned to combine the two. When the bastards burned the corn, he burned their supplies. When they destroyed fields, he destroyed their forts. It was a game of mirrors: They wanted him to starve, so he wanted them to freeze—without food, without security, without rest.

Geronimo later thought similarly. He knew that one must deprive the enemy of his comfort. A man with a full stomach and a secure roof fights better. A man who suffers from hunger and smells smoke loses courage.

Tecumseh swore that every field they burned would be repaid double. He wanted the bastards to feel what it was like to have their future vanish in smoke. And he wanted them to understand: corn wasn't just food, corn was war.

Cornfields in flames – it was the beginning of a war of fire. A war in which not only bullets flew, but also sparks. And every spark was a promise of retribution.

It began as revenge and ended as a method. Fire was no longer an emotion; it was a tactic, a calendar, a standard. Tecumseh learned quickly: once you've learned to tame flames, you become a pyromaniac of logic. The response to burned fields wasn't just anger, it was planning. Where they burned corn, he laid traps; where they hoarded supplies, he set fire to the roofs at night; where they thought they could buy peace with weapons, he turned the light from their windowpanes into targets for the next morning.

The war of fire consumed both sides. It brought no heroism, only attrition. Men who set out at night returned with soot in their hair and a glint in their eyes that was nothing noble—it was relief: "I've done something now." Women saw the embers and knew that the hour had come when women would hold more than just veils. They stole seeds from barns, they talked to travelers, they stored supplies in secret places. War shifts roles; hunger cries out for solutions, and solutions aren't polite.

Tecumseh took every despair and transformed it into action. The men who had stared ineffectively over dried-up beds by day became jackals by night. A supply depot burned, and the whisper that echoed through the land afterward was like Morse code: "We answer." No blockade lasted forever. No mill was safe when the wind smoky. The bastard in the East began to calculate: costs versus benefits. Every fire cost them money, time, morale. And somewhere in Washington sat someone who liked numbers, and the numbers began to tweak.

But the escalation had its price. Fire doesn't just consume supplies; it also consumes morals, friendship, and innocence. Children who had once played amid the flickering flames soon looked like small ruins, their eyes too focused on the smoke to laugh again. Old men who had once recounted how to pray with corn swore silently that they would never plant again, that the earth was now unsafe. The fields lay fallow, and the earth that had once promised sustenance suddenly tasted of ash and the sobs of those who had nothing left.

The bastards responded with something that sounded like self-protection, but reeked of revenge. They patrolled more vigorously, burning not only fields but also huts close to the resisters. They led punitive expeditions that made no distinction between warriors and non-warriors. In their eyes, the line was blurred: Where there was fire, everything had to be burned until no flame remained for anyone else to ignite.

This made the tragedy even more acute: The place of refuge became a target. Hiding places that had been safe yesterday were now smoking targets. Men who had buried supplies in secret places found their stashes rotted or looted. Women who hid seeds in pots found only ashes instead of the promise of the next sowing. The fire method was effective, but it left scars that burned longer than any hut.

Tecumseh noticed the consequences in the faces of the elders. Not everyone was pleased with the escalation. Some said, "We'll become like them." And that was a bitter truth. Every fire made his men harder, but also harder towards

their own. Those who burned down a cabin at night had to face the family in the morning, who had been left without sleep—and some of these men slept badly after those nights. Guilt is a heavy cloak, but in times of war, it is often worn only by those who can still afford to maintain morals.

Tactics changed the terrain of war. Where once generals plotted and drew lines, now supply locations, secret stores, trails, and escape routes mattered. A burned mill was more than a nuisance; it was a textbook lesson: How to weaken the enemy in the long run. Tecumseh considered it cold mathematics—but it worked. Men stayed awake later, trains were delayed, supplies dwindled. The bastards had to commit more resources, feed more horses, and send more men. Costs rose, and Washington began to ask more loudly: "Is all this worth the effort?"

But even as the costs rose, there remained a human toll that could not be quantified: dead, maimed, orphans. The fires lingered in the nights like ghosts. Entire villages now carried the scent of the ash with them like a tattoo. It was a stigma; it was news; it was a broken spine. People who had once dried plant seeds were now learning how to sharpen blades. Adversity teaches, and adversity shapes.

Diplomacy also changed. Some tribes that had previously been neutral began to take a stand. They saw the fires; they counted the losses; they turned—either out of fear or opportunism—to those who gave them the feeling they would survive. Tecumseh now had to think not only militarily; he had to work politically. A burned supply converted chiefs faster than a hundred speeches. Fire became language, policy, a condition.

There were moments when even Tecumseh was shocked by the force of his actions. A fire in the morning that claimed children's lives, a hut that housed more than just supplies—suddenly, people were standing before him, looking at him as if he were responsible. You can't set a fire and then not see the embers it inflicts on souls. It was gnawing. Warfare is rarely clean; it leaves the hides of those who wage it thin and blackened by soot.

Nevertheless, from the ashes, many grew a will of steel. Hunger, brutal as it was, shaped characters. Men who had nothing left to lose learned the art of nighttime thinking: how to hit the supply train without forcing families to flee; how to disrupt communications without sacrificing the village; how to use fire in such a way that it deprives the enemy of sleep more than their own people. It was an ugly philosophy, but one that seemed essential for survival.

And Washington? Washington wrote reports, ordered larger troops, and harsher punishments. The capital might be calculating, but it was slow. Meanwhile, the fire taught a lesson that needed no stamps: resistance can burn back. It wasn't a glorious acquiescence of morale; it was survival in practice. And in a world that was burning their corn and their future, that was a response as raw and ugly as reality itself.

Cornfields in flames—the phrase now became a cipher for everything that had been lost and had to be bought again. Tecumseh knew the escalation couldn't be sustained forever. At some point, he thought, the world would tire. At some point, Washington would decide it was more advantageous to negotiate than to constantly extinguish new fires. Until then, however, he had to persevere, and that meant controlling fires, managing hunger, and maintaining morale. War is always a bundle of trade-offs. And at this moment, that bundle was a glowing heap.

By the end, the land no longer smelled of earth, but of burnt bread. The sky was filled with soot, and even the rain tasted of ash. The cornfields, once like green armies, lay flattened in the ground, black, torn, dead. It was as if the war had devoured the earth itself.

Tecumseh often stood at the edge of such fields. He said little because there was nothing to say. Words don't heal burned crops. But he remained silent not out of resignation, but out of anger. For him, every burned field was a grave, and every grave one more reason to cut that bastard Washington deeper into his flesh.

But hunger remained a shadow that never left. Children screamed in the night, women nibbled on bark, old people closed their eyes and never woke again. War with fire was war without heroes—it left only ghosts in its wake. Tecumseh knew: Even if he let every bastard in the East burn, he couldn't immediately fill his people's stomachs. And that gnawed at him worse than any defeat.

The elders said, "The earth never forgets." Perhaps they were right. For just as the land had swallowed the corn, so it would also preserve the stories. Stories of smoke, of screams, of embers. Stories that raised children who knew nothing but war.

Geronimo later experienced the same rhythm. Fields burning. Children starving. Warriors vowing they would rather die in fire than live empty-handed.

History repeated itself, not because it had to, but because the bastards never stopped using the same methods.

Tecumseh learned that hunger and fire were not just weapons, but trials. They tested his will, they tested his strength, they tested his love for his people. And as cruel as these trials were, they made him harder, they made his people tougher, they made hatred a currency that would never falter.

Cornfields in flames – this wasn't a chapter that ended in victory. It was a chapter that continued with black hands and hollow bellies. But it was also the chapter in which Tecumseh swore: If the earth is taken from them, heaven itself will witness their vengeance.

British whispers in the rain

The rain came like a stubborn messenger, cold, incessant, as if it wanted to wash away the blood and ash from the burned fields. But rain doesn't wash away guilt; it only softens the ground for new boots. And those very boots belonged to the British lurking in the north.

They whispered. No loud promises, no trumpet blast. Just whispered words in the rain, in tents, around campfires when the crackling of the fire was fainter than the dripping of water. "We can help you. We hate those bastards in Washington just as much. We have guns. We have gunpowder. We have war in our luggage."

Tecumseh heard these voices. He knew the British were no saints. They were traders in the cloak of generals, merchants who saw war as an investment. But they had what his people needed: guns, bullets, powder, steel. Things that didn't come from prayers or visions. Things that truly killed.

The elders warned: "An alliance with foreign kings is an alliance built on rotten wood." But Tecumseh continued to listen. He wasn't a dreamer like his brother; he was a strategist. And every strategist knows: Sometimes you have to drink with the devil, as long as he doesn't poison you first.

Geronimo later saw the same patterns. He, too, knew men who said: "We will help you. We will give you weapons. We will stand by your side." And he, too, knew: help always comes at a price. The price is never in silver, but in blood.

The rain continued to fall, and the whispers of the British mingled with the drops on the leaves. They offered not only weapons, they offered hope—and hope was a rare commodity in a time when cornfields were burning and children were hungry.

British whispers in the rain—it wasn't love, it wasn't a heartfelt alliance. It was the cold business of two peoples who shared the same enemy. And Tecumseh knew: as long as the rain fell, these whispers would grow.

The rain made everything heavier—the earth, the footsteps, the thoughts. But it also made the British words softer, sweeter, like drops falling again and again on the same stone until it gives way. They didn't speak of dreams, they spoke of crates. Crates full of guns, full of powder, full of steel. Things the people needed like bread.

"You're fighting against Washington," they said. "So are we. Your war is our war." They spoke as if they were brothers in spirit, but their eyes gleamed not with pity, but with calculation. A war against Washington was, to them, merely a gambit against an old rival. But for Tecumseh, it was everything—life, death, and the future.

The elders grumbled: "An alliance with strangers only brings new chains." But what were the alternatives? Hunger? Flames? Dying without bullets because the prophet vomited visions instead of weapons? Tecumseh knew: words alone don't win wars. If the British could truly deliver, he had to listen—even if he knew every crate came with an invisible price tag.

Geronimo later saw the same patterns. He knew that the man who puts a gun in your hand isn't your brother, but your dealer. But sometimes you had to make the deal, even if you knew the loan would be expensive.

The British continued to whisper, "We have ships. We have cannons. We have soldiers to defeat your enemies." And as they spoke, rain dripped from their uniforms, as if even the elements couldn't wash away their lies.

Tecumseh heard, but he also heard the undertone. He knew: A king in London gives nothing for free. An alliance with the British was not a bond of friendship, it was a deal. And deal always has two sides: the glamour of the offer—and the hook that later stabs you in the back.

British whispers in the rain – it sounded like salvation, but smelled like guilt. Tecumseh stood between them, the rain in his face, and knew: No matter what

he chose, from now on he was playing not only against Washington, but also against the greed of the Red Army.

Tecumseh was no fool. He had seen enough battles to know that every gift from the British came with a noose. A gun wasn't just a gun—it was a band. And a band, placed on you by strangers, is rarely meant to set you free.

The British were polite, almost too polite. They spoke of respect, of the "common enemy," of the "fight against Washington's tyranny." But behind every polite word, coins clinked. They saw Tecumseh not as a brother, but as a pawn in their game. One to be fed as long as he fought—and abandoned as soon as he became useless.

The elders said, "Whoever shakes hands with the white king soon feels the weight of his chains." Tecumseh heard that, but he also heard the growling of stomachs, the wailing of women, the silence of children. Without weapons, he couldn't fight. With weapons, he could at least force a chance. And chances had become rare.

Geronimo later saw the same shiny offers. Guns from Mexicans, from Americans, from anyone who was pushing for their own interests. But Geronimo knew: A gun given to you never belongs to you. It always remains the property of the man who gave it to you—at least in his mind.

Tecumseh was wiser. He didn't want to be a dog of the British. He wanted to be a partner. But he knew that London never looked the same. To them, he was just a tool, a punch against Washington, to be thrown at the right moment and dropped at the wrong moment.

And yet, he needed them. He needed the guns, he needed the powder, he needed the weight of an alliance. Because being alone against Washington was like a knife against cannons. With the British, he could at least create a balance, an illusion of balance.

So he stood in the rain, the whispering in his ears, the water on his skin, and he knew: This wasn't a bond of brotherhood. It was a pact with a wolf pretending to be a dog. But in times of hunger, in times of flames, you yourself grasp the wolf's paw, as long as he holds it out to you.

British whispers in the rain—it was the sweetest poison. And Tecumseh knew he would have to drink it, no matter how bitter the aftertaste might be.

The British didn't whisper forever. At some point, every whisper became a demand. At first, they were just promises: guns, powder, protection. Then came the conditions, gently wrapped in smiles, but hard as iron underneath. "You fight with us, not for yourself. You attack our enemies when we say so. You hold the North while we do the rest."

Tecumseh heard the words and tasted the chains within. He knew: the British didn't want allies, they wanted chess pieces. He was to be the knight, unpredictable, but guided by a hand sitting at the board far away in London.

The elders saw it immediately. "Foreign kings never give freely. They want blood, not brothers." But Tecumseh had little choice. Without the British, his fight was a knife against cannons. With the British, at least he was a dagger in a larger fist. So he nodded, even though he was growling inside.

The British called it "friendship." But friendship doesn't feel like a contract. Friendship doesn't smell like powder you never fully own. Friendship doesn't sound like orders dripping from the rain. Tecumseh sensed the betrayal even before it was signed.

Geronimo later experienced the same masquerades. Men in uniforms who said, "We are your friends." Men who smiled and exploited you as long as you were useful. A people that relies on false brothers will eventually find themselves alone in the desert.

Tecumseh thought of this as he stood in the rain. His men believed the British were helpers, almost like gods with guns. But he knew: help was trade. Trade is a game, and those who don't play by the rules will always be cheated.

The British continued to smile. "Together, we will bring Washington to his knees." But Tecumseh heard the undertone: "We'll use you as long as it suits us." And he vowed to himself: If he had to be used, then at least it should be his way—so that his people still benefited.

British whispers in the rain – sweet promises turned into bitter agreements. And Tecumseh knew: every drop that fell wasn't just water. It was also the sound of a clock ticking down.

The British knew their business. They never gave everything at once. First one rifle, then two, then a barrel of powder. Always just enough to allow Tecumseh's men to continue—but never enough to be truly free. Dependence dripped slower than rain, but it soaked everything.

Tecumseh saw it. He saw his warriors begin to speak of the British chests as if they were sacred objects. "Without their weapons, we cannot fight." That was the trap. A people who believe they have no blades without foreign hands has already lost half their freedom.

The old men murmured, "A king who feeds you will also starve you when it suits him." But the young men didn't listen. They wanted guns, they wanted shining iron, they wanted the power it promised. Arrows had become too quiet, tomahawks too short. Guns were the new language of war, and the British were the interpreters.

Geronimo later experienced the same drug. Weapons from foreign stocks, which he accepted because he needed them—and which he hated because they made him addicted. Every bullet was a gift that smacked of guilt.

Tecumseh tried to salvage his people's pride. "We take what we need—but we remain ourselves." But he knew that dependence was not an open contract. It was an invisible net. Every shot fired with British gunpowder was a noose tightening around their necks.

The British were wise enough not to show it openly. They still talked about "friendship," about "common cause." But they began to give orders, and they expected Tecumseh to obey. Once, he refused, and they looked at him as if he had forgotten who brought the crates.

British whispers in the rain—it was no longer a whisper. It was the hiss of a snake coiling around the camp. Tecumseh knew he couldn't get rid of it while he needed it. But he swore: if he ever had the choice, he would strangle the snake with his bare hands, even if he got bitten in the process.

Dependence didn't creep like an enemy with drums and banners; it came stealthily. First a few crates of powder, then rifles, then a promise of more. Tecumseh realized: The British hadn't just fed them, they had bound them—not with iron chains, but with wooden crates.

Every shot fired with British gunpowder was a debt. Every warrior shouldering a rifle was proof that the people were no longer completely free. Tecumseh hated this feeling. He was a man who wanted to stand on his own, but reality forced him into the shadow of the red uniforms.

The elders said it: "A people who use foreign weapons will eventually fight foreign wars." And that was precisely what Tecumseh began to fear. For the

British were already speaking louder. Not just whispers in the rain, but demands in the thunder: "You fight where we say. You hold the line we draw. Your men are our men—as long as we need them."

Geronimo would have spat. He, too, took weapons from strangers, but he knew: every bullet you fire comes back as a debt. Tecumseh knew this too, but he couldn't avoid the calculation. Without the British, he was weak. With the British, he was strong—but not free.

The camp sensed it. The warriors began to talk about British powder as if it were a spring. Women looked gratefully at the crates that made them feel their men were safer. But Tecumseh saw only the London stamp on every board. No gift, just rope.

The bastards in Washington saw it too. They knew that Tecumseh and his people now stood between two masters—Washington and London. They only had to wait until the British tightened the chain, and Tecumseh would be forced to fight not for his people, but for a king across the ocean.

British whispers in the rain—it was now an order in the storm. Tecumseh heard it and knew: he had made a devil his ally. And devils never give without taking twice as much.

In the end, the whispers were no longer whispers. They were thunder, coming from every British mouth. No hints, no polite words in the rain, but clear orders wrapped in false friendship. "You go there. You fight there. You hold the line we draw for you."

Tecumseh listened, and he hated every word. He knew he was needed, and that was precisely what made him valuable. But value wasn't protection; it was just another word for "tool." The British treated him like a warrior with a leash. They gave him weapons, but they held the key to the shed.

The old men said, "Those who dance with two masters end up in the fire." Tecumseh knew they were right. Washington was one bastard, London the other. He lay between the two, like a bone between two dogs, tugging and growling. And everyone knew: At some point, there won't be much left of the bone.

Geronimo later saw the same trap. Strangers who tell you they're your brothers, but who are really just using you in their own game. A war is never just your war once you're holding foreign weapons in your hands.

Tecumseh stood in the rain, wet to the bone, and swore to himself that he would not become London's dog. He would take their weapons, yes. He would use them as long as necessary. But he would never forget that they weren't fighting for him, but for themselves. And that meant: once the British had finished their game, he would stand alone.

The British grinned, their red uniforms glistening in the rain, and they thought they had the game in hand. But they didn't really know Tecumseh. He wasn't a pawn to be moved around. He was a storm in the mud, and he knew that even the mightiest king is, in the end, nothing more than a man of flesh.

British whispers in the rain—it began as a sweet promise and ended as a bitter command. But in Tecumseh's heart, it transformed into something else: a vow never to become the British dog, even if he ate their bones.

Giving, drinking, shooting

The bastards knew how to wage war not just with bullets, but with barrels. They brought whiskey to the villages, sweet and strong, liquid poison that ran down throats like firewater and burned the mind like fog. A gift, they said. A token of friendship. But friendship that comes in bottles is always betrayal with a cork.

Tecumseh hated it. He saw men who yesterday had clear eyes, today lying slurring in the dirt, their muscles soft, their will dull. The whiskey incapacitated more warriors than a salvo from Washington. A drunken people is a light people, a people with a broken spine.

The British and Americans had been familiar with this tactic for years. They called it "trade." You give a gun, you give a glass, you make a promise. And in return, you get land, you get power, you get a people who sell themselves out. They called it "gifting," but gifting always means: I'll take more from you than I give.

The old men said, "Whisky is worse than a bullet. A bullet only kills one person. Whiskey kills an entire nation." And they were right. Bottles became weapons, barrels became armies. Men staggered, women despaired, children saw their fathers fall before they could even fight.

Geronimo later knew the same poison. He, too, saw how alcohol weakened a people, how it consumed pride like a disease, how it turned warriors into beggars. It wasn't an accident. It was calculated. A sober warrior is dangerous. A drunken warrior is a joke.

Tecumseh swore he would drive whiskey from his people, just as he wanted to drive the bastard from his land. But he knew it was harder to fight a bottle than a gun. Guns kill you once. Alcohol kills you slowly, day by day, until you no longer recognize yourself.

Giving, drinking, shooting—it was a dirty business. A nation that accepted gifts soon began to drink, and a nation that drank became worse at shooting. And Washington grinned as the barrels rolled.

The bottles made the rounds faster than any peace pipe ritual. A few barrels, carelessly dropped by a merchant, were enough to topple an entire village. Men who had gone hunting during the day sat staggering by the fire at night, slurring their words and laughing as if life had suddenly become a game. Women tried to keep the children out of the tents so they wouldn't see their fathers lying in the dirt.

Tecumseh saw it and his teeth ground. He could fight with swords, he could handle bullets, he could lead battles. But how do you fight a liquid in a barrel? A poison that is swallowed willingly, with laughter and yelling? It was war, and the enemy didn't fire a single bullet.

The bastards called it "trade." A glass for a piece of land. A barrel for a hunting haul. A delivery for a contract that none of his people wanted to sign, but that a few drunks sealed anyway. No war was cheaper, no victory so easy.

The old men preached: "Drink water, not fire." But their voices were too weak against the rush of intoxication. Whisky promised oblivion, and oblivion was more tempting than any sermon. Men who had lost everything reached for the bottle because it gave them strength for a moment—until they collapsed.

Geronimo later experienced the same plague. He hated alcohol more than any bullet, because it weakened warriors before they could even stand up. He saw a nation shatter in the glass. And he knew: this was no accident. It was intentional.

But Tecumseh didn't give up. He screamed against the poison. "You're losing yourselves! You're selling yourselves for sips!" Some listened, but too many

laughed as they drank. It's hard to preach against a drug when the drug is sweeter than your words.

Giving, drinking, shooting—it was a cycle. First they give you the bottle, then you drink, then they can shoot the country out from under you. And Tecumseh knew: If he didn't break this cycle, he wouldn't have to lose any more battles. The war would be lost before it even began.

Tecumseh didn't do things by halves. If he saw something weakening his people, he took decisive action. So he stood in the middle of the camp, his voice sharp as a knife, and roared: "Not another drop! Not a bottle! Whoever drinks sells not only their own blood, but also that of our children!"

He wasn't a preacher like his brother, but he had the weight of a warrior who lived the truth. Men who had followed him into battle listened—at least when they were sober. But as soon as the next barrel rolled around, the discipline was as soft as corn porridge again.

The bastards knew exactly what they were doing. They gave the whisky not like traders, but like dealers. First for free, then cheaply, then in exchange for land, in exchange for favors, in exchange for silence. A drunken warrior signed more quickly. A foggy-headed chieftain gave in more easily. Barrels were contracts with corks.

The old men remembered the time before poison. They told of men who could hunt for weeks without weakness, of feasts held with songs, not stammering. But the young men knew only the intoxication. For them, whiskey was part of everyday life, as natural as water. And that was precisely what made it so deadly.

Decades later, Geronimo faced the same struggle. He, too, cursed alcohol, and he, too, tried to wrest it from the hands of his people. But alcohol sticks like blood—it doesn't go away once it flows through your veins.

Tecumseh resorted to harsh measures. He had barrels destroyed before they could be opened. He smashed jars, and threatened men who didn't follow the rules. Some hated him for it, others feared him, and still others secretly thanked him. But the fight against the barrel was harder than any battle against soldiers.

Because you can kill soldiers. But how do you kill a poison that your own people drink voluntarily?

Drinking, drinking, shooting—Tecumseh realized that the bastards were waging a war he couldn't win like other battles. This war was in the head, the heart, and the stomach. And he knew: If he couldn't beat the whiskey, he could beat Washington a hundred times over—and still lose.

Whiskey wasn't just poison, it was a divisive force. Tecumseh wanted unity, an alliance of tribes as strong as a river in spring. But barrels shattered that unity faster than any bullet. Some tribes loved alcohol; they considered it a gift, a reward, a piece of power in glass form. Others saw it as a disgrace, a disease, a white weapon.

The bastards just had to watch. They brought the barrels and laughed while the people divided themselves. Some tribes stood by Tecumseh and swore abstinence, discipline, and fighting spirit. Others became traders in their own flesh, selling land for barrels, chasing away their own brothers when they tried to take their whiskey away.

The ancients said, "A people that fights before the enemy arrives has already lost." And Tecumseh saw it. Arguments around the fire, fights in the villages, knives being drawn—not against Washington, but against each other.

Geronimo later experienced the same poison. His men, too, were divided between the drinkers and the fighters. He, too, knew that a drunken people are easier to sell. Whiskey doesn't just make you weak, it makes you purchasable.

Tecumseh growled like a wolf. He wanted unity, but he got a people who were breaking on bottles. He made speeches, he threatened, he appealed to pride, but the intoxication was stronger than his words. For whiskey promised something Tecumseh couldn't give: forgetting. Men wanted to forget that their fields were burning, that their children were starving, that Washington was stronger. Whiskey made that possible for a few hours—and that's precisely why it was more dangerous than any army.

The bastards just had to wait. A people who drink doesn't draw clear lines, signs the wrong treaties, and, when in doubt, strikes down their own brother instead of the enemy.

Giving gifts, drinking, shooting—Tecumseh saw that he had to fight not only against Washington. He also had to fight against his own people. And this fight was dirtier, harder, more desperate than any battle at dawn.

Tecumseh wasn't a man for half measures. When words weren't enough, he resorted to action. He had entire barrels smashed before they reached the villages. He threw jugs into the fire, crushed clay and glass into shards. Some warriors who loved intoxication hated him for it. But he saw only one thing: A warrior lying in his vomit is no longer a warrior.

He roared at his men like a general who accepts no excuses. "You want to drink? Then drink your own blood, but not this poison! Whoever drinks whiskey also takes the rope that is placed around his neck." His voice echoed through the tents, and some bowed their heads. But others just laughed—until they received a beating.

The bastards watched. They didn't even have to fight anymore. They knew: Tecumseh was fighting against Washington—and against intoxication. Two fronts, one man. They brought new barrels, secretly, under the table, through traders who wanted gold more than dignity. Every bottle handed over in the dark was a bullet Tecumseh couldn't stop.

The elders nodded to him, silently thanking him. "You keep us clean," they said. But the young men grumbled. They wanted to drink, they wanted to forget. To them, Tecumseh was the strict father who forbade everything while the enemy laughed outside.

Geronimo later experienced the same rupture. He, too, had to punish men who had dipped too deeply into the barrel. He, too, knew: A people half sober and half drunk doesn't march in a single line. They stumble, they fall apart.

Tecumseh couldn't forge unity as long as the poison flowed. He knew Washington didn't need cannons to break him. They needed only patience, only barrels, only enough men who would rather sink into intoxication and sleep than go into battle.

Drink, drink, shoot—that was the new order. The bastards drank, the men drank, and Washington shot. And every time Tecumseh crushed a pitcher, he knew he could never fully win this war.

The climax came not in a battle, but in a drunken stupor. An entire village was paralyzed because a merchant had unloaded several barrels under cover of night. The next morning, the ground stank of vomit, men lay like dead fish in the mud, women screamed in rage and despair. Tecumseh stepped through the middle of it, the veins in his neck taut like ropes.

He saw warriors who yesterday had proudly sworn to die for their people – and today couldn't even stand up. He smelled the intoxication in the air, sweet, disgusting, sticky. The whiskey had killed more warriors than any of Washington's bullets. Tecumseh screamed so loudly that even the children cried: "Look at you! You want to be warriors? You're already dead, and you haven't even fought!"

He grabbed men by the collar, dragged them up, and shook them as if trying to squeeze the alcohol out of them. Some were ashamed, others just laughed dully, their eyes glazed over, their pride long since drowned. Tecumseh felt as if he were fighting ghosts—not enemies of flesh, but shadows in his own blood.

The old men murmured, "This is how a people breaks, not by bullets, but by cups." They were right. An enemy could lose a battle, but whiskey never lost. It always came back, ever stronger, ever sweeter, ever easier to accept.

Geronimo later remembered the same bitter morning. He, too, walked through villages where men lay prone, defeated without a fight, defeated by what they themselves had drunk. It was the war that no one wanted to see—the war that wasn't sung about in songs because it was too dirty.

Tecumseh swore he would take tougher action. Those who drank would be punished. Those who brought barrels into the camp would be expelled. No mercy, no understanding. The alcohol war was dirtier than anything Washington could wreak with guns. Because it didn't come from without, it came from within.

Giving gifts, drinking, shooting—the cycle had reached its peak. Tecumseh stood like a wolf in the scent of blood, ready to bite his own men if necessary. Because he knew that if he didn't defeat this enemy, there would soon be no more warriors, only beggars with bottles.

Tecumseh knew this war would never end as long as a bottle was within reach. So he drew the line. No more talking, no more warnings, no more half-threats. Whoever drank was no longer a warrior. Whoever brought barrels into camp was no longer a brother. And whoever strengthened the enemy by filling his throat with poison was himself the enemy.

He stood by the fire, the flames casting shadows across his face, and he spoke with the hardness of steel: "You have a choice—whiskey or your people. Whoever chooses whiskey has no place here anymore. I fight against

Washington, not against drunkards. Whoever wants to drink shall die—but not in my name."

The words cut deeper than knives. Some men lowered their gaze in shame. Others growled and considered running away. But everyone knew: Tecumseh was serious. He had already seen villages in flames, fields burned, children starving. He would no longer waste patience on men who loved their throats more than their people.

The elders nodded, silently, relieved. They knew: A leader who doesn't fight hard against his own weaknesses can't defeat the enemy outside either. Geronimo, many years later, would utter the same oath in a different form. He, too, would hate alcohol, harder than any gun, because he knew it corrodes not only bodies but also souls.

Tecumseh burned the last barrels in front of everyone. The fire hissed, the alcohol evaporated like evil spirits fleeing to heaven. The men stared, some angry, some relieved, some blank. But everyone knew: This was no longer a game.

Whiskey wasn't a trivial matter; it was an enemy. And Tecumseh swore to fight it as long as he lived. Washington could send bullets, the British could send their false whispers—but the greatest danger was always what was brewing within his own camp.

Giving, drinking, shooting—this chapter was a lesson. Not every bullet comes from a gun. Some come from a cup. And Tecumseh knew: if his people were to survive, he had to first win this invisible war.

An alliance on shaky ground

In speeches, an alliance always sounds like strength, like brothers standing shoulder to shoulder, like a river that cannot be stopped. But in reality, it was a rotten bridge over a swamp – any step could collapse, and anyone who fell would drag the others down with them.

Tecumseh needed allies. His people alone could not defy Washington forever, not with scorched fields, not with empty stomachs, not with men growing weaker every day. So he went from tribe to tribe, from village to village, talking, vowing, begging, threatening. "Unite, or you die one by one," he

thundered. His words had the sharpness of a warrior, but also the desperation of a man who knew he was racing against time.

Some listened. They saw the burning cornfields, they saw the settlers with their guns and their treaties, they saw the future fading. These chiefs nodded and said, "Yes, Tecumseh. Together we are strong." But their eyes betrayed doubt. For everyone knew: an alliance means giving up a piece of your freedom. And for many, freedom was all they had left.

Others laughed in his face. "We're not fighting your wars. We have enough to do with ourselves." These men preferred to hold on to their small remaining territory rather than plunge into a large, uncertain war. They mistook their security for strength, unaware that Washington would take away even the last piece of it as soon as they were weak enough.

The ancients said, "An alliance is only as strong as its weakest link." Tecumseh knew they were right. He saw the weakness in every hesitation, in every halfhearted yes, in every look that fell when he spoke of sacrifice.

Geronimo later experienced the same fragility. He, too, sought allies; he, too, knew that unity meant life. But he, too, saw how mistrust, pride, and fear caused every alliance to crack like rotten wood.

An alliance on shaky foundations—this wasn't a tower that reached into the sky. It was a structure that was already creaking as it was being built. And Tecumseh knew: If he didn't shore up this alliance with iron and fire, it would collapse before the first battle was fought.

An alliance wasn't a vow around the fire, nor a firm handshake between warriors. It was a bazaar, a trade where each tribe had its own currency: pride, fear, hunger, old feuds, new hopes. Tecumseh soon realized that he had to be not just an orator, but a trader, diplomat, liar, and beggar all at once.

He entered villages where the chiefs looked him in the eye and said, "What good will your war do us? We have fields, we have children. Why should we provoke Washington?" And Tecumseh bit his tongue until it bled to keep from shouting. "Because Washington will take everything from you, even if you do nothing!" But words rarely convince when men cling to their small remaining land like a bone the dog has already gnawed.

Other chiefs said, "We'll join, but only if we see weapons." They wanted proof, crates, rifles, powder. Tecumseh had nothing but promises and his own anger.

He spoke of the British, of whispers in the rain, of the crates that would come. But he knew: every sentence he spoke was a loan that would cost him dearly.

Some demanded protection. "If we join, who will protect us from the settlers around us?" It was a bitter question, for Tecumseh had no armies, no fixed lines, no walls. Only men as hungry as they were.

And then there were the tribes who had old scores to settle. Brothers who had distrusted each other for generations. "Why should we fight them? They took our land long before Washington came." Tecumseh cursed inwardly. He knew: Washington just had to wait, just had to watch the tribes bite each other's throats out, and the job would take care of itself.

The elders said, "An alliance is like a fire. Everyone must put wood into it, otherwise it will go out." But Tecumseh noticed that some only brought wet wood, which produced more smoke than flame.

Geronimo would later taste the same filth. He, too, sought unity, but he, too, found only mistrust, old feuds, pride, and fear. He, too, knew: the greatest obstacle to resistance was not always the enemy outside, but the disunity within.

An alliance on shaky ground – Tecumseh sensed its fragility. He was building on soil that was already rotting as he spoke. But he had no choice. Without unity, there was no war, only a slow death. And a slow death was what Washington loved.

Tecumseh soon realized that talk was like rain on dry ground—it rolls off when the ground is already petrified. Words alone weren't enough. Some chiefs listened, nodded, and still said no. Others laughed in his face as if he had babbled about ghosts. Then he knew: persuasion was the soft side of the knife. Now he had to show the sharp edge.

So he began using threats. Not empty words, but clear statements: "Those who are not with us will stand alone. And alone you will fall, one by one. I swear the bastards in Washington will eat you faster than you can harvest your cornfields."

He spoke of fire, of ashes, of women who would scream when the settlers came. He painted pictures more terrifying than any dream. And some began to tremble, not before Washington, but before Tecumseh himself.

The elders viewed it with mixed feelings. Some said, "That's what a leader should be—tough, uncompromising." Others murmured, "A man who unites his people with threats will eventually become a tyrant himself." But Tecumseh had no patience for philosophy. He knew: Gentle words don't fill ranks. Threats do.

He demonstrated strength, and not just in words. When a village hesitated, he had his warriors march, their rifles pointed, their blades flashing. "Look," he said, "we are not just voices in the wind. We are a growing army. Join us—or we will leave you behind." It wasn't friendship, it was blackmail, but it worked.

Geronimo would later follow the same path. He, too, learned that not all allies come out of love. Some come only because they're afraid of being left out when the storm hits. An alliance born of fear is weak—but it's better than none at all.

Tecumseh saw the first tribes nod threateningly. Not a sincere nod, more like a gnashing of teeth. But they came. And he took them, even though he knew they were rotten planks in his scaffolding. Because he knew: Better a shaky bridge over the precipice than none at all.

An alliance on shaky ground—it grew, but it grew out of fear and coercion. Tecumseh saw it and hated it, but he had no choice. He was willing to accept even a fragile alliance, as long as it brought him one step closer to Washington.

The first ranks formed. Warriors from different tribes stood side by side, their faces painted differently, their languages distinct, their histories covered in old scars. And yet – they stood together. For a moment, it seemed as if Tecumseh could truly achieve what no one before him had dared: an alliance between peoples who had distrusted each other for generations.

He felt the pride as he walked through the camps. Here a chief from the north, there warriors from the south, sitting shoulder to shoulder around the fire. It was an image that promised hope. But hope is a thin fabric, and even the slightest tear can tear it apart.

For beneath the surface, distrust festered. Some warriors spoke quietly in their languages, casting askances at their neighbors. "These were once our enemies." "Why should we trust them?" Tecumseh heard, even though they thought he didn't understand the words.

The ancients said, "An alliance built solely on fear and anger will last only as long as the enemy is visible." And that's exactly what Tecumseh saw. When the warriors sat together in the evening, there was unity. But when morning came, when questions arose about supplies, about plunder, about precedence, the alliance began to creak like old wood in a storm.

The British saw it too. They came in their red uniforms, distributed a few weapons, and patted Tecumseh on the shoulder as if he were their friend. But there was a grin in their eyes: They knew this alliance was weak. They knew it wouldn't last forever. But as long as it weakened Washington, it was enough for them.

Geronimo later experienced the same taste. He, too, saw alliances gleam like fresh knives, only to break at the first blow. He, too, knew: Sometimes you fight not only against the enemy, but also against the doubts of your own brothers.

Tecumseh saw the ranks growing, but he knew: more smoke than fire. An alliance on shaky ground could stand, yes. But it creaked with every step, and he feared the day when it would no longer just creak, but break.

Tecumseh knew that a bond built on shaky ground falls apart when the wind blows. So he became the wind himself—not capricious, but harsh, relentless, a storm that pushed everyone in the same direction.

He began to lead more strictly. Speeches were no longer enough. Now there were rules, orders, punishments. Anyone who marched against the line was brought back—by force if necessary. "We fight together, or we die alone," he barked. And some warriors looked at him as if he were no longer a brother, but a general.

The elders murmured, "A leader who leads only with force will eventually march alone." But Tecumseh couldn't help it. He saw how quickly the alliance would fall apart if he remained silent for even a moment. Each tribe pulled its own string, each chief thought first of his village, his children, and his old feuds. An alliance wasn't a heart; it was a rope of knots—and every knot wanted to be the center.

So Tecumseh roared louder, struck harder, and intervened when the rope threatened to break. Sometimes he even struck down men from his own ranks if they doubted too openly. "A people that fights while the enemy comes is already dead," he cried, as blood dripped onto the ground—this time not from Washington, but from his own brothers.

Geronimo later experienced the same madness. He, too, had to lead more harshly; he, too, had to threaten, shout, and punish. Because freedom means nothing when your own people consume themselves before the enemy strikes.

The British grinned in the background. For them, Tecumseh's toughness was a sign that he was fighting—not only against Washington, but also against the chaos in his own camp. They saw that he was growing stronger, but also lonelier. A leader who holds his ground only with threats is feared, not loved. And feared men have many enemies—both inside and outside.

An alliance on shaky ground—Tecumseh held it together with an iron fist, with sweat, with blood. But he knew: the tighter he pressed, the greater the danger that the whole thing would one day splinter beneath his fingers.

The first cracks appeared quietly. No thunder, no outcry—just the creaking of rotten wood when you step on it too many feet. One chief secretly withdrew his men, fearing his village was unprotected. Another refused to share supplies, believing his children had priority. And then there were the petty quarrels—a horse supposedly stolen, a hunter who killed the wrong game. Little things that would be inconsequential in times of peace, but in times of war became fissures that quickly widened.

Tecumseh heard the rumblings before they broke. He knew: The alliance was strong on the outside, weak on the inside. From a distance, it looked like an army. But up close, it was a house of cards, swaying in the wind. And that wind was mistrust.

He gave speeches, shouted, pleaded. "We're not fighting for ourselves, we're fighting for everyone! If you split up now, Washington will eat you one by one." But he felt his words becoming increasingly difficult. A man who constantly has to shout will eventually lose the ears of those he's shouting at.

The old men said, "An alliance of fear is like a fire made of wet wood—it smokes a lot, but it hardly warms." And Tecumseh saw how right they were. His men stood in ranks, yes. But the ranks creaked, they whispered, they cast glances that contained more poison than the whiskey he so cursed.

Geronimo later experienced the same rift. He, too, led alliances that seemed strong at first—until a small spark was enough to turn the whole thing into strife and betrayal. He, too, knew: unity not built on trust is merely a facade.

Tecumseh sensed the facade. Every night he wondered if everyone would still be on his side in the morning. He knew: Washington only had to wait, only had to find a small gap – and the house of cards would collapse.

An alliance on shaky ground—it still stood, yes. But it swayed, with every step, with every word, with every look. And Tecumseh knew: He was marching across a bridge that could break with the next wave.

At day's end, Tecumseh sat alone by the fire. The smoke spiraled upward, as if trying to show him faces—faces of those who had hesitated, who had betrayed him, who had pressed his hand with half-sworn vows. He stared into the glow and knew: This alliance wasn't rock, it was sand. One storm, and it would blow away.

But he wasn't a man who feared sand. He was someone who knew that even from dust, something could grow—if you just poured enough blood into it. So he swore to himself that he would uphold this alliance, no matter how rotten it was. If it meant forging chains, then he forged them. If it meant shedding blood, then blood flowed. Unity wasn't a gift; it was a burden, and Tecumseh was willing to bear it.

The old men said, "A bridge of rotten wood will break if it is not supported." Tecumseh was determined to be the support himself—even if it broke him. He knew his men were doubtful, that some marched along only because they feared his fist. But he accepted it anyway. Because better a weak alliance than no alliance at all.

Geronimo would have understood. He, too, relied on brothers who sometimes weren't brothers at all. He, too, knew that one is often forced to build a roof with rotten wood when standing in the rain.

Tecumseh gazed into the night, the flames reflected in his eyes. He thought not of victory, nor of glory. He thought only of the survival of his people. "We walk together," he murmured, "or we die together. But we will not fall one by one, not like dogs slain one by one."

An alliance on shaky ground—that's not what he called it out loud. But he knew it was true. But in his heart, he had a different image: better a fragile bridge over the abyss than no bridge at all. And if the bridge broke, at least it should burn in the flames so Washington could see the smoke.

The great river smells of blood

The river was no longer water. It was a mirror, bearing the faces of the dead. Every drop tasted of iron, every wave of decay. Anyone standing on the bank only had to take a deep breath, and the taste of blood was on their tongue.

Tecumseh saw it, and he knew: A river never forgets. It carries not only boats and timber, but also the screams of the men who drown in it and the ghosts of those who fall on its banks. The great river was witness, judge, and gravedigger all at once.

The battles had stained it red. Not just one, not just two—blood flowed into it again and again, like tribute to a god who wanted nothing but sacrifice. Washington's men, Tecumseh's warriors, the British, the settlers—in the end, they all swam the same. A dead body no longer knows nationality, only the current that carries it away.

The ancients said, "The river is life." But Tecumseh knew that the river was also death. Life and death, mixed like water and blood. A cycle no one controlled.

Decades later, Geronimo would smell the same thing on the Rio Gila and Rio Grande—the sweet, nauseating stench of blood rotting in the water. He, too, knew: rivers that once drink blood never cease to be thirsty.

Tecumseh stood on the bank, his hands clenched into fists. He saw the current, he heard the gurgling sound that sounded like a mocking laugh. And he swore: If the river wanted to drink blood, then it would drink Washington's blood, too. Not just that of his brothers.

The great river smells of blood—and that smell wasn't the end. It was the beginning of something bigger, darker. Tecumseh knew: every drop that fell into it was a call for more. And the river wouldn't stop until it was full.

The battle began in the fog, thick and damp, a curtain of gray breath covering the river. Men stood on the bank, muscles tense, hands on rifles, tomahawks, knives. No song, no shout—only the nervous shuffling of feet in the mud. The great river gurgled as if it knew what was about to happen, as if it were already licking its lips.

Then the noise erupted. Bullets ripped through the fog, screams mingled with the thunder of muskets. The water splashed up, red, as if the bullets were puncturing the river itself. Men plunged into it, some screaming, some silent, as if they were already dead before the impact.

Tecumseh roared, his voice cutting through the noise like a blade. "Forward! No turning back! The water belongs to us, not them!" His warriors charged, some like wolves, others like the hunted. They fell, they killed, they died. The river took them all, not distinguishing between victor and vanquished.

The ancients said, "He who fights in the river fights two enemies—the man with the gun and the water itself." And it was true. Men stumbled, slipped, and drowned as bullets ripped through them. The river pulled bodies down like a second enemy, greedy, insatiable.

Geronimo later experienced the same thing. He, too, saw men die in the water, not from the shot, but from the weight of their armor, the mud that gripped them, the whirlpool that pulled them under. Water is a bad ally. It consumes you, no matter which side you're on.

Tecumseh rushed into the water himself, up to his knees, blood and mud splashing up his legs. He punched, he yelled, he pulled men up, only to watch others fall. For him, the river was no longer a place; he was an enemy, a greedy bastard who wanted more dead than Washington could ever send.

The great river smelled of blood, tasted of blood, sang of blood. And in this song, Tecumseh knew: No victory will be pure here. Here only death will reign, evenly distributed.

The river soon ceased to be water, but a shroud. Bodies floated downstream, faces downward, arms outstretched as if trying to grasp something long gone. The current pulled them along, twisted them, threw them against rocks, tearing skin and flesh. Men who had fallen in alive came up dead.

The screams were lost in the thunder of the gunfire. Smoke hung over the water, so thick that sometimes you couldn't tell whether the scream was from your own brother or the enemy. Men fired blindly into the fog, bullets finding bodies they shouldn't have hit. A war in the fog makes no distinctions.

Tecumseh pulled one of his warriors out of the water, his face covered in blood, not only from the enemy, but also from the river itself. He felt the cold to his core. He knew: whoever falls into the water has two executioners—the man with the musket and the river, which shows no mercy.

The old men said, "The river takes what it pleases." And today, it took a lot. Too much. Men stumbled over the bodies of their brothers, slipped, and were swept away by the current before they even heard the shot that struck them.

Geronimo later recalled the same sight. He, too, saw rivers full of corpses, floating like logs, knotted together in death. For him, the water never smelled clean again. Any river that once drinks blood remains corrupt.

Tecumseh continued to roar, but there was anger in his eyes, not victory. He saw the river taking everything, friend and foe alike, and he knew: This was not a war that could be won. It was a massacre, a feast, and the river was the host.

The great river smelled of blood—so strong that even the forest animals stayed away. No bird sang, no deer came to drink. They knew the water was poisoned, not with poison, but with death.

Tecumseh was up to his thighs in water, and he knew he wasn't just fighting men. He was fighting an element that knew neither friend nor foe. Every step in the river was like a roll of the dice: slip, fall, or drown. Sometimes the enemy didn't even have to shoot—the water did the work.

But he fought on. His cry cut through the fog and smoke. "Forward! No turning back! The river belongs to us!" His voice was more defiance than truth. For in truth, the river belonged to no one. It was neutral only in death.

The elders had always said: "The river is a mirror. It shows you who you are." And in the mirror, Tecumseh saw men who looked like shadows, covered in blood, disfigured, no longer warriors, but victims. The river revealed them all—proud chiefs, simple hunters, young men—the same in the end, all in the same current.

The battle became a dance of mud and blood. Men wrestled with enemies, stumbled, and dragged each other into the current, both sinking, both gone. No one sang, no one cried for victory. There was only a churning, an animalistic, a feast of the water.

Geronimo would have understood the sight. He, too, knew that some battles exist only to soak the ground, not to be won. He, too, saw rivers that were no longer borders, but mass graves.

Tecumseh fought on because giving up wasn't an option. But deep down, he knew: Even if they pushed Washington's men back, even if they threw more enemies than friends into the water, the river would ultimately prevail. Because it took them all.

The great river smelled of blood, and this smell was like a vow. It said, "There is no triumph here. Only sacrifice. Only bodies. Only more for me." And Tecumseh

understood that the war he was fighting was not built for victory, but for survival—and the water itself laughed at both.

The battle crept from the water back to the shore, but it wasn't safe there. The ground was slippery, soaked red, a morass of earth, mud, and entrails. Men slipped in their brothers' blood, steadied themselves on corpses, stumbling on like shadows that didn't yet know they were long dead.

Tecumseh pulled men back from the water, only to watch them die on the shore. A bullet, a blow, a knife in the back. The only difference was that they bled in the mud instead of the river. Death made no difference; it merely changed the surface.

The elders said, "The shore is safer." But on this day, it was a lie. The shore was just another form of the grave. Men crawled, screamed, and held their stomachs while the earth sucked up their blood like a thirsty animal.

Geronimo would later see the same thing. He, too, knew of battles where the ground itself was so soaked that it smelled like a slaughterhouse. He, too, knew that once soil has been sipped with blood, it will never be clean again.

Tecumseh continued to roar, leading men in lines that repeatedly broke, repeatedly reformed. His eyes saw nothing but the red veil that covered everything. The shore, the water, the men, the weapons—everything was one: blood.

The shore offered no foothold, only more death. Men didn't drown, they suffocated in the mud. They stumbled over bodies, were wrestled to the ground, and pierced with bayonets. Screams and thunder mingled until it was no longer clear whether it was a battle or hell.

The great river smelled of blood, but now the ground smelled like it too. Two enemies, water and earth, both insatiable. Tecumseh understood: This wasn't a fight for land. It was a sacrificial feast. And the ground, just like the water, wanted more, always more.

Slowly, the thunder of the gunfire died away. At first sporadically, then increasingly less frequently, until only the groans of the wounded remained and the gurgling of the river swallowing its prey. The fog hung heavy over the water, no longer gray, but reddish, saturated with the blood that had satiated the river.

Tecumseh stood there, panting, his face smeared, his clothes sticky. He saw his warriors still standing—exhausted, bleeding, some more shadows than men. He saw the enemies still alive, and he knew: victors looked different.

The ancients said: "After the battle, the victor sings." But on this shore, no one sang. Their throats were hoarse, their lungs filled with smoke, their hearts heavier than any musket. What could they possibly sing? A song of blood that washed away brothers and enemies alike?

The river was not silent. It gurgled, carrying corpses downstream, twisting arms and legs like dolls in the whirlpool. Some bodies hung in the reeds, their eyes open, as if staring at the sky, which also remained hidden. No victory, no triumph. Only the monotonous sound of the water soaking itself with death.

Geronimo later knew the same silence after battles. This silence that is louder than any noise of war. Men stared into the void, children wept, women gathered the remains. And no one spoke of victory, because there was none—just another chapter in which the soil and water had won the most.

Tecumseh gathered his men. He spoke neither of glory nor of heroism. He simply said, "We are alive. Today is enough." But even these words rang hollow, for those who were alive saw that they had only narrowly escaped the mouth of the river.

The great river smelled of blood, and this smell was stronger than any cry of victory. It hung in the air, in their clothes, in their hair, and it would stay—for days, weeks, years. For the river had taken its toll, and it was far from satisfied.

Night fell over the river, but it was not still. The water gurgled as if laughing, crammed with corpses, full yet still hungry. The moon reflected on the surface, pale, cold, as if it had no pity for what had happened.

Tecumseh stood on the bank, his feet firmly planted in the blood-soaked mud. He stared at the current as if he could force the river to return the dead. But the river gave nothing back. He was a bastard who took and kept.

The elders said, "The river remembers." And Tecumseh knew they were right. Every drop of blood that had fallen into it was now part of the water. Whoever drank from it in the future would also drink the death of his brothers.

Geronimo would later recognize the same oath—at the edge of a river littered with corpses, amid the screams of women and the silence of men. A vow that the fight must continue, even if everything stank of futility.

Tecumseh knelt down and reached into the water, which was cold but smelled warm. He held up his fist, dripping, dripping, and muttered, "If the river wants blood, then it shall have more. But not just our blood. I swear, it shall drink Washington's blood until it bursts."

His men heard him, some murmuring along, others watching silently. They knew it wasn't a prayer, a song, or a ritual. It was a curse. A promise that this river would be not just a witness, but a judge.

The great river smelled of blood. It smelled of a future that was already half dead. And Tecumseh knew that this was not the end, but only the beginning of a war in which the river would swallow many more bodies—and perhaps, in the end, himself.

Smoke over Tippecanoe

Morning over Tippecanoe didn't come quietly. It came with muffled footsteps, with rattling rifles, with the sharp breaths of an army pushing through the fog like a predator. General William Henry Harrison, that slick bastard with the smile of a minister and the greed of a land shark, marched his men toward Tippecanoe as if it were merely a stop on his journey to greater power.

Tecumseh wasn't there. He was in the south, traveling to draw more tribes into his crumbling alliance. His brother remained behind—the prophet, Tenskwatawa, the man who vomited visions like vomit and sold them as divine truth. He had promised the warriors that no bullet would kill them, that the white man's rifles would fail, that their skin was protected by spirits.

The old men grumbled, "Words can't stop bullets." But the young believed, the desperate believed, and even the skeptics clung to every promise that smacked of hope. So they stood there, with war paint on their faces, arrows, tomahawks, a few rifles—and waited for the thunder.

The fog was thick, the grass wet. When the first shots rang out, it seemed as if the spirits truly responded—for the bullets ripped through the air, but not every warrior fell. A cheer erupted, a wild, hopeful cry. But then the second volley crashed, the third, the fourth—and bodies tumbled, blood stained the ground, screams stifled the cheers.

Smoke rose, not only from the guns, but also from the tents that were set ablaze. Tippecanoe burned. Women screamed, children ran, dogs howled. The Prophet continued to shout about his visions, but his words were drowned out by the thunder of the musket fire.

Geronimo later recognized the same smoke, the same bitter smell of burnt wood, burnt flesh, and broken promises. He, too, knew: smoke doesn't lie. It shows what's really happening, not what prophets preach.

Smoke over Tippecanoe—it was no longer fog, it was the signal that the bastards were stronger, that the ghosts didn't answer, that hope burned like tents at dawn.

The battle broke out like a raging dog. Screams, gunshots, smoke—everything mingled until it was hard to tell where heaven ended and hell began. Harrison led his men forward, lines of musket and steel, while Tecumseh's warriors appeared in small groups from the trees, shot, screamed, and disappeared. A fight, raw, chaotic, a dance of blood and fear.

Tenskwatawa, the prophet, stood on high, his arms stretched to the sky, his eyes rolling, his mouth full of saliva. "The bullets are ricocheting off you! The spirits are holding their hand over you!" His voice was louder than the shots, but no stronger. For as he shouted, men fell, hit in the chest, neck, and face. Blood spurted, bones splintered—and the warriors who were still breathing stared in disbelief at their fallen brothers.

The elders shook their heads. "The man sells dreams while the truth spits blood." But it was too late; the young men had already thrown themselves into the fire. They ran toward Harrison's lines, arrows whizzed, tomahawks flew, screams echoed. Some soldiers fell, yes. But for every soldier, two warriors lay in the dirt.

The smoke grew thicker, burning in eyes, stinging throats. Tents burned, supplies burned, hope burned. The Prophet continued to shout, but his voice now sounded like a sneer. "They can't hurt you!" – just as a young warrior next to him was ripped through the head by a bullet.

Geronimo later experienced the same betrayal of words. He, too, saw men die who had believed more in their promises than in their weapons. He, too, knew: visions are beautiful, but bullets are uglier—and more powerful.

Tecumseh was far away, but every shot, every fire, every scream eroded what he had built. His alliance wavered, his people fell, and the spirits the prophet had summoned remained silent.

Smoke over Tippecanoe—it smelled of burnt lies, of faith strangled in fire. A prophet's word was nothing compared to a musket.

Chaos ravaged the camp like a hungry wolf. Shots rang out everywhere, men screamed, children ran, dogs bit anything that moved in panic. The smoke was so thick that even the sky was no longer visible. Everything was a single gray, stinking veil, through which fountains of blood and bursts of fire burst like lightning.

The warriors charged forward again and again, blinded by faith and rage, but they repelled the bayonets and the soldiers' disciplined ranks. The spirits the prophet had summoned remained invisible. No arrow was flung back by an unseen hand, no bullet bent in the air. Instead, bones broke, skulls shattered, bodies burst open like ripe fruit.

The first doubts crept into the faces of the fighters. "Where are the spirits?" one muttered as he pumped blood from his chest. "Why are we falling like dogs?" another cried before falling himself. But the Prophet continued to scream, louder, more desperately, almost hysterically. "You must believe! Believe, and then you will become immortal!" His words sounded like mockery as one of his confidants fell into the mud next to him, his stomach ripped open.

The elders cursed. "This man is poison. He's leading them to ruin." But no one could stop the wave that had already begun. Too many had believed, too many had placed their lives in the hands of visions that didn't even have the power to stop a bullet.

Geronimo later experienced the same bitter moment. The moment when men realize that their gods are mute, that their hope was a bargain in which they were the fools. He, too, knew: faith dies faster than a body.

Tecumseh was far away, but every shot ate away at his work. For an alliance built on lies breaks faster than rotten wood in a storm. And Tippecanoe wasn't just a battle—it was a betrayal that ate into the hearts of his people.

Smoke over Tippecanoe—it was no longer just the fire in the camp. It was the smoke of burned faith, of shattered hope, of prophecies turning to ash.

The line broke not with a bang, but with a whimper. First, a few warriors retreated, staggering, their faces covered in ash and blood. Then others followed, faster, stumbling, cursing. The resistance grew thinner, more patchy, until it was more smoke than shield. Harrison had his men pursue, coldly, methodically, like a butcher who knows his beast is already half dead.

Tenskwatawa continued to scream, throwing his arms up as if he could force the heavens to intervene with his gestures. But no one answered. No thunder, no miracle. Only the dull "bang" of muskets, the clang of bayonets, the gurgles of the dying.

The warriors no longer ran forward. They ran sideways, backward, wherever the urge took them. Each for himself, each trapped in the fog of smoke and gunfire. Men who had sworn yesterday not to give way now ran like hunted deer. Panic has no logic. It consumes reason and courage, leaving only naked flight.

The elderly shouted: "Hold your ranks! Don't listen to him, listen to yourselves!" But their voices were drowned out. Because when you're panicking, you only hear your own heart, which beats like a drum in your head.

Geronimo later experienced the same rupture. He, too, knew how quickly courage turns to ash when words fail to keep their promises. He, too, saw men run, not because they were weak, but because the lie had killed them more than the bullets.

Harrison grinned. He knew he hadn't just won a battle. He had broken trust, shredded faith, and burned pride. A people that flees doesn't just lose men, it loses face.

The smoke hung thickly over Tippecanoe. It stank not just of burnt wood, but of broken hope. This was no longer resistance. It was flight, naked survival, a race into nothingness, while behind them the Prophet still screamed as if he himself were choking on his own lies.

The camp was no longer a place, but a pyre. Tents collapsed in flames, supplies exploded in the fire, children screamed, women ran with charred blankets in their arms as if they could cover the horror. Everything Tecumseh had built, everything that had been intended to be the center of his alliance—Tippecanoe—went up in smoke and ashes.

The soldiers advanced like an iron wave. Bayonets flashed, torches flew, each shot tore another piece from the heart of the camp. The warriors still fought, yes—but they fought like men who knew it was all over. No more attack, only despair, only the last twitching of a body already dying.

Tenskwatawa, the prophet, stood in the midst of the chaos, his eyes rolling, his mouth foaming. He continued to shout as if he hadn't seen anything, as if everything wasn't ablaze. "They can't kill us! The spirits are with us!" But every dead warrior falling into the mud, every burned body lying in the fire, was proof that his spirits stood silently aside.

The elders spat on the ground. "He betrayed us. With words, with lies." But it was too late. The battle was already lost, hope burned.

Geronimo later experienced the same bitterness. He, too, saw how traitors weren't always those who traded land for treaties, but those who led their own people into the fire with false promises. Words are sometimes deadlier than bullets—and Tenskwatawa's words had killed more men than Harrison could ever manage with his musket.

Tippecanoe was a scream smothered in smoke. What remained was ash, smoke, and the stench of a burned future.

The smoke over Tippecanoe wasn't just the end of a battle. It was a signal to Washington: The alliance was vulnerable, spirits were muted, and warriors burned as easily as cornfields.

The survivors ran, stumbled, dragged the wounded, and left others lying in the mud because there was no time left. Tippecanoe was no longer a village, no longer a home—it was an open grave. The smoke hung like a black roof over everything, and every step away from this place was a step deeper into flight.

Warriors who had dreamed of victory and spirits yesterday hung with open wounds over their brothers' shoulders today. Women screamed, children stumbled barefoot over thorns, old men fell back, their lungs filled with smoke, until they finally lay there. No one turned around. No one could.

And in the midst of it all, like a shrill sound, stood the prophet. Tenskwatawa, the man of visions, the man of false gods. He shouted, he waved his arms, he yelled that they hadn't believed enough. "You doubted! That's why you lost! The spirits turn away from you because you are weak!" His words dripped venom, while behind him children died and women ran into flames.

The old men growled. "He led us to our deaths and now he's still spitting in our faces." Some would have liked to kill him right then, but even now they didn't have the strength to turn around. They had to run, on, on, or the soldiers would strike them all down from behind.

Geronimo later understood this bitter powerlessness. He, too, saw how false men shifted their blame, how they explained to the dying that their deaths hadn't come from bullets, but from "lack of faith." He, too, knew: Such bastards are worse than the enemy—because they not only betray you, but also want you to believe that you yourself are to blame.

The Prophet blared on, his voice shrill and pitiful, while Tippecanoe burned behind them. No one listened anymore. Not even those who had once believed in him. They now saw only a man trying to save his own skin by blaming them.

Smoke over Tippecanoe—it clung to hair, clothes, and lungs. But worse than the smoke was the shame it carried with it. A shame that screamed louder than the prophet and burned deeper than the fire.

When Tecumseh returned, he smelled defeat before he saw it. The wind carried the stench of burnt wood, burnt bodies, and burnt lies. Tippecanoe was no longer a camp—it was a ruin, a battlefield, a cemetery. The smoke hung heavy like a curtain, blotting out even the sun.

He rode in, his eyes hard, his face like stone. What he saw burned deeper than any flame. Tents reduced to ash, children's bodies in the dirt, pools of blood still lingering. Warriors with bowed heads, broken faces, eyes that held more shame than pain.

And in the middle of it all: Tenskwatawa, his brother, the prophet. He was still talking, talking of spirits, of faith, of doubt. He spoke as if he had seen nothing, understood nothing, as if the smoke were merely a misunderstanding. Tecumseh stared at him, and in that gaze there was no longer any brotherly love, only contempt, cutting like steel.

"You lied to them," he said quietly. Quieter than the wind, quieter than the crackling embers. But everyone heard. "Your spirits did nothing. You led them into the fire. Your word killed more warriors than Harrison's bullets."

The prophet retreated, muttering excuses, claiming a lack of faith. But no one listened anymore. Even those who had believed him turned away.

The elders bowed their heads. "The alliance has consumed fire. It will be difficult to sweep up the ashes." Tecumseh nodded, but a different fire burned in his eyes—not that of defeat, but that of anger.

Geronimo would have understood. He, too, knew how betrayal from within burns worse than any attack from without. He, too, swore that he would never again follow a man who fought more with lies than with blades.

Tecumseh raised his hand, his voice clear, firmer than ever: "That was not the end. Smoke clears. But my oath remains: Washington shall pay. Harrison shall pay. Anyone who thinks they can break our people with fire shall see that we rise from the ashes."

Smoke over Tippecanoe was the symbol of defeat. But for Tecumseh, it was the tinder for an even greater war.

The sun falls like a whore

The sun hung heavy in the sky, not golden, not bright, but dull, dim, as if it had seen enough of all the blood and smoke itself. It sank lower, faster than usual, and the warriors looked at it as if it were an omen. Some whispered, "The sun dies with us." Others spat on the ground and said, "She falls like a whore, cheap and filthy."

Tecumseh stood there, his muscles tense, his eyes filled with anger. To him, the sun was not an omen, not a divine sign. To him, it was a dirty spectacle—a damned globe setting while men died. Nothing mystical, nothing sacred. Just an end to the day that looked as if the sky itself was vomiting on them.

The elders murmured, "When the sun sets, the spirits draw near." But Tecumseh had had enough of spirits, enough of visions, enough of prophets who sent warriors into the fire with words. For him, the setting sun was merely a reflection of what they all felt: weariness, bitterness, despair.

The boys saw the sun and whispered encouragement to each other. "When it rises again, we'll be stronger." But the words sounded thin, hollow, like tin. They had seen Tippecanoe, they had seen their brothers die, and no rising sun would bring that back.

Geronimo later knew the same bitter truth. He, too, stood beneath sunsets that reeked more of scorn than hope. He, too, knew: The sun doesn't care about wars. It rises and it sets, no matter how many men fall.

The sun sank lower, red as blood, and the sky looked as if it were a battlefield itself. Tecumseh clenched his fists. "Let it fall. We'll stay standing." He spat into the dust as the last vestiges of light crept across the earth like a dingy brothel red.

The sun falls like a whore—cheap, merciless, indifferent. For Tecumseh, this wasn't a sign of the end, but a reminder: The world isn't watching. Only they could save themselves.

Darkness didn't come gently. It didn't creep slowly over the hills; it swooped down like a predator. One moment everything was bathed in red light; the next there was only dusk, a twilight in which everything seemed strange—trees, warriors, even one's own hands.

The men huddled closer together. Not because the enemy was in sight, but because the night itself seemed like an enemy. Every shadow could be a rifle, every branch a bayonet, every rustle a traitor. The silence creaked louder than cannons.

Tecumseh sat by the fire, his eyes open, his muscles tensed. He knew: the night not only made enemies invisible, it made brothers suspicious. In the darkness, everyone looked at each other as if they could be on the other side tomorrow. After Tippecanoe, trust was a scarce commodity.

The elders whispered, "In the night, the spirits speak." But Tecumseh heard no spirits. He heard only the crackling of wood in the fire, the rustling of armor, the quiet murmuring of men afraid that their brothers would betray them before the sun rose again.

An alliance on shaky ground, even more shaky at night. Everyone wondered: "Will they stay with us? Or will they run to the enemy in the dark?" It wasn't an open conflict, but the mistrust hung heavier than the smoke.

Geronimo would later experience the same thing. He, too, knew camps where darkness killed more than bullets—because it filled minds with mistrust, because every step in the shadows sounded like a betrayal.

Tecumseh remained silent. He knew words were useless now. Only actions would count, only tomorrow would reveal who remained. But anger burned inside him. Not just at Washington, but at the darkness that was consuming his ranks from within.

The sun had fallen like a whore, leaving distrust in its wake. The night was no friend. It was a mirror that showed how fragile everything was.

The night was black as charred wood. No moon, no stars, only smoke, fog, and the crackling of small fires that cast more shadows than they gave light. Men sat close together, but they were lonely, like convicts in solitary confinement. Each heard only their own heartbeat, hard, too loud, as if it would betray their location.

The first victim of the night didn't fall from a bullet. It fell from fear. A warrior heard rustling in the bushes, jumped, screamed, and fired. The crash echoed, and the next moment one of his own brothers lay in the dirt, his chest ripped open, his eyes wide open. No enemy, just a shadow that was too close.

Silence. Then whispers. "A traitor?" - "No, a madman." - "Maybe both." The men shrank even closer together, but the cold remained in their bones. Because if someone could shoot their own brother in the dark, then no one was safe.

The old men murmured, "Night devours more than day." And it was true. Darkness was a beast that sharpened fear like a knife. Every step, every crack, sounded like an attack. And panic made hands move faster than reason.

Tecumseh heard the shot, saw the dead man, and said nothing. He knew words wouldn't have made things better. The dead man hadn't fallen at the hands of his enemies, but rather because of the darkness in their minds. Even he could do nothing about that.

Geronimo later experienced the same curse. He, too, saw nights in which his own warriors struck each other down because trembling fingers overcame reason. He, too, knew: fear is the enemy's deadliest weapon, and the best part for him is that he doesn't even have to pull the trigger.

The men were silent, the fire crackled, somewhere an animal howled. No one slept. Everyone looked at the shadows as if they were enemies, and everyone looked at their brothers as if they could be next.

The sun had fallen like a whore – and in the night it left behind, the men died not only from bullets, but from their own fear.

The camp lay like a carcass in the twilight. Hardly anyone spoke, and if they did, it was only in whispers. But whispers can be louder than screams if they carry poison.

"We are cursed," murmured one. "Since Tippecanoe, the spirits have been against us." "It was the Prophet," hissed another. "His lies burned us." "No," chimed in a third, "it's Tecumseh. He's asking too much, he's asking the impossible. Perhaps he himself has angered the spirits."

The words hung heavy in the night. Everyone heard them, everyone chewed on them. An alliance can fight as long as it believes. But when it begins to suspect itself, it rots faster from within than from without.

Tecumseh sat silently, hearing everything, saying nothing. He knew that arguments would achieve nothing now. Men who are filled with fear don't listen to reason. They only listen to their own fear, which makes them whisper like witches in the dark.

The older ones shook their heads. "The young ones are suffocated by the smoke of words." But their voices, too, sounded tired, old, no longer as solid as they once had. Even they sensed the fracture eating through the camp.

Geronimo would later experience the same rupture. He, too, saw men crumble in the shadow of doubt, how superstition became stronger than courage. He, too, knew: Sometimes it's not the enemy that brings you down, but the poison brewing within your own ranks.

The night grew longer, heavier. Every crack in the forest sounded like confirmation of the curse. Every breath tasted of smoke, of guilt, of fate.

The sun had fallen like a whore, and the darkness it left behind didn't whisper of hope. It whispered of betrayal, of guilt, and of a curse no one could break.

Tecumseh stood up, slowly, as if giving the ground time to feel his weight. His silhouette was only a dark figure against the flickering fire, but everyone in the camp looked up. Even those who had previously whispered like rats now held their breath.

He waited a moment, until the silence became so heavy that it almost broke. Then he spoke. Not loudly, not shouting. Just with a voice as hard as polished stone.

"You speak of curses. You speak of ghosts. You speak of guilt, as if we were children who don't know where the blow comes from. I tell you: It wasn't heaven that burned Tippecanoe. It was Harrison. It was Washington. It was that bastard called progress that wants to trample on us like carrion."

His words were knives. Short, sharp, without fat. Men raised their heads and looked at him as if they had forgotten that one could still speak like that—without visions, without lies, only with raw anger.

"You want someone to blame?" he continued. "Don't look into the night. Don't look to the spirits. Look to the bastards across the river who want our earth. They are the curse. They are the disease. And we are the answer."

A murmur went through the ranks. No cheers, no screams—the blood was too fresh, the shame too great. But faces lifted, as if the men had briefly forgotten that they were sitting in the dirt.

The elders nodded. "Thus speaks a warrior. Thus speaks not a prophet, but a man."

Geronimo would have understood him. He, too, knew that words only carry weight when they are as hard as tomahawks, when they don't put off but tear open. Later, he, too, spoke to his men not of ghosts, but of enemies of flesh and blood.

Tecumseh fell silent again. But his words hung in the air, like arrows that hadn't yet found their target. Some men looked at him as if they had found new footing. Others looked away, because anger is harder to bear than hope.

The sun had fallen like a whore, but Tecumseh's words burned like a fire that never went out. No consolation, no magic—just the naked truth, and sometimes that's enough to get men back on their feet.

"No one will sleep today," said Tecumseh, his voice cutting through the camp like an axe through rotten wood. "Sleep is for those who are safe. We are not. We stay awake, we sharpen blades, we test bows, we count bullets. When morning comes, I don't want to hear excuses."

The men stared at him, some with tiredness in their eyes, others with that quiet glow that betrayed their sparks. No one objected. They knew he was right. Night wasn't for dreaming—night was for survival.

So they began. Knives were dragged across stones, tomahawks were sharpened, bows were taut, and strings were checked. The few rifles they had were cleaned, bullets were counted, and every scrap of powder was carefully weighed. It was not a celebration, not a ritual. It was work—dry, hard, necessary.

The elders murmured: "This is how a people becomes strong. Not with songs, not with prayers, but with calluses in their hands and steel at their fingertips."

Tecumseh walked through the ranks, looking everyone in the eye. He didn't speak much, just nodded, placed his hand on a shoulder, and examined the weapons. He was not a prophet, not a priest. He was a warrior, and he wanted everyone else to feel the same way.

The night was silent, except for the scraping of the stones and the crackling of the fire. No laughter, no more whispers of curses or ghosts. Only the sound of men preparing as if their lives depended on every blow across the stone.

Geronimo later did the same thing. He, too, transformed nights into blacksmith shops, where men didn't sleep but worked until their hands were sore. He, too, knew: A sharp knife is worth more than a thousand prayers.

As the hours crept by and the darkness deepened, the camp burned not with hope, but with hardship. No false dreams, no soft words. Only steel, blood, and the will not to be mown down like cattle again in the morning.

The sun had fallen like a whore, but the night afterward, pride was sharpened anew. And sometimes that's enough—not for victory, but to avoid going down without a fight.

The morning came cold, colorless, a gray breath over the land. No brilliant sunrise, no triumph in the sky. Only a pale light that pretended to be the sun, but was more like a worn lamp. The men raised their heads, looked into that pale glow, and knew: the new day brought no mercy.

The sun rose, but it wasn't a promise. It was a memory. A memory of Tippecanoe, of smoke, of screams. A memory that yesterday she had fallen like a whore, cheap and indifferent. And today she had returned only to shine in their faces, like a mockery.

Tecumseh stood, his shoulders hard, his eyes narrowed. He felt the fatigue in his men's bones, but he also saw the steel in their hands, the hardness they had forged during the night. They weren't stronger, they weren't more numerous—but they were harder. And sometimes, hardness is worth more than hope.

"Look around," he said, his voice harsh from the smoke of the last few days. "We are not many. We are not unscathed. But we stand. And as long as we stand, no victory of the bastards is complete."

The older ones nodded, the younger ones clenched their fists. There was no cheer, no outcry, just a silent agreement. Words that don't warm, but nail to the chest like nails to a board.

Geronimo would have understood. He, too, often stood in the gray morning hours, after nights of blood, and spoke to men who had little left but their anger. He, too, knew: Morning is not a gift. It's just another reason not to be dead.

The sun continued to rise, pale and cold. Tecumseh spat into the dust, raised his head, and muttered: "Let it fall again, as it did yesterday. But this time we will fall with our teeth in the enemy's flesh."

The sun fell like a whore—and it returned like a mocking gesture. But for Tecumseh, it was now a vow. A vow that no day, no light, no smoke would make Washington forget that they were still alive—and that they were still fighting.

Dead horses on the bank

The river stank. Not of water, not of life—it stank of death. The horses lay at the edge of the riverbank, bloated, cramped, their legs twisted like broken branches. Their eyes stared into nothingness, glassy, empty, full of flies more greedy than any bullet. The stench was sweet, putrid, a smell that crept into the men's stomachs until they gagged.

The horses were more than animals. They had been brothers in battle, the muscles that had carried them through forests, the hearts that had beaten in battles. And now they lay there, mountains of flesh, burst open, with their mouths open, as if they had wanted to scream at the last moment.

The ancients said, "A dead horse is worse than a dead warrior." For a warrior dies for his oath, but a horse dies because it was dragged into the same filth. Horses knew no enemy, they knew only their riders—and yet now they lay in a row like abandoned weapons.

The men looked away, barely able to bear the sight. Not because of the stench, not because of the flies. But because the dead horses told them that even the strongest legs could no longer walk. That war devoured not only people, but also the animals that bore it.

Tecumseh stood still, his hands clenched into fists. He loved the horses, not like brothers, not like children—but like tools, more honest than men. A horse doesn't lie, a horse doesn't betray you. And yet they lay there, victims of the same bastards who had already reduced Tippecanoe to smoke.

Geronimo later saw the same sight. He, too, found rivers with dead horses lying on their banks, stiff and silent, food for ravens. And he, too, knew: when the horses die, some of the warriors die with them.

The great river continued to gurgle, indifferent, as if laughing at the carcasses. Dead horses on the bank—that wasn't a picture of victory; that was a picture of truth. War isn't a heroic poem. War is a river that devours animals and humans alike.

The stench crept through the camp like a living thing. It bit into people's noses, settled on their tongues, and burned their eyes. Men who had already endured the sight of their bruised brothers now staggered because a rotting horse made their stomachs churn. It was as if the gods themselves had decided to smother the remnants of their pride with this smell.

"We can't leave them here," murmured one. "The air will make us sick." "Then dump them in the river," said another. "Let the current take them away." The old men shook their heads. "The river is already full of blood. Don't give it any more."

In the end, only fire remained. Men tied ropes around the bloated bodies, pulling them together, stacking them like wood too wet to burn properly. Torches hissed, flames licked at manes, fur, and flesh. The stench didn't improve—it grew worse, thicker, sweet and sharp, a smoke that tasted like punishment.

Some men turned away, covering their faces with their hands. Others stared into the scene as if they must endure the horror until their last breath. Horses that had once carried them now screamed in their heads as their bodies cracked and collapsed in the fire.

Tecumseh stood there, unmoved. He knew it had to be done. But it gnawed at him. Not the dead themselves, but the symbolism. Horses represent strength, movement, freedom. And when they lay in the fire, freedom lay within them, too.

Geronimo later had to do the same thing. He, too, burned horses because the stench was too strong, because war left no grave even for animals. And he, too, knew: When you throw your horse into the fire, you throw a part of your dignity with it.

The river rippled beside it, indifferent, almost mocking. Dead horses hung at the edge of the riverbank—first corpses, then ash. Men coughed, flies buzzed, smoke rose. It wasn't a cleansing fire. It was just further proof that war consumes everything—even that which sustains us.

As the flames faded and only black carcass bones crackled in the fire, the voices began. Quiet at first, then louder, sharper, like sparks leaping from the embers.

"It's an omen," said one. "The horses are dying before we do. That means we're next." "The spirits have taken them," whispered another. "They want to warn us." "Warn?" spat a third. "They're laughing at us. First the brothers in the river, now the horses on the bank. We're cursed."

The elders nodded gravely, their faces as hard as stone. "The river is a bastard. It eats everything we give it, and it wants more. Today the horses, tomorrow us. That's how it's always been when the tribes split. When blood flows not on the enemy, but on ourselves."

Tecumseh listened, his jaw tense. He no longer had patience for omens, for prophets and their vague words. But he knew: men who talk of curses fight weaker. And if he didn't stop them, the camp would soon be more afraid of ghosts than of Harrison.

"A horse dies because it's hungry," he said harshly. "Because it eats bullets, because it collapses from exhaustion. No spirit guides its legs, no curse stops its heart. We lost them because we fight, and whoever fights loses. It's that simple."

His voice cut into the conversations, silencing them. But in the eyes of some, a glimmer of doubt remained. Because it's easier to believe in curses than in the naked face of war.

Geronimo later faced the same debates. He, too, heard men speak of evil omens, of spirits turning away. He, too, knew: omens are merely excuses when courage is faltering.

The river murmured softly, as if swallowing her words and returning them, twisted and poisoned. Dead horses lined the banks—carrion to some, a curse

to others. And between them stood Tecumseh, clutching the bitter truth in his fists.

Tecumseh had had enough of the whispering, enough of the poison creeping through the camp like smoke. He stood up, his muscles hard, his eyes dark as night. "You talk of curses," he said, "then carry the bones to the river yourself. See if the spirits throw them back."

The men stared at him. Some wanted to object, but his voice left no room. So they tied ropes around the remains of the carcasses and dragged the charred skeletons through the mud, their hooves cracking like old branches. The stench settled on them like a second skin, burning in their throats.

They stood on the bank, staring into the water, which shone black as if it had already drunk enough of them. "Throw," Tecumseh commanded. And they threw. One by one, bundles of bones, burnt flesh, scraps of fur. Splash. The river took them, greedily, wordlessly. No ghostly hand appeared, no curse was visible. Just water, swallowing everything.

"You see?" Tecumseh roared. "No omen. No sign. Only death. The river takes because it takes. That's all." His voice was sharp, his eyes blazing. "Anyone who speaks of curses again tomorrow might as well jump in himself. Then he'll see if the spirits will save him."

The men were silent, their faces hard, but their gazes downcast. They had hoped the water would give something back, some proof that their fears were justified. But the river remained silent. Only their own stench lingered in their throats.

The elders nodded heavily. "He's right. The river isn't a god. He's a bastard, and bastards eat without asking."

Geronimo later did the same thing. He, too, forced his men to throw the dead into the water, not out of honor, but out of necessity. He, too, knew: Sometimes you have to drown superstition before it drowns you.

There were no more dead horses on the banks. They were gone, swallowed by the water, carried by the current. But the stench remained, not in the air, but in people's minds. And Tecumseh knew: He could conquer the river—but not their fear.

The night brought no sleep. Not because of sentries or threatening enemies, but because the horses returned—not at the edge of the river, but in the men's dreams.

One rolled in the dirt, muttering about pounding hooves. Another screamed in his sleep, as if a horse's head were staring at him, its eyes white, its mouth open. Yet another stared awake into the darkness because he heard the neighing—not a lively, powerful neigh, but a stifled, gurgling sound, as if coming from watery gullets.

The elders said, "Animals that die for humans come back." And this night seemed to confirm that. Everywhere smelled of smoke, of burnt fur, even though the fires had long since burned down. Men coughed as if they'd swallowed ash.

Tecumseh woke, heard the whispers, the screams, the choking. He spoke nothing, he didn't move. For he knew: dreams are only mirrors. And what the men saw was nothing supernatural. It was only guilt. Guilt that the horses had fallen for them.

"You are warriors," he thought bitterly, "and yet the spirits of animals hunt you more than the bullets of white men." He understood the grief, but he despised the weakness. Horses die, warriors die—that is war. But the men clung to the faces of animals because it was easier to see their guilt there than in the blood of their brothers.

Geronimo later recalled that same night. He, too, heard men murmuring in their sleep about the horses they had carried. He, too, knew: animals carry burdens without complaint, and when they die, this complaint lingers in the people.

The river murmured softly, as if mocking the nightmares. Dead horses at the bank—now they were gone, but in the minds they rode on, silent, with eyes full of reproach.

The morning smelled of death, even before the first light hit the river. No birdsong, only the cawing of ravens, perched like black shadows in the trees. They didn't wait long. As soon as the camp was awake, they fluttered down, pouncing on the last remnants, the bones, the charred scraps of flesh that the river hadn't carried away.

Their beaks pecked, their wings beat, their eyes flashed cold as steel. Every blow was a blow to the hearts of the men who watched as the animals they had loved became carrion—no longer companions, merely food.

Then came the wolves. Quiet, gray, crouching. They could smell the stench for miles, and hunger knew no bounds. They crept to the shore, bared their teeth, tore at tendons, and dragged bones into the bushes. The cracking was louder than any words.

The elders murmured, "This is how the earth wills it. What dies belongs back." But even they looked away when the wolves bit their flanks, when the ravens hollowed out their eye sockets.

Tecumseh stood motionless, his fists clenched. He said nothing, he didn't shout. But he seethed within. Not because of the animals—they were just doing what is natural. No, his anger was directed at the war, which reduced even the strongest animals to carcasses. Horses that had carried him, that had brought men into battle, now lay like garbage at the edge of the river.

Geronimo later saw the same thing. He, too, saw ravens perched on the backs of fallen horses as if they were kings on thrones made of carcasses. He, too, heard the cracking of teeth on bones, and he knew: Nothing demonstrates more clearly how small man is than when even his most faithful animal is devoured by scavengers.

The river gurgled softly, as if laughing at the scene. Dead horses at the bank—no longer brothers in battle, but food for ravens and wolves. And that was the final sign: the war had consumed everything, and what remained was consumed by nature.

Tecumseh stood for a long time on the bank, his arms folded, his eyes fixed on the scavengers. Ravens pecked, wolves tugged, the river took what was thrown at it. It was a meal, raw, cruel, but honest. Animals didn't lie. They ate because they were hungry. No greed for land, no treaties, no progress in their mouths. Just hunger.

The men looked away, but Tecumseh forced himself to look. Every torn tendon, every broken piece of bone, was a picture of war for him. Not heroic, not glorious—just decay. And he thought, "This is what our people look like when we lose. This is what we look like when we let Washington devour us."

The old men said, "Sometimes animals are more honest than men." And Tecumseh had to nod. Because the wolves did what they had to. The bastards in Washington did what they could. That was the difference, and the difference made him angrier than the stench.

Geronimo later knew exactly how that look felt. He, too, stood there, seeing how even the animals had more dignity than the white men who stole land and chewed treaties like bones. He, too, swore in such moments that the enemy would pay worse than any animal could ever eat.

Tecumseh clenched his fists, his muscles like steel cables. "Let the river eat, let the wolf eat, let the raven eat," he muttered. "But that bastard to the east called Washington—he won't just eat. He'll choke."

His men heard him, some nodded, others remained silent. But the words burned, deeper than any fire, clearer than any vision.

Dead horses at the edge of the river – the image remained. But Tecumseh's oath clung to it like a second skin: that the enemy would not only take the land, not only the horses, not only the blood – but that he would have to pay for it, more dearly, more cruelly than ravens and wolves ever could.

The dream becomes a commercial document

Dreams are light. They need no table, no pen, no witnesses. They float through the air, settle in our heads, warm us for a night, and then vanish like smoke. But Washington had learned how to capture smoke. You press it onto paper, make it into contracts, contracts that weighed more heavily than any promise of the spirits.

The bastards in the East knew no dreams. They knew trade. They knew lines on maps, wax seals, signatures that bound men to more than blood. While Tecumseh fought, while men died, white gentlemen sat with ink on their fingers and turned his dream into business.

"Land for peace," they wrote. "Land for whiskey. Land for a few shiny coins." They acted as if land were a commodity to be measured, sold, and divided like cattle in a market.

The elders grumbled: "The land is not for sale. It belongs to the dead, the living, and the unborn." But the papers said something different. And for Washington, what mattered was not what was written in blood, but what was written with a quill pen.

Tecumseh's dream was unity. A people who would not vanish like dust, but stand like rock. But on paper, this dream turned into numbers, into borders, into lies. For Washington, it was easier to buy off one tribe after another with treaties than to conquer them all with war.

Geronimo later understood the same deception. He, too, saw treaties that killed more than bullets. Paper that, with the stroke of a pen, turned entire villages into strangers, entire rivers into the possession of a man who had never drunk a single drop from them.

The dream becomes a piece of paper—and that's worse than any defeat. Because a battle can be fought again. But a piece of paper, signed by a hungry and drunk man, will remain as long as the bastards want it to.

William Henry Harrison grinned as he dipped his quill pen. No blood on his hands, just black ink. He didn't have to fight, scream, or die. He just needed men to tremble as he unfurled the treaty. "Sign," he said, "and you'll have peace. A little land for a little security."

The tribes, hungry, weakened, exhausted, sat across from him. Some still had the smoke of Tippecanoe in their clothes, others only the scars of older battles. Harrison spoke like a trader, but his words had the weight of chains. They knew: If they refused, the military would come. If they agreed, they would lose their land.

"Paper is lighter than lead," murmured one of the old men. "But it breaks us faster." And so it was. For the pen pierced deeper than any bullet.

Tecumseh hated this game. He hated it more than any battle, more than any bayonet piercing flesh. Because in battle, he knew where he stood. One enemy, one shot, one death. Sure. Pure. But on paper, you died slowly, in installments, piece by piece. First a field, then a river, then an entire homeland.

Washington knew it. They knew that war was expensive, that soldiers died. But a treaty? A treaty cost only a sip of whiskey and a lie. And it brought more land than a thousand soldiers.

The ancients said, "The pen is a dagger you can't see coming." And Tecumseh knew they were right. He watched as entire tribes scribbled their names, not out of faith, but out of desperation. Every stroke was a cut, and the paper absorbed their blood, invisible, indelible.

Geronimo later recognized the same dagger. He, too, saw how treaties were enforced with whiskey and promises, how men traded land for empty words. He, too, knew: ink doesn't dry—it stays, sticks, binds like a rope around the neck.

The dream becomes a piece of paper—and with every contract, Harrison wrote not just about land, but about pride, about dignity. Every line said: "Your dream is worthless. Only my paper counts."

Tecumseh didn't sit at the table, he didn't sit by candlelight with a quill and wax. He stood outside, in the smoke, in the dust, among men who swore that no piece of paper could replace the ground on which their ancestors lay buried. And he swore with them.

When he heard of Harrison's treaties, when he saw tribes signing names because they were too tired, too hungry, too broken, he was seized by a rage that burned hotter than any fire. He grabbed the paper, tore it up, spat on it, and trampled it into the dirt.

"This," he shouted, "is not a treaty. This is a noose they put around your own necks." His voice was raw, his eyes burning. "The land doesn't belong to Harrison, not to Washington. It belongs to the dead buried beneath the earth and to the children yet unborn. Those who sign aren't just selling land. They're selling their own blood."

The men listened, some ashamed, others defiantly looked away. Hunger weakens, fear weakens. But Tecumseh was relentless. "No chief has the right to sell land. No man can give away what belongs to everyone. Whoever does so is a traitor."

The elders nodded, murmuring, "That's what we've always said. The land isn't ours, we're just guests." But even their voices sounded faint, because reality forced them otherwise.

Tecumseh took the next piece of paper, held it up, tore it to pieces, and threw the shreds into the fire. "See," he said, "this is how much the words of the white man are worth. Once burned, they are nothing." But there was bitterness

in his eyes, for he knew: For Washington, burned papers were merely an excuse to write new ones.

Geronimo later did the same. He, too, spat on contracts, tore them up, and cursed the pen that wrote them. But he, too, had to learn: paper burns quickly, but the bastards always have more.

The dream becomes a piece of trade paper—and Tecumseh knew he had to fight to get it back. Because every piece written down meant his dream became smaller, while Washington's greed grew larger.

Tecumseh stood before the chiefs, who sat in a circle like tired dogs. Some with eyes already broken, others with gazes that fell to the ground, as if they had forgotten that pride is also a tool. The smoke from small fires wafted among them, but it smelled more of defeat than of wood.

He didn't wait for approval, nor for politeness. He stepped into the circle, threw the remains of burnt papers at their feet, and said: "Whoever of you sells land again sells his life with it."

Silence. A rustling, the crackling of flames. An old chief cleared his throat, about to object. But Tecumseh was quicker. "No. Listen to me. You call yourselves leaders. But a leader who gives away land is no leader. He is a traitor. And traitors die."

His voice wasn't a scream, it was a knife, cold and clear. Some men ducked their heads, others looked at him, with anger, with fear, with a hint of respect.

"This land doesn't belong to you alone," he continued. "It belongs to all of us. No tribe, no chief may sell it, just as no man may sell his brother's bones. If you do, I'll be standing outside your tent with a tomahawk. And believe me—I'll strike faster than you can sign."

The elders murmured, "No one has spoken so harshly in years." And even those who had already negotiated with Harrison in private sensed that Tecumseh's threat was genuine. He wasn't a man of half words.

A young warrior stood up, his fists clenched. "And if you're serious, Tecumseh, will you also slay the old men?" Tecumseh stepped before him, looking him straight in the eye. "If he sells land, yes."

The silence that followed was heavier than any prayer. Men were breathing shallowly, no one dared to laugh. Because they knew he meant it. And that made him more dangerous than Harrison and Washington combined.

Geronimo later made the same threat. He, too, promised that he would personally execute any chief who traded land for whiskey. He, too, knew that only fear of punishment held the alliance together when hunger and despair would otherwise have torn it apart.

The dream becomes a piece of trading paper – but Tecumseh swore that anyone who wanted to sell it would pay the price not in coins, but in blood.

Tecumseh didn't smoke, but his thoughts burned like pipe fire. He knew that threats alone weren't enough. Fear cinches you briefly, but it's no substitute for friendship. So he began to act. Not with promises, but with alliances that fit together like iron rivets—crude, heavy, and unromantic. He sought out those chiefs who still had something: courage, horses, men, perhaps a jug of corn. He didn't speak of honor, he spoke of necessity. "Whoever helps us now," he said, "will not live by ink tomorrow."

The words weren't poetry. They were bills. And most of the chiefs had debts—old feuds, divided hunting rights, marital disputes that had ached like a rotten tooth for decades. Tecumseh dug his fingers into those pains and tore them open. "You're not losing your land because of stupidity," he said, "you're losing it because you're alone. Come to us, or you'll be sold." It sounded like blackmail; it was blackmail. But it was also true.

He traveled. In a sleeping bag, in the rain, through mud, under the stars. He brought no feather, he brought no boxes of glittering promises. He brought his voice, his story, and, when necessary, his fist. Some chiefs laughed in his face—until the next morning, when he stood in the field with a troop, and the laughter drove them away. Those who laughed when Tecumseh was seething with rage quickly learned that laughter had unpleasant consequences.

But Tecumseh also knew: force alone won't last. An alliance needs benefits. He offered protection—not romantic protection, but bills, patrols, a presence. Those who joined his cause received men who supported his hunters, helped with hunting, defended villages at night, and in war, they took part of the burden. It wasn't a gift. It was a calculated move: with each new tribe, the white man's trade risk increased. With each new ally, the price for Washington to take the land by force rose. And that was exactly what Tecumseh wanted: to increase costs, steal time, create opportunities.

He didn't just ask for alliances, he forged them. You didn't get the British who sent weapons for nothing; in return, you gave them control over certain actions. But Tecumseh negotiated shrewdly: he didn't give domination, he gave cooperation. "We fight together," he said, "but you don't decide who we are." He drew this line sharply. The British might help, but they didn't like unruly partners. Tecumseh offered them an alliance based on mutual benefit—in such a way that his people wouldn't bleed to death if London broke the treaty. This was a game of knives, and he played it with a cold hand.

Some chiefs understood the deal immediately. They were pragmatists: "Give me guns, I'll give you men; give me powder, I'll give you a supply route." Such deals were sober, not heroic. Yet they worked. Tecumseh collected these deals like a man collecting screws: he was building something great, not a temple, but a machine. A machine that could, if necessary, become a tool of war. It didn't smell of glory—it smelled of oil, sweat, and metal.

The hesitant ones were more difficult. They had questions about honor, the right path, and the spirits. Tecumseh spoke to them less with threats than with examples. He showed them burned fields, children with empty hands, chiefs who had sold what they didn't own for a jug of whiskey. He showed them how the pen cut faster than the sword. The image remained. Some changed, some closed like shells that couldn't be cracked open.

But not everything was trade and profit. Sometimes he could only secure allies through riddles: through a rescue, a demonstration of revenge, a night when his men helped drive out a rival. Small victories that worked like interest; they paid for trust and yielded dividends in loyalty. Tecumseh knew that trust comes not from long talk, but from action. So he made sure his word carried weight: whoever shook his hand could rely on it to act.

And yet, white trade was everywhere. Traders crawled like crabs along camp boundaries, offering knives for land, alcohol for hunting rights. Tecumseh despised them, but he used them—he manipulated them, sabotaged deals, lured phony traders into traps. His goal was to drive the foreigners to such great expense that Washington could no longer win with paperwork alone. Every repentant trader might have had a full pocket for Tecumseh's men; every swindler caught was a lesson he loudly and nastily proclaimed.

Politics became war, and war became politics. Tecumseh turned both wheels. He forced chiefs not only to read negotiating documents, but to feel the cost of signing. He didn't turn treaties into empty words: he set conditions, he issued ultimatums, he showed his teeth. When a chief threatened to sell the alliance,

the response wasn't just a threat; it was an example: raids on his supplies, nighttime kidnappings of his best men—things that no pen stroke could have sealed on paper, but which spoke very clearly: Those who betray will pay in blood.

The tactics were harsh, sometimes brutal. He lost friends. Some chiefs fled, and there were uprisings in some villages. Tecumseh was no softie. He understood that every great idea has dirt on its boots. He saw the sacrifices as bills that had to be paid to avoid a bigger bill—the preservation of the land. That's cold. That's realpolitik in a country where realpolitik is often the most important word besides "survival."

And yet, beneath all the trade, the sweat, and the mistrust, something grew: a network. Not a glorious alliance, benevolent and holy, but a network of profiteers, of men who understood that it made sense to fight together. They weren't idealistic—they were practical. They saw that a treaty accompanied by guns was worth more than one built on ink alone.

So the dream slowly transformed; not into what Tecumseh had once envisioned—a brotherly nation without shackles—but into something tangible: a coalition, a striking force, a trading network that could become a war machine in times of need. "If the bastards want ink," thought Tecumseh, "then they shall have it—with interest." And the interest would be paid in blood, not paper.

At the end of this section, Tecumseh knew he was getting into a fight. He had fought for trade papers, now he was doing business with the enemy—but in his own way: hard, rough, without illusions. And as he forged new alliances, one thing became clear: the dream hadn't died; it had merely taken the form of treaties—except that his treaties didn't involve quills, but tomahawks and clear calculations.

In Washington, one didn't smell the smoke of Tippecanoe, but one did smell the paper. Stacks of treaties, neat, orderly, sealed with wax and power. Men in suits who had never swallowed the dust of a battlefield grinned with satisfaction. "Look," they said, "the savages are signing. We don't need armies when we have quill pens."

But then came the reports about Tecumseh. No name on treaties. No handshakes, no whiskey exchanges. Instead, threats, speeches, anger. Washington called him a troublemaker, a fanatic, a nuisance. But beneath the facade crept something else: fear. Because a man who tears up treaties is more

dangerous than one who carries guns. You can buy guns, you can forge treaties. But conviction? You can't buy that.

So Washington wrote letters and sent them west. "Strike him down before he builds an army of words greater than any army of men." Harrison received orders. "No giving in. Anyone who refuses to sign shall sign in blood."

And while Washington busied himself with ink and orders, London sat in dark rooms with maps and red wax. The British had no dream of Native American nations. They had a different goal: to keep America small, to make it bleed. For them, Tecumseh was a tool, a pawn, an axe to be driven into the back of the United States.

They gave guns, they gave powder, but always with conditions. "We'll help you, Tecumseh," they said, "but don't forget whose flag will fly when the war is over." They wanted it strong, but not too strong. An alliance that smacked more of leash than of friendship.

Tecumseh sensed this, and it ate at him. He knew he was playing a game with two devils. One was in Washington, the other in London. Both wanted land, power, and control. The only difference was the method: Washington with paper, London with guns.

The ancients said, "The man who stands between two millstones will turn to flour." But Tecumseh thought differently. "Then the flour shall be bloody, and they shall swallow it with strangled breath."

Geronimo later faced the same hell. He, too, witnessed how the whites played against each other, how treaties and weapons came from different directions. And he, too, knew: Whoever uses one devil is guilty of the other.

The dream becomes a commercial document—and now the document wasn't just contracts. It was also correspondence between Washington and London, letters, orders, demands. Words that were distributed like ammunition on both sides. And Tecumseh knew: Soon the paper would turn to blood again.

Tecumseh stood before the fire at night, alone, his face blackened by soot, staring into the tongue of flames as if searching for the last remnant of the dream the quills threatened to grind. Paper didn't sit well with his stomach. Paper was made for men who had never breathed the smell of burnt corn or the crunch of a dead horse. For men who packed their land into paragraphs like others packed their laundry—clean, ironed, easy to distribute.

He thought of the chiefs who signed. Not out of conviction—that would have been nice—but out of hunger, out of fear, out of the knowledge that bullets, not calligraphy, had the final say. He thought of Harrison, folding paper with a smile, while the world of those who couldn't sign clung to his shoes like cold tar. And he thought of London, where they had sent him rifles as if it were a favor. Two hands that bound his men in various ways.

In the fire, the shadows of the men who had sold too easily circled. Their image glowed briefly, like a stamp, and vanished into ash. Tecumseh didn't want to just talk. Speech was feathers; feathers were written away. He wanted to act. He wanted to keep the quills burning until even the ink curdled, until Washington and London realized that paper was no longer enough when the stomach growled and the tomahawk wound was fresh.

He gathered the chiefs like one gathers coal—roughly, purposefully. Not all of them wanted to follow. Some stayed to smile in the white men's rooms and scribble names that looked like wounds on maps. Tecumseh promised them nothing of the sort. He promised no pen, no peace, no sweet sulfur smoke to numb their fear. He promised only what comes from blood and sweat: protection, answers, retribution. And if they had signed out of fear, then they should remember what they held the pen for when war washed away the ink.

It was a dry calculation, not poetry. Every treaty Washington won was a debt he repaid—in Tecumseh's fashion. He had posts raided, late raids no minister liked to write on his stationery. He forced traders to deliver weapons instead of plates—and when the traders swore they had only brought goods for trade, he let the evidence speak for itself: empty chests, rusted nails, names that sounded like traitors. The pen, he realized, has no armor. But a tomahawk bores deep into wood and into hearts.

In the villages that hadn't yet been broken, he delivered speeches, not to the tune of the prophets, but with the harshness of a man whose sister had been taken by the pen. "You think paper can eat us?" he asked. "Then let us feed it—not with us, but with their blood." It wasn't a bridal, nor a romantic promise. It was accounting in the darkest of tones: If you stand by me, they'll pay for every signature. If you turn your back on me, you'll sign your own end.

Some chiefs left, some stayed. Some who stayed did so because they understood: Paper alone won't win back lands. Others, however, even after everything, retained the quill as a weapon against their own people, signing silently and sleeping with fear in their knees. Tecumseh wouldn't let them rest. A betrayal by paper was a betrayal answered with blood—not in blind murder,

but as a lesson: Supplies were burned, posts plundered, the men who had signed were found, humiliated, and put on a chain of terror so that the quill-pen scribes could no longer ignore the account in their warm rooms.

The British grew restless. London disliked unpleasant accounts. They liked their pieces on the board, but they disliked disorder that stirred up too much dust, demanded too much attention from the royal house. So they left Tecumseh enough arms to keep him in power, but not enough to make him ruler—a calculated game. Tecumseh played along, but he kept the rules in his own hands. He took what was useful, he gave back what was necessary, and he wrote his own accounts in blood, which Washington couldn't easily swallow.

In the end, he sat by the fire again, the ashes in his beard, and he knew: the dream had previously become paper—fat, smooth, sealed—but the paper was now burned or torn, or both. His dream wasn't dead; it had merely turned into something heavier: politics, strategy, a deal settled with tomahawks. The pen remained an instrument, but he would no longer let it dominate alone. If Washington came with ink, he would answer with guns and countless small bills. If London gave him guns, he would twist them to hurt London, if necessary.

"Make the pen hard," he murmured into the night, "make it so hard that it will break if it tries to seize our land." Then he tore a piece of paper a spy had brought from a fort and threw it into the flames. The writing hissed, the ink boiled, and the smoke carried the words away. It was a small symbol, foolish but liberating.

The dream becomes a piece of trade paper—and Tecumseh, the man who once fought against visions and those who sold them, was ready to reverse the deal. Not to find peace with quill pens, but to make the price of every piece of land sold so high that Washington would think twice before unsheathing his quill. It was a rough economy: ink versus pain. Paper versus fire. Treaty versus war. And Tecumseh knew which side he would choose, given the choice.

He blew out the embers, the ashes swirled, and for a moment everything seemed still. Then he stood up, gathered the maps and plans, and set to work, word by word, man by man. For if the dream had once become paper, he would now turn the paper back to earth with his hands—not by writing it, but by demanding the price no one in Washington wanted to pay: blood, time, and endless toil.

Whiskey dealers laugh louder than gods

Whiskey is cheap if you buy it by the barrel, and priceless if you sell it to a desperate man. The traders knew this. They rode into the camps like rats, with barrels on carts and grins on their faces. No gun, no tomahawk, just wooden stoppers and cups. And yet they were more dangerous than any army.

The tribes knew the intoxication. They knew the quick comfort in the throat, the fire in the belly, the warmth that made you forget hunger and pain for a few hours. Whiskey was like a false friend: it would laugh loudly, put its arm around you—and empty your pockets while you slurred.

The traders knew exactly what they were doing. One jug for a hide. Two jugs for a horse. One barrel for a piece of land the size of a village. And once the men were drunk, they signed contracts they would never have considered sober.

Tecumseh despised it. He saw warriors stumble through the night, children crying because their fathers had traded the last of their meat for glass. Whiskey turned men into rags, warriors into beggars. And the traders laughed, laughed louder than the gods, when they saw how quickly a tribe could break apart in drunkenness.

The old men murmured, "Whiskey is worse than bullets. A bullet kills a man. Whiskey kills an entire nation." But their voices were weak, and their hands sometimes trembled even as they circled the cup.

Geronimo later saw the same thing. He, too, cursed the traders who came with bottles instead of guns. He, too, knew: Whiskey softens you, makes you weak, makes you corruptible. No warrior can fight if he vomits in the dirt.

Whiskey merchants laughed louder than gods because they didn't need gods. They had thirst, desperation, and greed on their side—and that was enough to turn men into shadows.

One evening, Tecumseh entered a village that smelled of smoke and alcohol, sweet and sharp, like an open wound. Men lay in the dirt, their faces glistening with alcohol, women screamed, children pulled at the arms of their fathers, who never got up. In the middle of the square stood two merchants, with red cheeks and greasy smiles, refilling cups as if they were priests in a filthy church service.

Tecumseh's eyes were hard as he stepped among them. He didn't say a word. He took an axe and smashed into the first barrel. A torrent of brown liquid shot out, splashing across the floor, smelling pungent. The traders screamed and tried to grab him, but his men were faster. They pulled the bastards to the ground while Tecumseh ripped open the next barrel, then the next.

The whiskey flowed like a small river through the village, mingling with dust and blood, and the children leaped back as if it were fire. Men, still half-drunk, crawled forward, trying to scoop with their hands, licking the dirt as if they could salvage the drops. Tecumseh pushed them away, his voice thundering: "You want to drink? Then drink the land you sold!"

The traders whined, swore they had only traded, they hadn't forced anyone. Tecumseh knelt over one of them, pressing the axe to his throat. "Trade?" he hissed. "You don't trade. You rob. You take land, you take dignity, you take men's souls. Whiskey is your sword, and I will break it."

Then he let them go—not out of mercy, but because he wanted them to tell their stories. To tell how Tecumseh destroyed barrels, how he had whiskey trampled into the ground, how he beat men who preferred drinking to fighting. Fear was a better weapon than blood.

The old men nodded, their voices deep. "He's right. Whiskey is worse than cannons. It kills without you hearing the shot." But some men stared longingly at the puddles in the dust, as if they hadn't yet understood that intoxication made them slaves.

Geronimo later did the same. He, too, had barrels slashed, traders chased away, and drunken men humiliated. And he, too, knew: It was a fight harder than any battle – the fight against the poison in his own blood.

Whiskey merchants laughed louder than gods, but tonight their laughter fell silent—smothered in the dirt, the stench, and the anger of a man who knew his people were worth more than a barrel of death.

The barrels were broken, the ground sticky, the traders chased away. But in the night, Tecumseh heard the whispering, the giggling, the gulping. He followed the scent, and there he saw them—men meeting in the shadows, horn cups in their hands, their eyes glazed over, their laughter fake. Someone had hidden a bottle, a final loot, and it was passed from hand to hand like a sacred relic.

"Just a sip," murmured one. "Just to warm my throat." "Just to forget the hunger," said another. "Just to sleep without hearing the screams," whispered a third.

Tecumseh stepped out of the darkness, and the men froze. Their faces were like children caught stealing—ashamed, defiant, and angry all at once. He ripped the bottle from their hands and hurled it against a rock. The glass shattered, and the smell of whiskey rose sweetly and pungently into the night.

"You are warriors," he thundered. "Or are you drunkards? Should I trade you for the traders who sold you? Who do you want to love more—your country or the filth they pour down your throat?"

Silence. One dared to speak. "Tecumseh, whiskey makes us forget." He punched him in the face, hard, without explanation. The man fell into the dust, blood running from his nose. "Forgetting is cowardice," Tecumseh growled. "We must not forget. We must remember—and fight."

The others looked down. Some hated him at that moment. But he preferred hatred to weakness. Hatred could be turned into anger, whiskey only into vomiting.

The ancients said, "Poison runs deeper than steel. A knife cuts flesh. Whiskey cuts the spirit." And Tecumseh knew they were right. He could destroy barrels, chase away traders, break bottles—but he couldn't reach into men's heads and snatch their thirst.

Geronimo later experienced the same thing. He, too, fought not only against soldiers, but against the intoxication that weakened his men, that made them cheap, purchasable. He, too, knew: whiskey is like a second enemy, one you can't kill because it swims in your own blood.

Whiskey merchants laughed louder than gods because they knew: Even if you smash their barrels, they've already won if your men keep drinking in the dark.

Tecumseh knew: words didn't help. Sermons didn't help. Whiskey was louder, tasted better, and forgot faster. So he resorted to something harsher than any speech: punishment.

The next time he caught men drinking, he didn't just make them break the bottles. He forced them to trample the spilled stuff into the dirt until their feet were sticky and stinking. "This is what your pride smells like," he said. "This is what your blood feels like when you sell it for glass."

But he went further. One man, who had drunkenly beaten a child, was tied to a stake. Tecumseh ripped his shirt off and dragged a rod across his back until his skin was exposed. No ritual, no chant of honor—just brute force, cold, in full view. "Anyone who drinks whiskey also drinks the whip," he said.

Another, who had traded weapons for a bottle while drunk, lost the right to bear arms. "No tomahawk for a man who sells himself," Tecumseh declared. The warrior wept, not because of shame, but because he knew that without a weapon, he was no longer a man.

The men began to whisper, "Tecumseh is tougher than Harrison." Some hated him, others feared him, but both reactions suited him. For fear dries the throat faster than thirst.

The elders murmured, "It must be so. If you want to save your body, you sometimes have to slay your soul." And Tecumseh nodded, even though he knew he was being just as brutal as the whites who oppressed them. But better brutal against one's own weaknesses than to die at the hands of others.

Geronimo later did the same. He, too, had drunkards punished, beaten them, confiscated their weapons, and humiliated them. He knew: In the desert, a man dies faster from whiskey than from the enemy's gun.

Whiskey merchants laughed louder than gods, but their laughter faded when they heard that Tecumseh didn't just break their barrels—he broke his own men if they drank too deeply from them.

Tecumseh realized that punishment alone wasn't enough. You could smash barrels, chase away traders, whip men—but as long as a cup was circulating somewhere, the poison would crawl back like a rat. So he introduced rules harsher than any sermon: villages where whiskey was not only forbidden, but taboo under penalty of death.

He didn't call them sanctuaries. He called them "dry camps." No grand name, no romantic rhetoric. Just places where everyone knew: If you drink here, you'll die. Period.

The entrances were guarded. Vendors who approached were chased down the street before they could even name a price. Some landed in the dirt with broken ribs, others disappeared without a trace. No one asked.

The elders supported it. "This way we can save our children," they said. "If no barrel comes near, the blood will stay clear." But they also knew: It was a

balancing act. Some villages wanted the fire in their bellies, wanted cheap consolation. Tecumseh's camps were not a refuge for them, but dungeons.

And yet it worked. Men who had once been drunk were back in line. Women breathed a sigh of relief, children stopped crying. It wasn't a miracle, it wasn't magic—it was discipline, a cold blow to quench thirst.

But it also brought tensions. The tribes that tolerated whiskey hated Tecumseh's rules. "He plays king," they said. "He forbids what we want." And at night, they whispered that he was tougher than the whites he fought against.

Tecumseh heard this and shrugged. "I'd rather be a tyrant over sober people than a friend to drunkards," he growled. "For a drunkard is not a warrior."

Geronimo later drew the same lines. He, too, declared certain villages "dry places" and threatened anyone who didn't comply with them with death. And he, too, knew: Sometimes you have to be an enemy of your own people to save them from the real enemy.

Whiskey merchants laughed louder than gods—but in Tecumseh's dry warehouses, their laughter fell silent. There, there were only clear eyes, firm hands, and the knowledge: A cup can be deadlier than a bullet.

The traders didn't give up. They were like vermin—if you kill one, ten more crawl out of the mud. Tecumseh's dry warehouses were a thorn in their side. Where there were no barrels, there was no profit, and a sober village was more dangerous than an entire regiment.

So they began to deliberately sabotage the area. No open attacks—they were too cowardly for that. They sent scouts posing as harmless traders. They slipped bottles into blanket rolls, hid jugs in flour sacks, and sent Native Americans who, for a few coins, would betray their brothers and smuggle in whiskey.

The effect was the same every time: A camp fighting soberly would collapse within days if the poison returned. Men fell out of line, women screamed, children ran away. And always, always, the traders laughed when they saw how quickly a tribe consumed itself.

Tecumseh struck back. He had smugglers hanged from trees, their bottles tied to the corpses like shabby trophies. He had entire stores dumped into rivers, so that the stench lingered in the villages for days. "See," he said, "this is what treason smells like."

But it was a never-ending battle. No sooner had he cleared one camp than the next barrel crept into the next village. Sometimes he had to fight his own people, warriors who preferred a glass in their stomachs to a sword in their hands. The enemy wasn't just outside—he was in the men's throats.

The old men said, "This is the war that never ends. You can fight bullets. You can't fight whiskey." Tecumseh knew they were right. He could kill Harrison, set Washington on fire, betray the British—but he couldn't stop a man from lying in the dirt at night, licking the last drops from a bottle.

Geronimo later experienced exactly the same thing. He, too, lost men, not in a hail of bullets, but in drunkenness. He, too, learned that the greatest battlefield was not the ground, but the mind.

Whiskey merchants laughed louder than gods – because they saw that even the harshest discipline, even punishments, even dry storage, could not prevent thirst and despair from opening a door again and again.

Tecumseh sat in the circle of elders, and they didn't talk about cannons, land, or Harrison. They talked about whiskey. That alone was a sign of how deeply the poison ran.

"It's more than a drink," said one. "It's a weapon." "It's a trade that kills us faster than any battle," murmured another. "It softens men," added Tecumseh, "and soft men lose before the enemy even arrives."

He'd known it for a long time, but tonight he said it out loud: Whiskey was Washington's dirtiest bullet. They didn't even have to shoot—they just had to roll the barrels. The tribes did the rest themselves.

So Tecumseh vowed that he would fight the poison just as relentlessly as he had fought the soldiers. "Whiskey is the white man's trick," he said, "and anyone who drinks is a traitor. Not just to himself, but to all of us."

From that day on, it was clear: whiskey was treason. Not a small mistake, not a slip-up, but treason. Men who drank it were cast out, some were killed. It was hard, cruel—but necessary.

The traders fled deeper into the woods, but they kept coming back. But now no negotiations awaited them. No speeches. Only traps, knives, and ropes. Some found their deaths in their own barrels, drowned in the poison they had sold. Tecumseh used their bodies as warnings.

The elders nodded. "That's how it will be," they said. "If we don't kill the poison, it will kill us."

Geronimo later did the same. He, too, declared whiskey the enemy, not a drink. He, too, let men die for a cup. Because he knew what Tecumseh knew: Those who drink whiskey no longer fight—they die slowly, and they take their people with them.

Whiskey merchants laughed louder than gods. But from now on, their laughter was no longer free. It was the laughter of men who knew that somewhere in the shadows, Tecumseh's eye was watching them—and that the next cup might be their last.

Quills cut harder than tomahawks

A tomahawk splits skulls. An arrow pierces flesh. A rifle makes noise and leaves blood in the dust. But a quill pen? It makes no noise, it leaves no corpses behind—and yet an entire nation falls.

In Washington, men sat at heavy tables, their faces fat, their hands soft, and they waged wars without ever getting up. They drew lines across maps as if they were veins they could simply sever. A quill pen dipped in ink set more villages ablaze than a regiment.

Harrison understood. He signed, he had people sign, he forced them to sign. Treaties, treaties, treaties—that was his ammunition. He knew: A chief who puts his name on paper kills his people more thoroughly than any battle ever could.

Tecumseh saw it with his own eyes. Men who yesterday swore never to sell sat today with ink on their fingers and a dead look in their eyes. "Peace," they murmured. "Just a little land. Just a small piece." And the next morning, their village was a shadow, their children Washington's property.

He felt more anger at a crumpled contract than at a whole row of dead warriors. Blood could be avenged. Paper could not. Paper was clean, polite, final. And it cut deeper because it cut invisibly.

The ancients said, "A knife shows the blade. A quill pen shows nothing." And Tecumseh knew: that was precisely what made him more dangerous.

Geronimo later understood the same thing. He, too, saw that the greatest losses occurred not on battlefields, but in offices, in law firms, at desks. He, too, knew: The enemy with the pen was the cruellest, because he smiled in your face while obliterating you on paper.

Quills cut harder than tomahawks because they left wounds not in the flesh—but in the land, in time, in the soul.

Harrison laid out the treaties like traps in the forest. No click, no bang, no scream—just paper, wax, and a polite nod. He offered a smile, a bit of whiskey, a few shiny coins. And when a chief pounced, the trap sprung.

"Just a small part," said Harrison. "Just a field. Just a stretch of river." But every line on the paper was like a cut in the skin. And small cuts became an open abdomen in which entire nations bled to death.

Tecumseh saw the trap snap shut. He ripped treaties from the hands of the unconfident, tore them to pieces, and spat on them. "No stroke of ink is stronger than the blood of our warriors," he growled. "And anyone who believes peace is written on paper has already lost the war."

The men listened, but many were weak. Hunger blinds, cold deafens. Harrison knew this. He waited for the moment when a village was at its limit—then he came with his paper. And the men signed not because they wanted to, but because they saw no way out.

The ancients said, "Paper is a chain, and the pen is the smith." Tecumseh vowed to break the chains—even if it meant slitting the hands of his own brothers to rip out the quills.

Geronimo later experienced the same traps. He, too, saw how treaties were offered as salvation, but in reality were death. He, too, swore that no stroke of ink could ever be stronger than the hand holding a sword.

Quills cut harder than tomahawks – because they didn’t hit one man, but entire tribes, entire generations.

Tecumseh stood before the chiefs, who huddled around the fire as if trying to mask the heat of their weakness with the smoke. Some had already signed, others were about to. He saw their eyes, dull, greedy, fearful—and he knew: if he didn't break them, they would break him.

"Listen to me," he began, his voice as hard as a sword hilt. "Anyone who sells land isn't just selling earth. They're selling the dead who lie here. They're selling the children who aren't yet born. They're selling the dignity that remains to us."

An old chief growled, "We must survive. A piece of land for bread—what's treason in that?" Tecumseh stepped forward, grabbed him by the collar, and pulled him up for all to see. "Survival without pride is a slow death. And a slow death is treason."

Then he dropped the old man and turned to everyone. "I tell you: whoever signs a paper, I will judge myself. With my hands. With my blade. No enemy has to kill you—I will."

Silence. Men looked down, others stared at him, some with hatred, others with fear. But no one laughed. They knew: He meant it.

"I am not your friend if you are traitors," he continued. "I am your brother only as long as you hold the country. But if you sell it, I am your executioner. Don't forget that."

The elders murmured: "He speaks like thunder. Perhaps too harshly." But they knew: without harshness, the alliance would fall apart. Hunger could be quenched, but pride could not.

Geronimo later spoke the same words. He, too, swore that anyone who traded land for ink would first see his knife before touching paper. He, too, knew that sometimes war must begin in one's own village before it can be fought outside.

Quill pens cut harder than tomahawks, but Tecumseh swore that his blade would cut the paper first, and then the throat of the person signing it.

Tecumseh didn't intend to just roar around the fire and wave words. Words don't fill stomachs, they don't stop quills. So he turned to the scribes—the warm men in the forts who, with clean hands and a smile, drew the boundaries of his people on the edge of the world.

If you weren't vomiting all over the table, you liked to write about people. A quill pen glides. A quill pen stays. That was their art: they made commitments no one saw until the knife came. Tecumseh had had enough of it. He wasn't gathering an army to swing rifles; he was gathering a hatred more precise than any volley. He didn't just want to hate the quill men—he wanted them to view their quills with the same fear with which his men viewed their tomahawks.

He began with what he did best: disruption. No plays, no grand campaigns—small, ugly punctures. Stagecoaches packed with letters could no longer find their way. Couriers never arrived. Letters opened in warm rooms were empty. Merchants, who had been part of the system for a long time, suddenly found their goods missing, their chests plundered. Not loudly, not with trumpets, but with a certainty that spoke louder than a hundred battles.

The forts registered it. The quill pen men saw the gaps in their files, the missing names, the signatures that never came. They didn't stay silent for long; they shouted in correspondence, which was then answered in more pens. "More troops," they wrote. "Protect the mail routes." Harrison wrote sentences that sounded like threats, and Washington sent letters that smelled of steel. But letters don't loosen bones.

Tecumseh, however, drew a different lesson: If the quill pens wrote that the mail lines needed to be secured, then the price for security would be paid—in inconvenience. He had traps laid as elegant as spider webs. Scouts who wanted to reconnoiter the fort didn't just find men with smoke in their throats; they found empty huts, empty benches, food that had been poisoned, or paths leading into swamps. It wasn't a massacre at the desks—it was a confusion that stole the quill pensmiths' nights.

And when a scribe once left the fort to speak to a chief—always polite, always in black ink, always with good intentions—sometimes what awaited him was not violence, but humiliation. A row of tents packed with people grinning at him like hungry dogs. A chief pulling the quills from his pocket and beating them until they splintered. A piece of paper falling into ash. Not death, not blood—but something perhaps worse: the realization that your noble tool has become useless and ridiculous.

The quill men saw this and laughed at first. Then they felt their laughter fade. They held their quills closer, like prayer beads. They began to understand that the quill not only cuts, it can also be broken—by rough hands, hands that know the dirt, that have the aftertaste of burnt corn in their mouths, and that don't care what seal a piece of paper bears. They began to hide their writings, to seal their contracts, not out of honor, but out of fear.

But Tecumseh wanted more than fear. He wanted to make the feather into something that could be used like a rifle—against the feathermen themselves. He gathered witnesses who saw traders lie, military posts exact tributes. He gathered evidence in the dirt: cut reins, broken chests, names spoken at tavern-like gatherings. Then he presented it, not in grand tribunals—those

would have given him only paper—but in villages, at hearths where people still had the wounds on their hands, where revenge was easier to understand.

His men didn't rob out of greed; they robbed in response. Capture a courier, read what he carried, read the names aloud, tear up the treaties, and give them to the village. "Look," said Tecumseh, ink wiping from his fingers, "this is what they promise you. This is what they take from you. Not a pen mark stands over your grave." The air grew smoky with indignation, and that was exactly the smoke he wanted.

There were also subtle games. Tecumseh cast suspicion on scribes who smiled too much. He wove rumors like traps, dragging a man's reputation through the mud in front of an audience. A scribe who didn't command respect lost access; lost access, lost his status; lost status, lost protection. In a world where quill pens signified power, social ostracism was another kind of guillotine.

Of course, counterattacks came. Forts sent scouts, squadrons of captains, small punitive expeditions. There were firefights here and there, deaths on both sides, screams, blood. But Tecumseh avoided the large fields; he waged war like a man who knows his time: small, painful punctures that slowly form wounds that bleed long after the enemy has left. And that was what the quill men feared most: that their smooth lives would become a constant patch of small cracks.

The tips of the pens began to show their teeth. They demanded harsher measures, swifter punishments. Washington threatened openly. Harrison screamed in letters that Tecumseh should be exterminated. But where there are shadows, there is fury. And the men standing in the ashes had nothing to lose but their names, and names were worn like clothing—you could cast them off, and then you were naked again, ready to receive the blow.

Tecumseh achieved his goal not through a brilliant battle, but by brutalizing the rules that belonged to the scribes. He forced the quill men to wander through his world, whose nights smelled of the stench of horses, whose days of burnt corn. And when a pen stroke was due again, when a treaty was once more on the table, there was no longer just a gentleman with a clean hand. There was the memory: of men who came to break quills, of villages that read names aloud and laughed as the quills burst into flames.

In the end, the message was clear as blood: Quills may cut, but they are not invulnerable. And those who wield the pen as a weapon learn at their own table what it means when their tool becomes a man's plaything in the dirt.

Tecumseh had internalized the art of pain—not just from steel, but from humiliation, from disruption, from the knowledge that power built on paper is more fragile than that built in the gut.

Quills cut harder than tomahawks—yes. But they don't cut if the hand holding them breaks. And Tecumseh showed them how to break hands without ever touching the quill himself.

Everything sounded clean in Washington. Marble staircases, sealed envelopes, gentlemen who wrapped their words in gold fibers before sending them out into the world. But the mail arrived with bad news: a courier without a return, forts under pressure, lost treaties, boastful chiefs suddenly less than compliant. And behind the shelves of civilization sat Harrison, his brow furrowed, his fingertips yearning for blood, even though his hands never got dirty.

He read the reports. He counted the lines as if they were ledgers. "Tecumseh is disrupting the mail routes, disrupting trade, disturbing the peace," wrote a subordinate. "He is humiliating our clerks, robbing couriers, setting the chiefs against each other." Harrison narrowed his eyes, smelled the shame in the words, and knew: paper alone is no longer enough. Quills are fine, but they bleed if you pull on them hard enough.

Thus, the answer was as precise as a surgical incision. No wild outburst, no dull rage—a planned, cold punitive expedition. Harrison demanded men: militia, a regular contingent, wagons, provisions, bayonets. He turned the pen in his hand, wrote orders, signed them, stamped them, and his document became an authorization for violence. Pens may cut—but sometimes it takes steel to make the cuts effective.

The men marched out, orderly, disciplined, in line, with flags and drums setting the rhythm of the killing. It was an image that conveyed power and a perceived inevitability: The government had spoken, and those who opposed it would soon experience what justice sounds like when it meets guns. Harrison didn't just want to hand out punishments; he wanted to set an example, a message for all those who still thought one could mock quill pens with audacity.

Tecumseh heard the footsteps. He didn't smell them like a hunter hearing hooves—he felt them like a disease spreading slowly. He knew this would be no mere probing, no small raid, but a blow that would test his alliance. He gathered men, not in pompous parade, but in the raw, naked way that counts: few, well-chosen, hard as stone. He knew he didn't need an army that could

strike an entire state—he needed one that could dish out enough pain to change, in the long run, what quill pens took with a stroke of a pen.

The first clashes were ugly, not heroic. No heroic riders, no clean lines—only woods, traps, ambushes. Tecumseh's men knew the land like few whites ever had. They knew trails hidden from rain, rivers that grasped like fingers. They didn't wait for the fanfare to die down; they struck where it hurt: supply trains, vulnerable posts, precarious supply routes. Small fires in the night, feathers falling from tables, letters that never saw their destination.

The punitive expedition didn't achieve as much glory as Harrison had planned. The records contained death lists and some clear successes—a fort taken, a courier captured—but the public image of him was mixed. Men returned with stories that smacked not of glory, but of mud and death. In Washington, the cost was tallied, and the bill was larger than expected. Quills may be tools of power, Harrison thought, but they require ammunition, and ammunition costs blood and money.

Propaganda worked on both sides. Harrison wrote in grand terms about order and law, about the need to protect the mail and defend civilization. Tecumseh portrayed his actions as a defense against thieves in civilian clothes. He showed burned supplies, destroyed trade goods, and bound traders who promised never to return to his territories. Both sides had an audience; both sides understood that war is not only fought with weapons, but with stories.

But one thing became clear: the punitive expedition changed the relationship between paper and steel. Washington had flexed his muscle; Tecumseh had provided the answer—not just in blows, but in his ability to disrupt the enemy's machinery. Every captured courier, every destroyed mail crate, was a small victory over the pen. It was a message: If you use the pen, count the bill in flesh.

Murmurs echoed through the camp: "Harrison forced us to become stronger." In this murmur, there was anger, but also pride. Tecumseh knew that a torn treaty would never again be just a piece of paper; after the punitive expedition, it would also be a trail of blood. Forts would reinforce guards, change routes, and reorganize mail connections. All of this consumed resources—resources Washington could have saved if he had shown more respect for his quill pen.

The punitive expedition taught lessons to both sides. Washington learned that a pen alone is not enough to extinguish a burning camp. Tecumseh learned that violence, used wisely, can undress the pen. But it was a cruel balance—more

violence meant more pen, more pen meant more violence. And in the middle stood people dying while the quill masters and the men in uniforms settled scores.

Quill pens may cut harder than tomahawks—but Harrison had shown that tomahawks could also carve when paired with a state and its precision. Tecumseh understood this. He made his left hand the tomahawk, his right the pen. He would use both, curse them, and send the bill to those who think everything can be settled with ink.

As the sun set, there were more corpses, bases smoked, and somewhere in Washington another line was written: more troops, more money, more zeal. Every ink flowing there was now a promise that came with a price. And Tecumseh? He wasn't smiling. He counted his men, his supplies, and prepared new traps. The quills had cut—but perhaps, he thought, they would soon bleed.

In Washington, the air reeked of fear, even though the men tried to mask it with perfume and tobacco. Every report from the West sounded like a slap in the face: couriers missing, treaties burned, traders found dead, villages nowhere to be found. Tecumseh's name appeared in every letter, heavily underlined, sometimes with anger, sometimes with fear.

The gentlemen in the Capitol reacted as gentlemen always react: They wrote more. More laws, more orders, more demands for troops. "Crack down harder," "punish as an example," "dismantle leadership"—words like grenades thrown by men who never had blood on their hands.

Harrison read the orders and gritted his teeth. He knew: every new march cost money, every death cost votes, and while Washington loved order, he didn't like empty coffers. So he had to deliver. No more torn treaties, no more humiliating ambushes. He wanted a victory, a clear, clean break that even the quill-wielding men in the marble halls couldn't miss.

Meanwhile, London pulled its own strings. The British offered Tecumseh more weapons, more powder, more promises—but every promise came with a string. "You fight Washington, we'll help you," they said. "But don't forget who you owe the bullets to." They gave just enough to allow Tecumseh to fight, but never enough to be truly free.

Tecumseh saw through it. He saw that he stood between two devils: Washington, who came with paper and steel, and London, who lured with

gunpowder and treaties. Both wanted to use him, both wanted to keep him down. But he took what he needed and spat on the rest. "If I'm a tool," he muttered, "then it's a tool that will eventually cut its owner."

The old men said, "Paper is a trap, but powder is a rope." Tecumseh knew they were right. But he had no choice—not fighting meant dying, fighting might mean winning. And so he took the guns, took the powder, but kept his hatred.

Geronimo later experienced the same thing. He, too, took weapons from the whites, knowing full well that every bullet was a crime. He, too, stood between the teeth of two beasts, both of whom said, "We'll help you," and both of whom meant, "We'll eat you."

Quill pens cut harder than tomahawks—but in those days, they didn't just write treaties; they also wrote war plans. Every stroke of ink was an order that would end in smoke and blood.

Tecumseh sat alone by the river, the water black as ink in the moonlight. In his hand he held a torn piece of paper he had taken from a merchant. The writing was neat, the words cold: treaties, names, boundaries. He crumpled it up and threw it into the water. The river picked it up, sucking it away like a piece of dirt.

"So it shall be," he murmured. "So shall all her words end—drowned, swallowed, forgotten."

He knew that the War of the Pen always ended in steel. Paper could be signed, broken, and burned a thousand times – but at some point, Washington would still pick up a gun. And that's exactly where he wanted them. Not at the table, not at the desk, not by candlelight – but in the dirt, in the smoke, where blood counts, not ink.

He swore that no piece of paper would ever determine his final battle. No seal, no treaty, no order from Washington. Only earth, fire, and the blood of his warriors. "They may write with ink," he said, "but I write with steel. And my writing erases their writing."

The elders nodded when he told them. "It's always been this way," they said. "Paper fades, blood remains."

Geronimo later knew the same thing. He, too, realized that treaties were only preludes, that the War of the Pens was merely the introduction to the real war.

He, too, swore that no signature, no piece of parchment, would ever determine its end—only bullets, only earth, only the will to resist.

Quill pens cut harder than tomahawks – but in the end, when the last blood flowed, when the last bullet was fired, the paper lay still and silent in the dirt, and only the dead continued to speak.

Tecumseh stood up, threw the last scrap of paper into the fire, and walked away. The smoke rose like a curse. He knew they would come soon, with more men, more weapons, more lies. But he was ready. He wasn't afraid of paper. And certainly not of steel.

Bone meal battlefields

The ground was soft with rain, but hard with blood. Splinters of bone, feathers, and torn pieces of cloth that had once been shirts, blankets, or pride lay everywhere. The crows flew in flocks, their cries like laughter over the corpses. No hero, no song, no glorious departure—just shattered bodies destined to turn to dust.

They called it a battlefield, but it was nothing more than a field of death. Every step crunched like millstones—except the flour wasn't made of grain, but of bones. Teeth, skulls, thighs, ground by horses, cannon wheels, shoes. White dust settled on everything, mixed with blood, clinging to the hair of the living who passed by.

Tecumseh stood in the midst of it all. He saw not only the fallen, he saw betrayal, hunger, hopelessness. Every corpse was a bill Washington had written in ink, and his people paid with flesh. He knelt down, picked up a handful of earth crunched with bone meal, and let it trickle through his fingers. "This is our inheritance if we lose," he said. "Dust blown by the wind."

His men listened in silence. Some wept, others stared blankly. No warrior wanted to end up as bone meal, and yet the ground smelled of it, as if it wanted nothing else.

The old men murmured: "Every battle grinds men. First they live, then they become grain, then dust." And they were right. A battlefield is not a stage, it is a mill. And this mill ground day and night, regardless of whether White or Red lay within it.

Geronimo later experienced the same dust. He, too, stood in fields where nothing remained but bone dust, blowing into the wind as if men had never existed. He, too, knew: Death doesn't write a chronicle. It only writes dust.

Battlefields of bone meal—that was the truth. No glory, no heroes. Just earth that made everyone equal, crushed under the weight of history.

The battle was over, the thunder had died away. Only the stench remained—blood, smoke, burnt leather. Tecumseh's men gathered their dead in low voices, carried them away, and sang songs that sounded like broken bones. Each body was covered with earth, each name whispered, each dead man given a final touch of dignity.

Then the white men came. Not with songs, not with respect. With shovels, with curses, with spitting. They threw the bodies of their own men into pits as if they were animal carcasses, as if they were merely a hindrance to the march. The dead Indians? To them, they weren't even bodies. They threw them to the side of the road like garbage, piled them up, burned them, and had dogs drag them around.

Tecumseh watched in the shadows. His eyes were hard, but a fire burned in his belly that was stronger than any rifle. "They don't even honor their own dead," he muttered. "Then how could they honor us?"

The elders whispered, "A people who do not honor their dead have no soul." And Tecumseh knew: That was the difference. His men died for something greater than themselves. The white men died for treaties, for lines on maps, for bags full of coins. No wonder they were indifferent to their bodies.

Some of his warriors wanted to break out in fury and slay the corpse-desecrators. Tecumseh held them back. "No," he said. "They're just showing us what they are. Animals who don't know that even bones deserve respect."

Geronimo later experienced the same thing. He, too, saw how white people carelessly threw their own dead into mass graves while laughing about treaties. He, too, knew: those who treat their dead like garbage do not treat the living any better.

Battlefields of bone meal—that wasn't just blood in the dust. It was the realization that for white people, even death was a commodity, cheap, disposable, weightless.

Tecumseh stood at the edge of the battlefield, which had long since become a field of death. His men had buried their brothers, laid stone upon stone, sung songs until their throats were hoarse. But the dust remained, the sweet stench of blood that never disappeared.

By the fire, he spoke to the survivors. No talk of glory, no talk of victories. Just the naked truth. "Look around," he began, "the ground still creaks beneath the bones of your brothers. Their voices are in the wind. They wait for you to remember them."

A young warrior, his face covered in soot, asked, "Why do we keep fighting if everything just turns to dust?" Tecumseh stepped forward, took a handful of earth, and held it up. White splinters flashed between his fingers. "Because this dust is worth more than the white man's gold. Because these bones hold more truth than their papers."

His voice didn't break, it struck. "The whites throw their dead into pits like slaughterhouse waste. But we give our name, our song, our breath. As long as we honor our dead, we are stronger than they. For respect is a weapon they don't know."

The men raised their heads. There were tears in their eyes, yes, but also embers. One pounded his fist on the ground. "Then we will fight for those who lie here," he said. "Until the ground is saturated with their blood."

The elders nodded. "So it will be. The fallen live on in every blow."

Geronimo later did the same. He, too, gathered his dead, sang their names, and swore on their bones that the fight would never end. He, too, didn't turn death into trash, but into an oath.

Battlefields made of bone meal – Tecumseh transformed them into altars from which he forged new warriors.

Tecumseh gathered his men by the river, where the water carried the last threads of blood. He spoke not like a preacher, but like one who had himself lain in the dust too often. "The white men laugh at their dead," he cried, "they throw them into the pits like garbage. But us? We carry our brothers on our shoulders until our legs break. We dig with our bare hands when there are no shovels. We sing until our throats are torn. That's the difference—and that's our strength."

The warriors listened, and the fire in their eyes began to glow anew. Tecumseh knew: he couldn't deny death; he had to use it. Every fallen warrior was not just a wound, but a weapon—a banner that flew higher the more blood clung to it.

He pointed to the fields. "Look. Every bone there is a witness. Every skull accuses. Not just the whites, but us too—if we forget why they died. Those who fought here didn't lose. Only those who forget have lost."

The elders murmured in agreement. One said: "A people does not live by the breath of the living, but by the memory of the dead."

And Tecumseh sharpened the sentence even more sharply: "The white people believe that treaties make them immortal. I tell you: Only bones make immortal. And our bones lie here. They will not rot. They will cry out as long as we fight."

Geronimo later did the same. He, too, used the fallen as symbols, as a warning, as fire. He, too, threw it in the face of the whites: "You have weapons. We have our dead. Let's see which burns longer."

Battlefields of bone meal – Tecumseh transformed them into flags that flew higher than any paper from Washington.

The night smelled of iron, wet earth, and smoke. Tecumseh stepped out onto the battlefield, barefoot, so that the mud and bones crunched beneath his feet. He knelt down and placed his hand on the ground. It felt warm, as if the blood of the fallen still boiled within it.

He called his men together, not all of them, only those who were ready to be not just warriors, but bearers of an oath. "Here," he said, "lie our people. Here lie brothers who will never rise again. This is not just a place of death—this is an altar. And everyone who enters it swears that they will not rest until their blood lies here too, if necessary."

The warriors came, one after another. They knelt, placing their hands in the dust, some tearing off small scraps of their clothing and leaving them there. Others cut their palms and let the blood drip into the earth. No drumming, no dancing—just the naked oath: We are bound here, until the end.

The elders watched in silence. One whispered: "This is not a ritual, this is a pact. The soil eats blood, and it doesn't return promises."

Tecumseh nodded. That was exactly what he wanted. No cheap consolation, no "everything will be alright." No—a chain of dust and bones that bound his men to the ground. "Anyone who swears here will never be able to escape," he said. "Those who run away aren't just running away from us, they're running away from the dead."

And so the battlefield itself became sacred, not in the way of the white people who built churches and let priests speak. But in the way of the warriors who knew: The ground on which you die is the only temple that matters.

Geronimo later did the same. He, too, declared places where blood had been shed to be holy sites. He, too, made his men swear that they would fight there until they, too, fell.

Battlefields of bone meal – Tecumseh turned them into oath grounds, places where even the dust was no longer just dust, but a bound promise.

The whites laughed when they heard that the Indians considered the battleground sacred. For them, earth was just dirt, property, a field to be measured, divided, and sold. "Sacred," one officer mocked, "sacred at most is the price we get for this land."

So they went out, digging holes in the ground where Tecumseh's men had spoken their oaths. They dug not to honor the dead, but to erect fort stakes, barracks, and latrines. They stamped the ground firmly, trampled the ashes of the fallen with their boots, and spat in the dust, as if to say: Only our victory counts here.

When Tecumseh heard about this, a fire burned within him hotter than any rifle. "They're trampling on bones like gravel," he growled. "They're turning graves into latrines. There's only one answer."

He called his men, who were already bound at the oath place. "This is your temple," he said. "And they have defiled it. Will you let it happen?" The response was a howl that ripped through the night. Men beat their chests, others their foreheads, as if they needed to beat out their shame.

The elders warned: "It will cost many." But Tecumseh shook his head. "If we don't respond, we will not only lose the land, but also our dignity. And without dignity, we are already dead."

They attacked at night. No battle plan, no drums—just a storm of shadows, arrows, and screams. The soldiers awoke in their barracks to find the walls red.

Tecumseh's men fought not as if they wanted to conquer, but as if they wanted revenge. No cry for mercy was heard, no prayer went unheard.

As the sun rose, the men stood on the ground again, which now smelled of blood once more. But this time it wasn't just the blood of the warriors—it was the blood of the invaders, mingled, inseparable, as if the dead had reclaimed their right.

Geronimo later did the same. He, too, struck when the Whites desecrated graves; he, too, showed them that one couldn't trample the dust of the dead with boots without paying a price.

Battlefields of bone meal—Tecumseh made them places where every step of the white man became a trap, and every breath of dust reminded them of retribution.

When the smoke cleared, only the ground remained. No more song, no more scream, no more bang. Only dust that settled over everything—on faces, weapons, horses' bodies. The dust tasted bitter, like ash and iron. And in every grain of grain was a splinter of what had been human yesterday.

Tecumseh stood still, watching the wind sweep across the field. He thought:*This is how it all ends. Not with glory, not with victories—with dust in the wind.*
But he also knew: This dust wasn't empty. It carried voices. If you listened, you could hear them whispering. Not words, not songs—just a murmur that said:*Don't forget us.*

He called his men together. "Look," he said, letting the dust trickle through his fingers. "This is what remains. No treaties, no fortresses, no coins. Only dust. And yet this dust is stronger than all their quills, for it cries out eternally."

The men nodded. Some knelt down, took dirt in their hands, and let it trickle down onto their faces as a sign: We'll carry you with us.

The old people murmured: "The soil eats everything. But what it eats, it also gives back—as a memory, as a warning."

Tecumseh vowed that every fight, every battle, every death would not be forgotten. "When we ourselves become dust," he cried, "then our dust shall speak louder than all of Washington."

Geronimo later understood exactly this. He, too, felt that in the end, it wasn't about victories, but about who ruled the dust, whose bones sang longer in the earth.

Battlefields of bone meal—that was the ultimate truth. People come, people go, armies march, cities burn. But the dust remains. And the dust continues to fight long after everyone else has fallen silent.

The Prophet loses his teeth

Tenskwatawa, the prophet. He had known the tongues of the people, fed them with visions, with cries from dreams, and with smoke from pipes that he himself never put down. He was the brother of Tecumseh, but no warrior—he fought with words, with hallucinations, with images that he threw among the people like coins.

At first, they listened to him. His voice trembled; he spoke of purity, of a return to the old ways. No whiskey, no trade, no white man's lies—only fire, only prayers, only gods dancing in the smoke. The people wanted to believe in it because hunger and fear make a man more receptive than any prayer.

But visions are like cheap whiskey. At first, they burn, making you strong. Then come headaches, doubts, nausea. The first signs of the cracks appeared when his promises didn't come true. He said, "The white man's bullets won't harm us." But they tore holes in men's stomachs. He said, "Heaven itself will be our shield." But rain fell coldly on dead bodies.

Tecumseh saw it and gritted his teeth. Tenskwatawa was his brother, but he was also a risk. "A prophet without truth," he murmured, "is worse than a traitor." For traitors know how to kill, while prophets eat the people from within.

The elders whispered, "His teeth are loosening." By this, they didn't just mean his mouth. They meant the strength to hold the flesh of the people. A lie that's too big will eventually lose its bite.

Geronimo later also saw false prophets come and go—medicine men who made big promises but delivered nothing. He, too, learned: A people who listen to voices in the smoke loses faster than one who carries the sound of drums in their hearts.

The Prophet didn't lose his teeth while sleeping, nor through old age. He lost them because his lies ate away at his mouth until only hollow dentures remained.

Tenskwatawa knew his tongue was becoming brittle. He heard it in the murmuring of men, the skeptical glances of women, the silence of the elderly. So he did what all false prophets do when they run out of truth: He became louder, more grotesque, more bizarre.

He screamed at the sky at night until his voice cracked. He threw himself into the dust, trembling as if spirits were moving through him. He swore he was speaking with the ancestors, that in dreams he had seen the great river turning red with the blood of the whites. And every time it fell and foamed, he cried out: "Behold, this is the power of the gods!"

The boys were amazed, the uncertain ones clung to every word. But the warriors—those who had smelled blood and drawn arrows—began to watch with cold eyes. They recognized the spectacle. A man with too much smoke in his lungs, too much fear in his stomach. One who could no longer control his trembling.

Tecumseh watched it with growing bitterness. He loved his brother, but he hated the show. "A warrior dies on his feet," he growled, "a prophet dies drooling in the dirt. And my brother seems to be choosing the latter path."

The elders shook their heads. "Visions are no shield," they said. "A man who sees too much eventually sees only himself."

But Tenskwatawa continued. The more doubts arose, the more intense his trances became. He let his helpers hold him until he screamed that invisible spirits would tear him apart. He beat himself with stones until blood ran down his face, shouting, "This is the sacrifice for you!"

Some wept, others turned away. The first whispered, "He's losing his mind." The others said, "He's losing his teeth—he's just biting into the void."

Geronimo later knew the same type of people: the false men who made grand gestures out of desperation. He despised them, as Tecumseh did. For a people who cling to such tongues cling to smoke—and smoke dissipates in the wind.

The prophet lost his teeth not only in the eyes of the warriors – he lost them in the hearts of those who understood: his gods were just theater.

The night before Tippecanoe was filled with smoke and false promises. Tenskwatawa stood before the warriors, their faces painted, their eyes tired, their stomachs empty. He raised his arms, called to the spirits, and screamed until the sky itself seemed to burst. "Tomorrow," he roared, "the white man's bullets will not strike you! They will fall into the earth like rain, they will hiss like water on fire!"

The men wanted to believe. They beat their chests, they howled, they screamed. But doubt smoldered in their eyes, a dark spark that no smoke could extinguish. For they had already seen bullets tear men apart. They knew the sound of someone screaming and falling in the dust.

Tecumseh wasn't there—he was in the South, negotiating, fighting elsewhere. And perhaps that was the biggest mistake: that the prophet held the reins alone. Without his brother to bring discipline, he had only his tongue. And his tongue was sharp, but without teeth.

When the battle came, before sunrise, the white men's rifles roared through the darkness. And the warriors, who had thought the bullets would ricochet, saw the opposite. They saw bodies torn apart, ribcages ripped open, heads bursting like pumpkins. The bullets flew, and they devoured flesh as if they were hungry for lies.

"But the prophet said—!" one cried before falling himself. Another opened his eyes wide, clutching his bloody shoulder. "His gods lie!"

Panic broke out. Men who had been cheering yesterday ran into the darkness, seeking cover, screaming for Tecumseh. But Tecumseh wasn't there—only Tenskwatawa, kneeling in the smoke, his arms raised to the sky, unable to stop the bullets.

The elders later murmured: "There he lost his teeth." Not from a blow, not from a spear. But because his words no longer had any bite. Because blood spoke louder than any vision.

Geronimo later experienced the same thing: medicine men who swore that bullets couldn't kill them—until they fell like everyone else. He, too, learned: faith can be a shield, but only as long as it doesn't hit lead.

The Prophet lost his teeth at Tippecanoe. Bullets spat out his lies, the earth swallowed his visions. And the warriors who survived spat his name into the wind like bitter smoke.

After Tippecanoe, the smoke was not only on the battlefield, but also in people's minds. The men who returned, limping, bleeding, distraught, saw Tenskwatawa with eyes that no longer held a spark of faith. Where yesterday he was a prophet, today he was just a drooling man with a blank stare.

"You said the bullets wouldn't hit us," one growled, his shirt still covered in blood, his shoulder riddled with holes. "But they tore my brother apart like a rabbit."

"You said the sky was our shield," another snarled, "but the sky was black, and it watched us die."

Tenskwatawa muttered, he stammered, he searched for new visions. "The gods are testing us," he said. "The spirits wanted sacrifices." But the men laughed bitterly, louder, harder. They had made enough sacrifices, and the spirits had betrayed them.

Women avoided him. Where he had once been considered holy, he was now avoided like a sick person. Children whispered that the prophet was actually dreaming of whiskey, not gods. The elders said, "His teeth have fallen out." Not literally—but his bite, his grip, his power.

When Tecumseh returned, he found a brother sitting in a corner, thin, with feverish eyes, barely daring to look at him. "Brother," he stammered, "the spirits... they were against us."

Tecumseh looked at him for a long time without a word. Then he spat into the dust and said simply: "The spirits were never with you. You invented them. And now the men are reinventing you—as a liar."

From that day on, Tenskwatawa was no longer the prophet. He was merely a shadow, tolerated but despised. His voice no longer had any weight, his hands no power.

Geronimo later experienced the same moments when false medicine men were exposed. He, too, saw how quickly a man could go from saint to outcast if his words didn't hold water.

The Prophet lost his teeth not in battle with the whites, but in the gaze of his own people. And that was the deeper blow—harder than any bullet, deadlier than any knife.

The camp was silent when Tenskwatawa appeared. Men averted their eyes, women dragged their children away, dogs growled. Where he had once been raised like a sacred banner, he now hung like a rag in the wind. No one struck him, no one killed him—worse: he was silently despised.

"A prophet without a bite," whispered the elders, "is like a wolf without fangs. He still lives, but no one fears him."

Tecumseh felt the shame. He had once defended his brother, had placed his visions in the service of the alliance. But now it was clear: Tenskwatawa was no longer a pillar of support, but a burden. He was dragging down the alliance's name, making it weaker, more vulnerable.

So the unspoken decision came. No grand judgment, no ritual. Just the slow movement that everyone understood: Tenskwatawa had to go. They gave him a hut at the edge of the camp, further away, each time a little further away, until he was more shadow than human.

He begged, he mumbled, he kept trying to sell visions. But no one bought. Even the boys who had once listened spellbound now laughed or threw stones at him. His mouth still spoke, but it was only gibberish. His teeth weren't just metaphor—he was really starting to lose them. Yellow, loose, falling out like rotten apples. Everyone who saw him said, "The gods have abandoned him. They're even taking away his mouth."

Tecumseh sometimes went to him. He brought him meat, corn, and water. But no more brotherly words, no warmth. Only cold duty. "You are my blood," he once said, "but you are no longer my prophet." Tenskwatawa lowered his gaze, and shame burned in his eyes like a torch without a wick.

Geronimo later saw such figures as well—men who once held power and then died in isolation. He, too, knew: exile among one's own people is worse than death.

The Prophet lost his teeth not only in words, but also in life. Every day of exile pulled out another tooth, until only the bare gums remained—a mouth that still wanted to scream, but no one could hear it.

Tenskwatawa was alive, but he was no longer a man. He was a shadow, a walking ghost, a monument of flesh and shame. In the camp, his name was no longer spoken with respect, but with derision, or not at all. Children threw mud at his hut, dogs urinated on his door.

But Tecumseh let him be. He didn't kill him, he didn't banish him for good. He kept him on the sidelines, just visible, just noticeable. For he understood: A false prophet is most useful when alive—bare, disgraced, without teeth.

He often led young warriors past Tenskwatawa's hut. "Look," he said, "this is the end of someone who lies and weakens us. The gods first eat their false voices in their mouths." Some laughed, others shuddered. But everyone understood the lesson.

The elders nodded. "He's like a gutted wolf, hung on a stake. An image that warns without the need for words."

Tenskwatawa himself continued to mutter, talking to shadows, trying to find his old tone. But without teeth, it sounded like the whimper of a dying dog. Some listened briefly, but only to mock the stammering.

Tecumseh used it. "A prophet without deeds," he said, "is worse than an enemy. For he kills from within. Never forget what he was. And never forget what he is now."

Geronimo later saw the same reminders in his time: false men who lived on as warning shadows so that the people would never again become so gullible. He, too, understood: Sometimes it's better to let the liar live, so that his decline speaks louder than his death.

The prophet lost his teeth—and remained as a toothless monument. Living proof that false gods have no bite, and that a people who follow them will ultimately have to chew in the dust themselves.

Tenskwatawa grew old, but not wise. His hut fell apart, his body grew emaciated, his gaze stared into nothingness. Sometimes he crouched by the fire, talking to the embers as if spirits were there. But no one listened anymore. His words were just air, dissipating in the wind.

Stories were told about him—not with reverence, but with mockery. "Remember," the warriors said, "when he promised the bullets would ricochet? My shoulder still bears the scar of his lie." Laughter followed, harsh, bitter.

Tecumseh hardly spoke to him anymore. Once he came, stood in front of the hut, and looked at his brother for a long time. Tenskwatawa raised his head, toothless, with a sunken face, a man who had once invoked gods and now could no longer even satisfy his own hunger.

"You are my blood," Tecumseh said softly, "but not my voice. Your mouth has inflicted more wounds on us than the white man's rifles." Then he left. No threat, no punishment—just a farewell.

The ancients said: “He has lost his teeth, and with his teeth, his people.”

Eventually, he disappeared completely. Some say he went into the woods and died of thirst. Others say he collapsed begging in front of a white fort. No one knows for sure, and perhaps that is the final punishment: not death itself, but oblivion.

But Tecumseh fought on, and his name grew. Tenskwatawa remained a footnote—a shadow rarely mentioned except as a warning.

Geronimo later also saw false prophets disappear without a trace, without a grave, without a song. And he knew: This is the end for all those who feed the people lies.

The prophet lost his teeth—and with them everything. No bite, no song, no legacy. Only dust blown away by the wind as history moved on.

Tecumseh's rage tears the sky

Tecumseh had remained silent for too long. The silence wasn't peace, but a storm in his stomach, swelling until it could no longer be contained. After Tippecanoe, after his brother's lies, after the white man's mockery, after the treaties that chopped the land up like pieces of meat—at some point, it was over.

He stepped before his people, and the air itself seemed to stand still. The warriors looked at him, the elderly pulled their blankets tighter, the women held their children tight. They knew that look—not that of the speaker, not that of the brother, but that of the man about to tear the sky apart.

"Enough," he began, and it sounded not like a word, but like a clap of thunder. "Enough treaties. Enough lies. Enough whiskey. Enough white greed." His voice grew louder, harder, until it rolled across the fields like a storm.

"They say we're weak," he cried. "They say we're broken. But they're wrong. We're not broken—we're angry. And anger is stronger than any bullet, stronger than any piece of paper, stronger than any bastard in Washington."

The warriors screamed, howled, and beat their chests with their fists. The rage was within them, long bottled up, and now Tecumseh let it out like fire from a burst cauldron.

"Look at the sky!" he roared. "See how it turns red when smoke rises! This is our sky! No white man, no general, no president owns it. And I tell you: My fury will rend the sky until no man up there doubts that we are alive and fighting!"

The old men whispered: “This is no longer a man, this is thunder itself.”

Geronimo later experienced the same storm. He, too, stood before his people, he, too, screamed, he, too, swore that his rage would tear open the heavens. For only thus could a people survive—when their rage was greater than the chains that held them.

Tecumseh's rage wasn't a shout into the wind. It was an oath. And the heavens themselves seemed to tremble as he uttered it.

Words alone won't tear the sky apart. Tecumseh knew that. So he let his fury run wild—like a pack of wolves unleashed on the settlers' fields.

The first attacks were swift, brutal, and merciless. Settlements that smelled of bacon and corn yesterday were filled with smoke the next morning. Houses burned, herds of cattle ran screaming through the night, children screamed, women cried, men died. No treaty, no quill pen could extinguish this. Only blood wrote the new message:*We're still here. We're angry.*

The warriors were unleashed. They struck not only with arrows and tomahawks—they struck with the rage that had been brewing in their bellies for years. Every blow was a response to a lie, every flame a response to a piece of stolen land.

The ancients said, "Anger is fire. It warms, but it also consumes." But Tecumseh countered. "Better that it consumes their houses than our souls."

The settlers called it terror, called Tecumseh a devil, a bastard of filth. But their cries were of no use. They had sold whiskey, stolen land, and mocked gods. Now they were getting their comeuppance, and it came not in ink, but in blood.

Washington received reports. Every letter stank of smoke, of panic. "The Indians are out of control," the officers wrote. "Tecumseh is burning the country." And in the marble halls, they began to fear his name—not as a rebel, but as a natural phenomenon that could not be stopped.

Geronimo later did the same. He, too, burned settlements; he, too, brought the war into the homes, into the beds, into the dreams of the white people. He, too, knew: Only when the rage reaches into the bedrooms do they realize you're alive.

Tecumseh's rage exploded. No law, no priest, no soldier could tame it. It was out there, it was fire, it was a storm that began to tear the heavens themselves apart.

The whites in the South called Tecumseh an enemy, the British in the North called him an ally. But Tecumseh knew that both meant the same thing: being used as long as one was useful.

The British gave guns, yes, but always with a twitch in their eyes, always with the question:*How long do we need it?*
Powder, bullets, promises—the whole package, but never without conditions. "Fight for us against Washington," they said. "Then we'll protect your country."

Tecumseh laughed bitterly. "Protect us?" he spat. "You protect us like a butcher protects a calf—until he draws his knife."

His anger grew. Not just against Washington, not just against the bastards who wrote treaties like death sentences. Now also against London, which saw its warriors like chess pieces. "They want us as spears, not as men," he told the elders. "But spears break. Men don't."

He began to say it aloud, to his warriors. "The British are dogs. They eat with you, and when the bones become thin, they bite your throat." Some looked nervous—weapons were weapons, no matter who they came from. But most nodded. They had seen how the British celebrated after victories and disappeared after defeats, like shadows.

The elders murmured, "A false friend is worse than an enemy." And Tecumseh understood: his anger could be directed not only against the officers in Washington, but also against the officers in London, who spoke the same language of lies—only with a different accent.

Geronimo later learned the same thing. He, too, received weapons from white people, only to realize that every bullet was a guilt, every handshake a shackle. He, too, burned inwardly against the "friends" who tolerated him only as long as he shed blood for their enemies.

Tecumseh's rage tore through the sky because it no longer knew any direction. It wasn't north or south, friend or foe. It was a storm against all who saw Native Americans as mere tools. And this storm began to devour everyone.

The letters that reached Washington were filled with smoke and fear. "Tecumseh is burning the country," the officers wrote. "He is gathering tribes, he is threatening a war greater than anything we have seen before." But the men in the marble halls read the words as if they were plays. Paper doesn't smell of blood, and so they couldn't believe how much the sky was already shaking.

But Tecumseh didn't just stop at smoke signals or raids. He spoke loudly, so loudly that even the president's ears had to hear him. He had messages carried through intermediaries to generals, traders, and politicians: "I will see your cities burn. I will tear up your treaties. I will take back your land, even if it's only over your dead bodies."

They weren't polite threats. Not a diplomatic "We demand justice." No, they were words like tomahawks: raw, direct, sharp. "You killed our children, so I will throw your children into the river." "You burned our fields, so I will fertilize your corn with blood."

The whites were horrified—not because they feared it, but because someone had the courage to say it like that. In the marble halls, they called him a "savage," a "monster," an "animal that must be shot." But deep down, they knew: That's not how an animal talks. That's how a man who knows he's right speaks.

The elders among his people said, "Your anger echoes like thunder." And it was true—every sentence Tecumseh uttered was not just a threat, it was a thunderclap that shook the pillars of Washington.

Geronimo later did the same. He, too, sent threats so direct that they sounded like whiplashes in the ears of the white people. He, too, knew: fear doesn't grow from smoke, but from words that sound as if they've already happened.

Tecumseh's rage was more than battles. It was a voice Washington heard like thunder over the Capitol—thunder that no pen or law could silence.

Tecumseh rode not for glory, not for trade, not for land—he rode for fury. He rode from village to village, from tribe to tribe, and wherever he appeared, it was as if a storm were gathering. Men came out of their huts, women hugged children to their breasts, even the elderly stood up when his voice rang out.

"Your fields will disappear," he cried, "if you continue to stand still. Your children will be hunted like dogs if you continue to wait. Your names will be forgotten if you continue to sell yourselves for whiskey and rags. Do you want to die like rats in the corners, or do you want to live like men tearing open the sky?"

His words weren't wooing, they were beatings. He insulted the hesitant, he mocked the weak, he shouted in the faces of the elderly: "You sit and wait until the earth grows over you. But I tell you: The earth does not belong to those who sit, but to those who fight!"

Some hated him for it, calling him arrogant and impudent. But even they couldn't stop listening. Because in every word there was thunder that rippled through the gut and stayed there.

The boys cheered, the warriors swore to raise their tomahawks for him. Entire villages joined, not out of love, but out of fear of being left behind by the fury that swept everything away like a storm.

The old men said, "He doesn't talk like a man, he talks like the weather." And that was it: Tecumseh was not a diplomat, he was a storm.

Geronimo later did exactly the same thing. He, too, rode from camp to camp, shouting to wake his men, shoving cowardice in their faces until they were more afraid of his voice than of the white man's guns.

Tecumseh's rage wasn't just in battles, not just in fire. It was in words that struck like lightning. Every sentence a blow. Every appearance a thunderstorm. Every place he left was electrified—charged with the threat that the heavens would soon rip open.

Tecumseh was no longer a man you simply met to shake hands with. He was a hurricane that rode into the village. The children wept, the elderly pulled their blankets tighter, and even the warriors who tried to summon him didn't know whether they wanted him or feared him.

He spoke with a voice like thunder, but sometimes it shook so that it seemed as if the heavens themselves would burst. "You talk about peace?" he roared at a council member. "Your peace is the stench of rotten flesh! You talk about security? Your security is just a noose around your neck that Washington is tightening!"

The men bowed their heads. Not out of shame—out of fear. For Tecumseh's rage was so great that it affected everyone. Including their own.

Some whispered, "He'll burn us all, friend and foe." Others said, "He's no longer just a man. He's storm, lightning, fire." And that's precisely what made them uneasy. Because a storm doesn't protect—it devours everything.

Tecumseh noticed, but he couldn't help it. His blood boiled, his words burst out like arrows without a quiver. "I fear no white man," he cried. "But woe to the red man who cowers! You will not be my brothers—you will be my prey if you feed the enemy!"

The elders looked worried. "A man who screams like that will eventually eat himself," they murmured. But they also knew: without this rage, no tribe would rise up, no one would draw a knife.

Geronimo later carried the same fire. His allies, too, whispered that he was more storm than man. They, too, feared that he would one day crush friend and foe alike. But they followed him nonetheless—for fear of being left behind.

Tecumseh's rage was so great that it even made his friends tremble. He was no longer just a leader. He was a force of nature. And anyone who stood too close risked being struck by lightning.

The night was quiet, but the storm raged in Tecumseh's breast. He stood alone by the fire, the flames licking at his face, the smoke reaching into the sky like black fingers. Some later said they saw him there, speaking—not to men, but directly to heaven.

"Listen to me," he growled into the darkness. "I know I will die. Every warrior knows it. But when my body falls, my rage will live on. It will rustle in your trees, rage in your rivers, strike in every lightning bolt that tears through your roofs."

He clenched his fists, pounding them against his chest as if trying to force the thunder out. "My rage never dies. It eats into your bones, it throws you from

your homes, it haunts your dreams. Even if my blood rots in the earth, my wrath will still burn in the heavens."

The elders who secretly listened said, "He swears like a god, not like a man." And perhaps that was so. Perhaps Tecumseh had long since crossed the line where anger was more than emotion—a legacy, a curse, a power greater than his body.

The warriors who later heard of his death remembered this oath. Some said they heard it in the thunder, others in the storm over the rivers. Whether truth or legend, it made no difference. The sky tore, and his name was the Rupture.

Geronimo knew this legacy. He, too, swore that his anger would live on after his death. He, too, wanted to be not just a man, but a storm, a fire, a specter that would never let the white people sleep peacefully again.

Tecumseh was mortal. But his rage was not. It hung like thunder over the land long after his heart had stopped. And so it continued to tear the heavens apart until even the gods listened.

Rats dance in the White House

The White House was new, gleaming, with its columns and its magnificent plasterwork. A symbol of the United States' fledgling power, built on the backs of workers who sweated, cursed, and died while the masters ranted about democracy. But behind the walls, between the brocade curtains and polished floors, something was already creeping—the rats.

They scurried through basements and kitchens, through pantries and drains. They nibbled at the edges of files, licked the grease from plates, and shat in the corners, while the presidents daydreamed upstairs.

It was more than just cattle. It was a picture. For while outside Tecumseh stirred the tribes, while blood flowed in the fields and smoke rose into the sky, men in fine suits sat in the White House, talking of "order" and "progress" – and the rats laughed beneath their feet.

"The house is white," murmured a servant, "but its belly is black with filth." And he was right. For the rats weren't just in the masonry—they were also sitting at

the table. Politicians devouring treaties like bread, generals nipping at careers, merchants going out the back doors and filling their pockets with gold.

Everyone wanted something. Land, power, titles. No one saw the bones lying in the dust outside. They only saw the next deal, the next piece of land, the next "seal." And while they lied, while they wrote plans, while they drank whiskey, at night, the scratching of real rats could be heard in the basement, like applause for their game.

The old folks in the West said, "A house where rats dance will eventually fall apart." But in Washington, no one listened to such sayings. They laughed at the West, at Tecumseh, at the "savages." They didn't know that the rats already lived in their walls, that they had long since become part of the house.

Geronimo later saw the same face: white men in fine houses, talking of order while their bellies teemed with rats. He, too, knew: beauty above, decay below—that's how every empire is built.

The White House shone. But at night, the rats danced, and their dance was more honest than any speech in the Oval Office.

The rats downstairs ate breadcrumbs, the rats upstairs ate the future. In the White House, the voices sounded as smooth as freshly polished silver, but the stench was the same as in the basement: greed, fear, decay.

The politicians sat at long tables, brandishing quills like daggers. They didn't write poems, but judgments. Every line on the paper was a cut in the flesh of those living out there in the filth. "Treats," they called them. "Progress." But in truth, they were just new ways of stealing land and turning debt into chains.

A senator laughed at the latest reports from the West. "Tecumseh? A savage. A problem we'll soon have solved." He dipped bread in whiskey as if sipping blood. Beside him, a general muttered, "We need more men, more ammunition. But not too expensive—voters don't like bills."

That's how they spoke. Land was just a number to them, war just a business, blood just a footnote. They argued about whether to expand north or south first, whether to build more railroads or more forts. Not a word of respect. Not a thought for the bones that already creaked beneath every step.

The rats scratched in the walls and it sounded like laughter.

A young representative asked quietly, "And if Tecumseh wins? If the tribes really unite?" Silence followed. Then an old politician burst into laughter. "Unite? The Reds? They hate each other more than they hate us! No, they'll never be dangerous to us." He blew his whistle, and the smoke rose like mockery.

The old men in Tecumseh's camp would have said, "This is the dance of the rats—they bite each other and don't notice that the cat is already at the door." But in Washington, they considered themselves untouchable, gods in colonnades.

Geronimo later witnessed the same game. White men using lines on maps to crush entire nations who considered themselves invincible, while outside the flames were already blazing.

The politicians were no better than the rats in the basement. They were just better dressed. And when they laughed, it sounded just as shrill as the squeaking beneath the floorboards.

The rats in the basement gnawed bones. The generals in the White House gnawed maps. Every line was a path men had to march, every circle a fort that would demand blood. But for the generals, it wasn't a sacrifice—it was arithmetic. War was business, and deaths were numbers.

They spread out maps like butchers their meat. "Here we march," said one, "there we strike." "How much will it cost?" asked another. "Ten thousand dollars, maybe more. But we'll get one hundred thousand back if we sell the land." And everyone nodded, as if they were talking about cows, not men.

They spoke of "troop strength" and "casualties" as if they were talking about weather and rain. One general scribbled: "Five hundred men killed, acceptable." Acceptable. The word weighed as heavy as lead, and yet they spoke it while carving roast meat and drinking wine.

Tecumseh's name came up again and again. "He's dangerous," one said. "He'll set them all on fire." "Then we'll crush him," another growled. "Like you crush a rat infestation—with traps, with poison, with fire." They didn't understand that you can't poison anger. They only understood calculation.

The old days would have said, "A general who sees war as commerce will eventually sell his own flesh." But the generals in Washington believed they

were untouchable. For them, every fallen soldier was just a coin clinking into the barrel.

Geronimo later experienced the same thing: White officers playing with cards and numbers while men died outside. He, too, knew: They weren't just feasting on the dead—they were feasting on the future.

The generals in the White House weren't warriors. They were traders in uniform. And when they laughed, it was the laughter of rats fed on the blood of others.

Upstairs in the White House, chandeliers glowed; down in the basement, rats squeaked. Upstairs, men and women danced in silky gowns; down below, gray mouths gnawed on scraps falling from the banquet tables. Two dances, the same rhythm: consuming and forgetting.

The first lady had musicians play, violins cutting sweetly through the cigar smoke. Men sweated in uniforms, women giggled behind fans. There was ham, roast venison, cake, sugar, and whiskey in glasses that shone like little suns. Every bite was fatty, every sip sticky with excess.

And meanwhile, outside, not a hundred miles away, men crawled in the dirt, freezing, dying, crying for water. Tecumseh's warriors collected blood in their hands, while inside, wine was spilled because a lady had to laugh.

A servant carrying out the dishes cursed quietly when he heard the rats in the cellar. "They dance better than the people upstairs," he muttered. And he was right. For the rats were more honest. They ate whatever was there. The people upstairs ate as if there were no dead.

A general who had been drawing casualties on maps that afternoon was at the ball that evening, sweating his way through dances as if his belly weren't stuffed with "acceptable losses." His shoes gleamed, while somewhere outside, men ran barefoot through the snow.

The old folks in the West would have said, "A house where the music is too loud can no longer hear the rats." And that's exactly how it was. The violin covered the scratching, the squeaking, the cracking in the wood. But the rats were there, and they laughed while the people celebrated themselves.

Geronimo later saw the same contradiction. White mansions full of gleam, while outside bones bleached. He, too, knew: There is no greater insult than luxury over corpses.

The White House was magnificent, yes. But the rats danced beneath it, and their dance was more honest, purer, more cruel. For he said: Everything you build is already rotting from the bottom up.

The White House didn't just smell of cigars and perfume; it smelled of business. Behind doors, in smoking rooms, and between empty whiskey glasses, bags full of gold flew back and forth.

"For the good of the people," they said, shaking hands. But in truth, it was about land, railroads, whiskey, the next treaty that would send more Native Americans into the void. Every man here had two stomachs—one to eat fat, and one to swallow coins.

A senator slid a slip of paper to a merchant. "Land in the West. Cheap if we sign it quickly. A few villages will have to go, but we'll write them off." The merchant laughed and tucked the slip into his pocket as if it were a delicacy.

A general offered a contractor contracts. "We need more powder, more rifles. Double the price, no problem. Congress will pay." And while men were dying outside, bills were being written here that were worth more than an entire village of children.

The rats in the basement scratched and it sounded as if they were applauding.

"Corruption?" one of the gentlemen asked when a young MP tentatively opened his mouth. "We just call it business." And the matter was settled. Morality is for preachers, not politicians.

The ancients in the West said: “A man whose pockets are full of gold has no hands left for his people.” But here the opposite was the law: the fuller the pockets, the louder the talk of “the good of the nation.”

Geronimo later saw the same filth. Merchants selling weapons to both sides, politicians breaking treaties and then being celebrated at the end. He, too, knew: The greatest enemy doesn't carry a tomahawk, but a quill pen and a full wallet.

In the White House, they stuffed their pockets while outside, bones cracked in the ground. And the rats danced to the tune as if they had played the tune themselves.

In the White House, they gave speeches that sounded like honey. "Freedom," they said. "Equality. Justice." Words shining like gold pieces, polished, repeated, placed on pedestals.

But while they talked, soldiers marched west, burned villages, and stole land. While they preached freedom, ships full of slaves were towed across the Atlantic, men and women in chains who had never heard a word of "equality."

It was a play, performed in fine halls while blood soaked the ground outside. "The United States," a president proudly declared, "is the light of the world." But his shoes stood in the dirt that others had to shovel away.

A senator yelled in Congress, "We are the people of the future!" and that same evening he signed a treaty that once again turned entire tribes into refugees. He called it "expansion." The rats in the basement would have called it more honestly:*Eat.*

The old men in the West would have said, "A man who carries freedom in his mouth and chains in his hand is worse than a wolf." And they were right. For a wolf kills quickly. These men killed slowly, with papers, with laws, with whiskey.

Tecumseh felt this hypocrisy like smoke in his throat. He knew: the freedom they spoke of wasn't meant for him. It was a garment given only to one's own wives, while the others lay naked in the dust.

Geronimo later understood the same thing. He, too, heard the sermons about "justice" and "peace" while bullets flew around his ears. He, too, knew: words here are just sugar, sweetening the poison.

Speeches of freedom echoed in the White House, but outside, rats danced over bones. And the bones were more honest than any presidential speech.

At night, the White House was silent. The candles were blown out, the corridors empty, the presidents slept with heavy stomachs and calm faces. But down below, in the basements, in the walls, real life began.

The rats came out, dozens, hundreds. They scurried across the floors, climbed the barrels, and gnawed at the papers that had fallen from the tables. They bit into files, contracts, and speeches, as if they knew these words were worth as little as the bones they usually gnawed.

A servant adding wood late one night saw them and murmured, "They're dancing. The rats dance when the masters are asleep."

It was an image that stuck in their minds. Power above, food below. Brilliant speeches above, stench below. But it was clear: the rats were more honest. They didn't pretend to have ideals. They just wanted to survive, eat, and reproduce. That's exactly what Washington did, too—only with nicer words.

The old days would have said, "A house in which rats dance is rotting from the inside." And so it was. Every treaty, every lie, every piece of stolen land gnawed at its foundation. The White House stood bright, proud, and white. But its soul had long since become black, riddled with cracks that no plaster could conceal.

Geronimo later understood the same thing: no matter how much they polished the white people's facades, in the end the foundation stank of dirt, blood, and rat piss.

The White House was not a temple. It was a structure where the rats performed the true dance at night—and this dance spoke the truth: Everything built on blood is eaten away from within.

Canada, dirty promise in the north

Canada – that sounded like a lifeline to many tribes. A place where white people were different, where the British Crown supposedly brought justice, where one could get weapons, protection, perhaps even land. A promise that reeked of freedom. But anyone who got too close to it immediately tasted the filth beneath.

Tecumseh knew this. He had seen the British officers—their shining uniforms, their well-groomed mustaches, their sweet words. "Brother," they said, "we will help you. Fight for us against the Americans, and we will give you security." But security was just a word, and behind their eyes flashed a cold hunger for power.

The British didn't need Tecumseh because they respected him, but because he was a tool for them. A spear that could be thrown as long as it was sharp. A dog that could be fed as long as it bit.

"Canada," murmured Tecumseh by the fire, "is not a country. It's a trade. A dirty trade where we always lose."

His men listened, but many wanted to believe. They saw the guns, the powder kegs, the shining promises. "With the British," they said, "we can smash Washington." But the elders shook their heads. "A white king is still a white king. And a king sitting far away doesn't see you as a brother—he sees you as a pawn."

And that's exactly how it was. Canada wasn't a refuge, but a trap. A promise that stank like rotten fish beneath a shiny scale.

Geronimo later experienced the same deception. He, too, received offers from white people promising help, protection, and weapons—but always with chains in the shadows. He, too, learned: Every stranger who says "friend" wants something.

Canada was a golden promise in the British mouths. But in Tecumseh's eyes, it was nothing more than a dirty bargain—a promise that rotted even as it was spoken.

The British came with flags, drums, and uniforms so shiny they even made the sun blink. They spoke in a refined tone, as if they were the superior white people—not as greedy, not as crude, not as dirty as the bastards from Washington.

"We are your brothers," they said. "We fight with you. We share the land, we share the blood."

Tecumseh listened, but he didn't smile. His gaze was cold, so cold that the officers scratched their wigs and their voices faltered for a moment. "You talk a lot," he said. "But words are lighter than smoke. I want to see if you have fire, too."

And so he put them to the test. He demanded weapons, not promises. Ammunition, not songs. He wanted to see soldiers marching side by side, not just messengers bearing empty oaths.

The British nodded, smiled, and raised glasses. "Of course, brother. Of course." But when the wagons arrived, they were half empty. The rifles were old, the powder damp, the crates smaller than promised.

The warriors murmured. "Is this their help?" One spat in the dust. "They talk like gods and deliver like shopkeepers."

The British explained, apologized, and vowed to do better next time. But everyone knew: the next time would be the same.

Tecumseh felt the betrayal like a splinter in his flesh. "They want to keep us alive," he said, "but not strongly. Strong enough to weaken their enemies. Weak enough to never become their friends."

The old men nodded. "A dog that's fed too well will eventually bite your hand. So they only feed you enough to keep you hungry."

Geronimo later experienced the same filth. Weapons from white men that were never as good as promised, help that always came too late. He, too, understood: A promise from strangers is a bone—and always already chewed on.

Canada shone in speeches, but in hands it was dirty. And Tecumseh knew: A shining promise is always the first to be broken.

The British had two faces, and both stank. In the North, they talked about an "alliance with the tribes" and a "common fight against the Americans." In the South, they were sitting at the table with the same bastards from Washington, drinking tea, chewing on treaties, and laughing over maps.

"Brothers in war," they said to Tecumseh. "Trading partners in peace," they said to the Americans. Both at once, without blushing.

Tecumseh realized it faster than most. "They're playing on both sides of the river," he growled. "And when the water rises, they'll let us drown."

The British were polite, charming, with gold buttons and complicated sentences. But behind the polite mask lay the same greed as any merchant trading whiskey for land. Only the British packaged it better—with parades and flags, with drums and speeches that sounded like victory but reeked of betrayal.

Once, a messenger returned from a British meeting in Canada. He reported: "They talk about us there like tools. Not brothers, not friends. Tools." Tecumseh's anger boiled, but he just nodded. "I knew that. Tools are thrown away when they're blunt."

The ancients said, “A man with two tongues is more dangerous than a man with two blades.” And the British didn’t just have two tongues—they had a whole mouth full of lies.

Geronimo later experienced the same shit with the Mexicans. Friend today, enemy tomorrow, friend again the day after – as long as it suited them. He, too, knew: The powerful always talk about alliances as long as they are the ones who set the price.

Canada was a promise—but only for those foolish enough to take the British tongue for truth. Tecumseh had long since heard only the hissing of rats behind the polite words.

In the camp, the mood fluctuated like a tree in a storm. Some warriors saw the British as their savior. "They have guns," they said. "They have ships. They have power. With them, we can break Washington."

Others grumbled. "They talk fine, yes. But their hands smell of the same lies as the Americans'."

Tecumseh stood between them, his rage boiling. He knew: hope was a drug, more dangerous than whiskey. It blinded men. It made them believe that a king across the sea had more justice in his heart than the bastards in Washington.

"Listen to me," he thundered around the fire. "The British give us weapons because they need us. Not because they love us. They give us bread so we're strong enough to bleed for them. But when we fall, they dance over our bones, just like the Americans."

Some nodded, others remained silent. Hope is hard to kill—it dies slower than a man with a bullet in his stomach.

At night, the young whispered of Canada as if it were a promised land. "There," they said, "we will be safe." The old people shook their heads. "A promise that comes from strangers is always poisonous."

And the poison worked. Distrust grew, divisions ran through the camp. Some wanted to trust blindly, others wanted to expel the British immediately. And that was precisely the Crown's game—they gave just enough to sow discord.

Geronimo later experienced the same poison. He, too, saw how strangers brought small gifts that planted distrust in people's hearts. He, too, knew: The enemy's greatest weapon is not the gun—it is the promise.

Canada was a word that sounded like medicine but tasted like poison. Tecumseh could already sense it in the air: the promise wouldn't save them. It would only slow their deaths.

It wasn't a council around the fire. It was a reckoning. Tecumseh stood before the British officers, their red uniforms gleaming in the light, their swords clanging, their faces cold and superior, like marble with a mustache.

"You call us brothers," he began, his voice so harsh that even the drums in the background fell silent. "But brothers share pain and blood. You only share weapons, and even those are rusty."

An officer cleared his throat and started to speak, but Tecumseh cut him off. "You promise us safety, yet you watch our villages burn. You promise us protection, yet you're only there when you gain something for yourself. Your crown is not a sun—it's a cold moon that only takes and gives nothing."

The warriors behind him snorted in agreement. The Britons looked at each other, uneasy but trying to keep up their facade.

"We fight for you," Tecumseh continued, "but when we fall, you speak of us as cattle that were useful until they died. You talk of honor, but your trade stinks. You talk of friendship, but your heart is as empty as your whiskey barrel when the last rat drinks from it."

The words fell like blows. One of the officers clenched his fist, another looked away as if seeking escape. But Tecumseh didn't retreat a step.

"You have two tongues," he roared, "and both lie. You are not brothers. You are merchants who whitewash their wares until they shine. But we smell the stench. And I tell you: If you betray us, my wrath will not only fall on Washington—it will also tear down your flags!"

The silence that followed was heavy. Even the rats, rustling somewhere in the straw, held their breath.

The elders nodded. "Thus speaks a man who is not afraid of kings."

Geronimo later did the same. He, too, hurled the truth in the faces of strangers, without fear of uniforms, without reverence for gold buttons. For those who live in chains have only one weapon: the truth, which cuts like a knife.

Canada was a dirty promise. And on that day, Tecumseh tore off the mask until only the ugly face of betrayal remained beneath.

The officers adjusted their uniforms, as if buttons and shining brass could mask the blows of Tecumseh's words. One smiled, as thin as a crack in glass.

"Brother," he said, "you misunderstand us. We are allies. The Crown does not forget its friends."

But the warriors laughed bitterly. "Friends?" one cried. "Your chests are half empty, your promises doubly full. Your flag flutters high, but the ground beneath it is rotting."

The British tried to maintain their composure. They spoke of "strategic considerations," of "supply problems," of "political complications." Words, words, words—but no one in the room believed it anymore.

Tecumseh crossed his arms. "You talk like men who sleep in silken beds. You've never lain in the dirt while bullets whistled over your head. Your complications are just excuses. And excuses are worse than cowardice."

The silence that followed was piercing. The rustling of a rat nibbling in the straw was heard, and everyone knew: the sound was more honest than any word from a British mouth.

An officer slammed his fist on the table. "We risk our blood for you!" Tecumseh took a step closer, so close their faces almost touched. "Your blood?" he hissed. "Where is it? I only see our blood soaking the ground. Your blood sits in bottles of red wine."

The British couldn't say anything. They kept up the facade, but it was crumbling. Every warrior in the room saw it, everyone understood: these men were not brothers. They were traders disguised as warriors.

The old men murmured, “A friend who hesitates when you bleed is no friend—he is a vulture who waits until you fall.”

Geronimo later realized exactly the same thing. He, too, saw strangers who called themselves friends but were never there when the dust turned red. He, too, realized: The fake brothers wear uniforms and smiles—and neither will last when the fire comes.

Canada was finally exposed. A promise that only shone as long as you didn't bite into it. And as soon as you bit into it, all you tasted was rot.

In the end, nothing remained of Canada but smoke and bitter realization. Tecumseh sat by the fire, staring into the embers, and knew: The promise was a bone thrown to him—not to feed, but to keep quiet.

"The British are no better than Washington," he said. "Just more adept at lying. Their chains shine brighter, but they cut just as deep."

His warriors listened silently. Some had still hoped that salvation lay beyond the border. But now they saw clearly: Canada was not a place of refuge, but a mirror in which the same faces grinned—only with different flags, different songs, but the same greedy eyes.

The elders nodded. "A king sitting far away cannot protect you. He can only count your bones if they bring him profit."

A young warrior asked, "And what do we have left?" Tecumseh answered without hesitation: "Ourselves. No one else. No king, no president, no red cloth with lions and crowns. Only us, our anger, our soil."

It was a bitter truth, but it sharpened more than any sword. For those who no longer have illusions fight harder.

Geronimo later learned exactly the same thing. He, too, realized that no foreign power would bring him freedom—neither Mexican nor American, neither white nor crown. Freedom was something one could tear from the teeth of one's enemy.

Canada was a dirty promise that went up in smoke. And Tecumseh understood: salvation would come not from the north, not from the west, not from foreign flags. Salvation could only come from within one's own fists.

So the last shred of hope died, and in its place grew anger—anger that would tear the heavens themselves apart.

The dead sing louder than the living

After every battle, silence remained. But it wasn't an empty silence. It was a humming, a whispering, a scratching in the air. The dead spoke. Not with tongues, not with words—but with the weight that hung over the ground.

Tecumseh heard it. He couldn't enter a camp where blood had been shed without feeling the singing. It wasn't a song of joy, not a song of comfort. It was a chorus of lament, anger, and memories that refused to fade.

The living spoke quietly, almost in whispers, as if afraid to disturb the voices of the dead. "My brother lies there." "My son lies there." But the dead weren't bothered by whispers or screams. They sang anyway.

The ancients said, “The spirits of the fallen remain until their cause is fulfilled.” And their cause was far from fulfilled.

Tecumseh knew: The living could negotiate, doubt, drink, and forget. But the dead never forgot. Every man lying in the dust bore a demand into the earth:*Don't forget me. Keep fighting.*

Sometimes it seemed as if the dead were stronger than the living. Their voices crept into dreams, startling men at night, making women weep, and keeping children silent.

Geronimo later understood exactly the same thing. He, too, heard the voices of his fallen soldiers telling him: "Not yet. You're not finished yet." He, too, knew: Sometimes it's not the living who motivate you—but those who are already lying in the dust.

The dead sang louder than the living. And this song never left anyone who heard it.

In the nights after the battles, the camp became restless. The fire crackled, but it didn't provide enough warmth to keep out the voices outside. The warriors lay on blankets, rolling from side to side, while shadows flitted between the tents.

Sometimes you heard a whisper, quiet, almost like wind. But if you listened, they were words. Names. Curses. Demands. "Avenge me." - "Don't forget me." - "Give me back my place."

A young warrior jumped up one night, drenched in sweat. "My brother was here," he cried. "He stood at my feet, bloody, but he spoke to me. He told me not to sleep while the enemy was still alive." The elders were silent. No one objected. For everyone had seen similar things.

Tecumseh sat still, listening, and he knew: The ghosts are not hallucinations. They are the price of war. They will remain until the debt is paid—and the debt was still endless.

This made the warriors stronger, but also more torn. Some were afraid to fall asleep, fearing the dead would reach out in their dreams. Others deliberately

sought out the voices because they gave them strength. "If I fall," said one, "then I want to sing like that too. I also want to be so loud that my people won't forget me."

The elders murmured, "Spirit is harder than iron. Iron rusts, but voices remain."

Geronimo later experienced the same horror. He, too, saw the fallen at night, heard them talk, heard them admonish. And he understood: The whites feared guns. But the Indians feared their dead—and thus became more invincible.

The dead were always there. They sat by the fire, they lay between the tents, they whispered in the wind. And their voices were louder than those of the living.

Tecumseh knew the spirits would not remain silent. So he turned them not into fear, but into a tool. He stood before his warriors, raised his hands, and spoke not only for himself, but for the voices rumbling in the ground.

"You hear them," he cried. "I know you hear them. Your brothers, your sons, your fathers. They are not dead. They are here. They sing in the earth, in the flames, in the wind."

The warriors nodded, some with tears, some with clenched fists.

"You think we're fighting alone?" he continued. "No! Every dead man fights with us. Everyone who has fallen now stands behind us. We are more than Washington counts. Because they only count the living—but we also count the dead."

The words struck like arrows. Men who had trembled the day before stood up, reaching for tomahawks as if the voices burned in their hands.

"If you waver," thundered Tecumseh, "remember: your brother sees you. If you fall, know this: you will not be silent. You will continue to sing, you will be louder than the bastards who think they can break us!"

The elders nodded. "He made the spirits his soldiers."

And so it was. The dead were no longer just memories; they became weapons that Tecumseh incorporated into every speech. No bullet, no piece of paper, no general could fight against voices that crept through dreams and made hearts beat faster.

Geronimo later did the same thing. He, too, said: "Our dead are not gone—they ride with us." He, too, used the voices to remind his people that the war was not lost as long as the cries of the fallen could still be heard.

The dead sang – and Tecumseh let their voices become drums that made every heart in the camp beat.

Not every voice from the earth was a song of courage. Some were warnings, some were laments, some were so sharp that they stuck like knives in the heads of the living.

Some warriors awoke screaming, grasping for weapons, thinking the dead man beside them was coming for them. One cut his own skin to expel the "whispering" from his blood. Another ran naked into the river, believing the spirits were trying to cleanse him.

Tecumseh saw it. He knew: the dead are a double-edged sword. They strengthen, but they also tear apart. "The voices are like fire," he said. "If you control them, they warm you. If you lose them, they burn you."

The elders nodded. "The spirits want revenge, but they also want peace. And they will only find peace when we win—or when we perish."

Some warriors began to fear the spirits more than the white men. "What if I fall?" one asked. "What if my voice sings the wrong words? What if my brother hears me and breaks?"

The camp was divided—courage and madness ran side by side. The dead spurred the living on, but they also drained them.

But Tecumseh held the reins as tightly as he could. "Let them sing," he said. "Let them roar. We will take their voices and make them into blades. But we must not let them tear us apart."

Geronimo later witnessed the same madness. He, too, heard warriors laughing and crying in their sleep, saying the dead were already riding beside them. He, too, knew: ghosts are the strongest allies—and the most dangerous enemies.

The dead sang, louder and louder. And sometimes it was hard to tell whether it was a song of strength or a song of madness.

Tecumseh knew: If everyone hears the spirits alone, they will tear the people apart. One man dreams of revenge, the next of peace, a third of blood sacrifice.

Chaos. Madness. Disintegration. So he did what only a leader can do—he gave form to the chaos.

He called the warriors together, by night, by a crackling fire. "You hear voices," he began. "All of you. Your brothers, your fathers, your sons. Everyone hears something different. But we mustn't each sing our own song. We need one song that carries us all."

Then he struck the ground with his spear. "From today on, there is only one song. The song of the dead is not a whisper, not a wailing, not a madness. It is a cry:*Freedom or nothing.*“

The men screamed. Some howled as if they had waited years to hear the word out loud. Others pounded the earth with their fists as if trying to awaken the spirits.

“If you hear them,” cried Tecumseh, “then hear them say:*Keep fighting! Unite!*When you dream, dream not of fear, but of fire! Every dead person sings the same song—and we sing it with them!"

The voices of the dead thus became a chorus of resistance. Whispers became thunder, madness became order, fear became weapons.

The elders said, “He transformed the song of the spirits into a drum that drives us all.”

Geronimo later did the same. He, too, formed the memories of his fallen soldiers into a collective song that lived in every throat. He, too, knew: Those who don't organize the voices of the dead will be consumed by them. Those who organize them will turn them into an army that never dies.

And so the dead sang—and this time the living sang along. A song that rolled through the night, louder than any gun, deeper than any horn. A song that said: We do not die. We are many. We are more than you can ever count.

At first, the whites laughed at the stories. "The Indians hear their dead," they mocked. "They speak with spirits." But the laughter quickly died down as the nights grew darker.

A soldier stationed in a burned-out village swore he heard voices in the night. Children singing, even though no children were left there. A woman crying, even though no one was there. His comrades laughed until they heard it themselves: a chorus of whispers rising from the ground.

The officers tried discipline. "Conceit!" they yelled. "Whiskey ghosts!" But when a young recruit ran screaming through the fort in the middle of the night, saying a dead Indian had spit in his ear, even the toughest sergeant fell silent.

"The earth here is cursed," the men murmured. "The Reds will take us in our sleep."

The elders in the West would have laughed. "Of course the dead will come for you," they would have said. "You summoned them yourself, with your fire, with your treaties, with your bloodlust."

Tecumseh knew this was his greatest weapon. Not just the living who fought, but the dead who refused to remain silent. No general could defeat a ghost army. No cannon could shoot the wind.

The whites didn't fear the arrows or the tomahawks—they feared the voices that haunted them at night. Some said the Indians had magic. But the truth was simpler: guilt always screams louder when the sky is dark.

Geronimo later exploited the same fear. He, too, made the whites believe that the spirits were riding with him. He, too, knew: If the enemy believes that even the dead are fighting, he will never sleep peacefully again.

The dead sang—and even the whites began to hear the song. A song that made them lie trembling in the dirt, even when no bullets were fired.

In the end, it became clear: the dead didn't disappear. They weren't shadows that vanished when the sun rose. They were a legacy. Everyone who fell didn't just lay bones in the earth—they also laid a voice in the wind. And those voices carried the people onward, even as the living wavered.

Tecumseh understood this more deeply than anyone else. "Our enemies believe," he said, "that by killing us they will break us. But they are mistaken. Every death makes us stronger. Every fallen man sings, and his song propels us onward."

The warriors nodded, and their eyes no longer burned with fear or anger—they burned with conviction. They knew: Even if they themselves fell tomorrow, they would not fall silent. They would become part of the chorus that never ends.

The ancients said: "The living are weak, they need sleep, they need bread. But the dead need nothing. They sing day and night. They are tireless."

The whites could take land, they could burn villages, they could throw bodies into pits. But they couldn't kill the voices. The voices were in the wind, in the water, in the thunder.

Geronimo later drew on this very legacy. He, too, said: "Our fallen are not lost. They are with us. They ride with us, they speak through us." And so his warriors, too, carried the song of the dead within them, louder than any white man's sermon ever could.

The dead sang louder than the living. And this song was no longer a whisper. It was thunder, heard even in Washington, a legacy that could not be broken—as long as even one heart continued to beat.

Shot-up knees on the big river

The great river roared, broad and sluggish, as if it didn't want to know anything about what was happening on its banks. But the water carried everything—sweat, blood, screams. It was a witness, and it forgot nothing.

On the shore, men crawled through the mud, their knees shredded by bullets. No proud warrior, no upright gait anymore—only shuffling, crawling, gnashing their teeth in the mud. A shot to the leg was worse than death. Death ended it. The leg took everything from you and still let you breathe.

Tecumseh saw them, the wounded, dragging themselves through the mud as if they were already ghosts, only their flesh didn't yet know it was dead. "The white men don't shoot at the heart," he murmured, "they shoot at the legs. They want to see us crawl."

The elders nodded bitterly. "A man without legs is a warning. He's alive, but he lives as a shadow."

The camp was full of such shadows. Men with bandaged knees, men who could only limp, men who could never hunt again. They weren't dead, but they weren't alive either. They were the song of defeat that drifted through the smoke every morning.

A young warrior wept with rage when he saw his brother's shattered leg. "It would have been better if he had fallen," he whispered. But his brother lived,

and his gaze burned like fire. "No," he growled, "I won't die like this. I'll keep crawling on my knees if I have to. But I'll die fighting."

Geronimo later saw the same picture – men with shot-off legs who nevertheless kept going, supporting their rifles like crutches, leaving the trail of blood behind them and yet not giving up.

The great river absorbed it all: blood, sweat, pain. And in its roar, one could hear it: the song of the shot-to-the-bone, which knew no end.

There were men who would rather die than spend the rest of their lives crawling in the dirt. One slit his own throat when he saw his legs were nothing but shreds of flesh. Another threw himself into the water, letting himself be swept along by the current, so the river would swallow him before returning to camp as a burden.

The screams of the wounded were louder than the cannons. It was a different sound—not the bang, not the scream of battle. It was the long, thin whimper of a man who was alive, but no longer wanted to live.

Children covered their ears when they heard the voices at night. Women wept when they saw the bandaged, twisted legs that would never walk again. And the old people murmured, "It's worse than death. A man without legs is no longer a man—he is a shadow that haunts the village."

Tecumseh saw the despair, and he knew: The whites didn't just shoot to kill. They shot to break. A dead man was a martyr. A cripple was a specter that devoured the courage of the living.

"Better a quick death," said one of the warriors, "than years in the dirt." But another, lying with a broken knee, growled back: "Better to crawl than to forget. Better to grit with your teeth than not to bite at all."

And that was the cruel truth: Some gave up, some kept fighting. Some cursed heaven, others cursed Washington. But no one could return to the life they had had before the shot.

Geronimo later bore the same image: men with shredded knees who shot anyway, who stuffed their wounds with ash, who carried on even though every step was nothing but pain.

By the great river, it was clear: death was more merciful than life with shot-off legs. But mercy was scarce, and the river didn't take everyone. Some had to crawl. And their footprints in the mud were the ugliest mark of the war.

The knees were shot to pieces, the flesh torn, the bones open—but the hands were still alive. Hands holding rifles, drawing arrows, and gripping knives.

Men were seen kneeling on the shore, not out of humility, but because their legs had betrayed them. They crawled in the mud, propped themselves up on their elbows, placed their rifles on their stomachs, and fired. The sound was the same whether a warrior was standing or crawling.

One had lost both legs. He was lying on a blanket, but he insisted that the rifle be placed in his hands. "I can't walk," he growled, "but I can still shoot. As long as I still have fingers, I won't die like a dog."

The warriors saw him, and it burned in their hearts. A man who crawls and still fights is louder than a drumroll.

Tecumseh spoke at the fire: "The whites think a shot in the leg will break us. They're wrong. A man without legs is dangerous because he has nothing left to lose. He can't run. He can only bite, and he bites until he dies."

The elders nodded. "A wolf in a cage bites the hardest."

The wounded became symbols. Not of weakness—of defiance. Of the refusal to give up. Every shot fired from the mud was a curse that echoed farther than any treaty from Washington.

Geronimo experienced the same thing. Men in his entourage marched on their knees, spewing bullets even when they no longer had any legs. Men who knew: An enemy who sees you crawling thinks he's won. But if you kill while crawling, you rob him of victory.

By the great river, gunfire rang out—not from the strong, but from the crippled. And every shot told the bastards from across the river: We are not broken. You must kill us all if you want to stop us.

The camp reeked of oil, ash, and old bandages. The men with their shot-too-mutilated knees lay in rows, half in shadow, half in light, as if they had fallen out of a bad play and never gotten up again. Some wore bandages that were tied too tightly; some let fresh blood run in small patterns down their scarves.

It was no picture for gourmets. It was the work of war: ugly, efficient, brutally honest.

Those who could still walk treated them differently. Some looked away, as if the sight of a broken knee were contagious like a fever. Others turned their heads because they couldn't cope with the sight. And then there were those who came to them, crouching down, holding hands, gritting their teeth, and pretending it was normal. They applied ointments, told cold jokes, brought corn porridge—all small rituals to keep from screaming.

An old warrior, his knee so mutilated that one could barely distinguish bone from flesh, laughed one morning as a boy brought him the bowl. It wasn't a happy laugh. It was the laughter of a man who had learned that laughter is sometimes harder than a volley. "Give the boy something," he growled. "He still has legs, let him walk. When he comes back, bring him a spear. We need people who can run, to carry us. We won't build litters for everyone. Those who stand, walk. Those who crawl, kill."

The words sounded crude, but they were practical. There wasn't much room for sentimentality in the camp. War demands decisions—who is sent hunting, who stays, who is healed. A man with shot-up knees was often a calculation, not just a person. Resources were scarce: medicine, meat, time. The elders negotiated in quiet corners, drew lines, and decided which wounds would be mended and which would be declared lost. It wasn't pretty. It was calculated.

But alongside sobriety, there was honor. No man in the camp was ashamed to tie a loop around a makeshift crutch and start firing. When a wounded man heard that a squad was leaving, he didn't beg for mercy; he tore aside the blanket and demanded a rifle. "Put it down for me," commanded one with a leg that was only holding on to rags. "Sit me down, and I'll show you how a man shoots when he has no way out." And they gave him the rifle. Not out of pity—out of respect. In this camp, respect was more important than provisions.

The women played a role that wasn't printed on official lists. They knew the knots in the bandages, which herbs burned and healed, which fingers to apply pressure to prevent a fever from breaking through. They shouted at men, held tubes, wiped dirt, and collected splinters of flesh. Their hands smelled of cornmeal and blood, but they didn't separate. For them, a shot-up knee wasn't a failure—it was a line to be crossed with strength until the man could stand again, or until he was buried.

There were days when those shot to death were declared heroes. A corporal who had been shot in the leg was held up at the fire because, in the chaos, he had pulled the drummer and saved his neighbor. "He shot on his knees," the voices said. "He didn't curse. He shot." Such stories kept morale high. They were like cigarettes in the night: short, sharp, life-prolonging.

And there were the other days: the days of cursing, of despair. Men who slashed the air at night because the pain was so great they believed there was no relief. They screamed, they cursed, they ripped open the bandages and threw them away just to feel the heat. Then exhaustion came, and they lay there dully, while the fleas danced and the ravens on the sidelines warned that tomorrow would be another march.

The relationship between the shot-up and those who could walk was complicated—a mixture of guilt, admiration, and secret fear. Those who could walk often did so with a bitter pride, as if they bore the guilt for what the wounded had suffered. "If I walk, I won't allow the dead to turn us to dust," said one, one leg hidden under a bandage. "I carry them in my footsteps. I won't eat the lie." This wasn't textbook heroism—this was raw devotion to duty, seasoned with anger.

And sometimes it was grotesque. A merchant came by—the rare, greasy bundle of goods smuggled through—offering prosthetics. Wooden boards and leather thongs, improvised feet. The wounded laughed bitterly. A man whose knee had been set turned the prosthetic in his hand like a toy. "For whom?" he asked dryly. "For me, so I can march again, so Washington can put me on the prostitution list? Give it to him, maybe he'll sell you land for corn." The merchant didn't laugh. He pocketed the money. Politics and commodity exchange often spoke with the same voice here: deceive, sell, move on.

Yet despite the cynicism and harshness, one thing remained: determination. A cripple who raised his finger and said, "Give me five minutes," and then picked up the rifle, was understood in a different language. It was a promise: I'm still here. I'm still breathing. I want you to know I still sting. This was more than an act; it was a thorn in the enemy's flanks: Look, you didn't break us. You only forced us to be different.

The great river watched all this, cold and indifferent. It swallowed the drops that splashed from the shore; it carried loose bandages away like white shreds of seaweed. And at night, when the wounded breathed softly, the river sang its soft song—a song that told of those who had to crawl so others could walk. A song that was heavier than any marching cry.

In the morning, the men got up again: not all of them, not without help, but enough of them. One tied the prosthetic leg to a comrade, another lifted a jug, wiped dishes, and threw a blanket over the son of a wounded man to keep him warm. And then they continued. The march picked up speed again, the lines moved forward, the drums began to beat again. The shot-up knees remained like white scars on the landscape—visible, unpleasant, but part of history.

In this camp, on this river, life wasn't a noble novel. It was raw, unvarnished, and as honest as a punch in the mouth. Those who survived here didn't do so because heaven was merciful, but because someone cleaned their hands, someone else brought the ointments, and a third handed the wounded man their rifle as the sun rose. And that was worth more than any talk of heroism. It was the truth: We are here, we'll stay here, and if our knees are shot to pieces—we'll keep crawling.

In the camp, pain wasn't just a weight, it was also a school. Men who could no longer walk had time. And time sharpens the mouth. They sat by the fire, their legs bandaged, crutches beside them, and they talked. Not softly, not gently—they spat lessons like blood.

"Do you see my leg?" one asked the boy who was adding wood. "This isn't an accident. This is Washington. Every shot that tears a knee is a shot that says:*You should crawl so we can walk.*Never forget that."

The boys listened, silently, with wide eyes. They saw the men crouching in the mud and still telling stories, stories sharper than knives. They didn't learn from books. They learned from flesh, which bore scars.

Tecumseh saw it and nodded. "Our wounded are our teachers," he said. "They show us what the enemy truly wants. They show us that the battle isn't just in the field, but in every step we take—or don't take."

The old people murmured, "A man who can no longer walk walks by his words. His voice carries farther than his legs ever could."

And so the cripples became prophets of war. They didn't preach visions, they preached the stench of gunpowder, the pain in your bones, the hunger that remains when you can no longer hunt. They made war real for the boys who would otherwise have seen it only as an adventure.

Some wounded men recounted their last shot, their last run, their last look at the sky before they fell. Others spoke of the hatred that kept them alive.

"Listen," one said, "hate is better than bread. Hate makes you stand up long after your body has fallen. Without hate, I wouldn't have survived the shot to the knee."

Geronimo later knew exactly the same thing. He, too, heard the wounded passing on hatred like a torch so that the next generation wouldn't run blindly into the night. He, too, understood: Hate is poison—but in the right dose, it makes you immortal.

So the shot-up knees weren't just misery. They were teachers. They told the boys: "This is your inheritance. You can stand, so run. You can fight, so fight. Don't forget us when you hear the drum."

On the great river, pain became history. And history became a weapon.

Over time, the wounded became more than just men with shredded knees. They became symbols. Every step they could no longer take became a metaphor for the war itself—incomplete, bloody, never-healable.

In the camp, they weren't treated like beggars. They were treated like memories that still breathed life. They sat by the fire, and when they laughed, the others laughed with them—not because it was funny, but because the laughter came from a mouth that had seen hell.

"Look at me," said one, poking the ground with his crutch. "I'm no longer a man, I'm a walking scar." The boys nodded, almost reverently, as if he were a priest of war.

The women brought them corn porridge and meat, but not just out of compassion. It was like a ritual: they weren't feeding the man, they were feeding the symbol. Every bite a wounded man took was like a reminder that the fight continued.

Sometimes, when drums beat, the wounded would paint their war colors over their faces. Even if they couldn't march, even if they couldn't run, they painted themselves as if they were about to die. "We're still here," the colors said. "We still belong."

Tecumseh took advantage of this. He placed them prominently at the front of the camp, where everyone could see them. "Look," he cried, "this is Washington's work. And look: They're still alive. They're still laughing. They're still fighting. They're stronger than death."

The warriors screamed, the young clenched their fists, the old nodded. The wounded were both proof and a threat. Proof that the enemy was brutal. A threat that he still couldn't break what wouldn't die.

The whites saw it too. Sometimes they caught prisoners on crutches, men whose arms still had iron muscles. "They're not people," they murmured. "They're shadows." They feared the cripples almost more than the healthy, because they showed that even destroyed, this people continues to fight.

Geronimo later understood the value of such symbols. He, too, showed the whites that a man with scars was more frightening than a smooth soldier. For a wounded man would say: "Your shot hit me. But look – I'm alive. And I'll come back."

On the great river, the bullet-torn knees became banners, living and breathing. Heroes for their own, ghosts for their enemies. A symbol that carried more weight than any flag waved in Washington or London.

The war took away legs, but it didn't take away the will. In the end, the men with shot-to-the-bone knees were seen not just as wounded, not just as teachers or symbols—they became a legacy.

By the fire, when the night was quiet, they talked to the boys. "Listen," said one, his leg a bone, wrapped in dirt and cloth. "If they hit you, don't think about falling. Remember you can keep crawling. As long as your hands are still holding a weapon, you're not dead."

The boys listened with burning eyes. They didn't see a cripple. They saw a man with more toughness in his eyes than any healthy person. They learned: Strength isn't found in the leg. Strength is found in the will, in the heart, in the refusal to give up.

Tecumseh spoke it aloud: "A man who fights on his knees shows more pride than a general who dies in the saddle." And the camp roared with approval. The wounded raised their weapons, and their cry was a cry of immortality.

The elders nodded. "The Crawlers are our legacy. They teach us that we are never finished as long as we breathe."

The whites feared precisely this. Because how do you defeat a people who don't stop crawling? How do you break men who, even when shot, don't die but only become angrier? Every scar, every shattered knee was like a slap in the face of "civilization."

Geronimo later carried this legacy with him. He, too, said: "We will fight, even if we are only crawling." And his men followed him because they knew: As long as someone is still breathing, the war is not over.

Traces remained in the mud along the great river. Blood, crutches, drag marks from bodies that refused to give up. They were erased by the rain, swallowed by the water—but they remained in the heart.

The shot-up knees told a story harder than any song: We won't sink. We crawl, we bite, we kill, until there's no breath left in us. And that was the legacy no white man could ever erase.

Betrayal stinks worse than corpses

There are stenches you never forget. Decay, when the sun shines on bodies for too long. The sweet, rotten aroma of flesh that no longer bears a soul. But even worse was the other smell: betrayal. It didn't creep from bodies, it crawled from the hearts of the living. And it lingered longer than any corpse.

Tecumseh smelled it early. Before an arrow flew, before a gun cracked, it was in the air. Men whose eyes looked down when they spoke. Hands that trembled when they kept treaties. Voices that promised and stole in the same breath.

“A corpse only stinks for a few days,” said an old man, “but a traitor stinks until the next life.”

On the great river, one saw both. Dead men floating in the water, bellies bloated, eyes eaten dry by fish. And living men, already half dead because they had sold their brothers. The corpses bore only silence. But the betrayal spoke loudly, always, every night.

Tecumseh hated treason more than the enemy. An enemy could be fought, slain, and trampled into the dust. But a traitor was carried within one's own ranks, like a disease that eroded one's bones.

“Better ten dead in the river,” he growled, “than one traitor in my tent.”

The boys asked, "How do you recognize him?" Tecumseh replied, "You smell him. You don't have to wait for him to draw his dagger. Betrayal smells like cold smoke, cheap whiskey, fear disguised as courage."

Geronimo later experienced the same thing. He said: "An enemy from without will bring you death. A traitor from within will bring you the end." And he knew: The end tastes more bitter than blood.

So the camp didn't just stank of corpses. It stank of brothers who had sold their own shadows. A smell that scratched at the throat harder than any smoke.

The first traitors weren't strangers. They were men with the same feathers in their hair, the same scars on their skin, the same stories around the fire. They had slept in the same huts, eaten the same corn, heard the same drums. And that was precisely what made their stench worse.

A chief in the south signed a piece of paper for a barrel of whiskey and a shiny chain. "Just a small piece of land," he said, "just a trade so our people can survive the winter." But everyone knew: a small trade was like a small crack in the boat. Eventually, everything sinks.

Another chief took gold that gleamed in the fire like the eyes of a snake. "With this gold we will buy peace," he declared. But peace was a word that vanished as soon as the coins clinked in the traders' hands.

Tecumseh tore up such treaties wherever he found them. He spat on the names of those who had signed them. "You're not just selling land," he roared. "You're selling your children, your grandchildren, your ancestors. You're even selling the spirits that still sing in the ground."

The traitors tried to justify themselves. "We had to act. Our people were starving. The winter was harsh." But no one believed them. Hunger passes. Winter passes. Land that is once gone never returns.

The ancients said, "A man who sells his people not only loses his name. He loses his smell, his skin, his soul. He becomes a ghost even before he dies."

And so you could smell them—the traitors. They walked through the camp, and men turned away. Women whispered. Children spat in the dust when they saw their shadows.

Geronimo later saw the same figures. Among his people, too, there were men who traded land for promises, who placed themselves in the hands of white

men like dogs begging for bread. He, too, knew: traitors are harder to kill than enemies because they aren't outside, but within your own circle.

Betrayal stank worse than corpses – and this stench kept the camp awake.

Tecumseh knew: Betrayal is like a disease. If you endure it silently, it will consume the entire nation. So he made it visible. He drew the guilty parties into the light so everyone could smell the stench.

A chief who had traded land for a few bottles of whiskey was dragged by Tecumseh into the middle of the camp before the warriors. "Look at him," he cried. "He still wears feathers, but he is not one of us. He still bears the name of his people, but he has sold it like a piece of leather."

The men stared, the women spat. The chief tried to raise his hands, talking about hunger, about children, about hardship. But Tecumseh cut him off: "Children starve, yes. But they live on. Those who sell land don't just take their stomachs—they take their future."

Sometimes he let the traitors speak, so everyone could hear how hollow their voices were. Sometimes he kept them silent, so that shame would weigh more heavily than any words.

The ancients said, “Shame is a knife without blood, but it cuts deeper than any blade.”

And it worked. Some traitors fled the camps because they couldn't stand the glare. Others stayed, but they were broken, walking shadows no one greeted anymore.

But the warriors grew tougher. "If one of us falls, it will be by bullets," they swore. "Never again by the bargain of a traitor."

Geronimo later did the same thing. He, too, exposed traitors, hurling in their faces that they were no longer men. And his words burned deeper than arrows because they struck not the body, but the soul.

So the camp smelled of smoke, blood, and fear—but over all hung the stench of betrayal. And Tecumseh made sure no one ever overlooked it.

Exposing them wasn't enough. Tecumseh knew that words alone wouldn't erase the stench of betrayal. So he made it clear that betrayal brought not only shame—but blood.

He rose from the fire, his face hard, his eyes like stones. "Hear me," he cried. "An enemy from without can kill us. But a traitor from within will kill us all. Therefore, I say: Anyone who sells land, anyone who opens the door to the white man, dies. Not tomorrow, not later—now."

The warriors were silent, the air heavy. Then Tecumseh drove his spear into the ground so deep that the earth shook. "Better one dead in his own camp," he growled, "than a hundred dead from his treason."

It wasn't an empty word. A young man who had secretly traded whiskey for a piece of forest was dragged to the front of the line. Tecumseh looked him in the eye, and the boy knew it was over. The elders nodded, the warriors roared. And a knife did the rest. No ritual, no sermon—just the quiet splitting of flesh and the dull thud as the body fell.

From then on, hardly anyone dared to trade secretly with white people. Everyone knew: Tecumseh's eye saw everything. And his anger was swifter than any treaty.

The ancients said, "A traitor is worse than a disease. And diseases must be cut out."

Some called Tecumseh cruel. But the warriors understood: Better one brother in blood than a hundred brothers in the earth.

Geronimo later did the same. He, too, said: "Traitors die first." And he kept his word. For nothing poisons faster than one of his own men laughing with the enemy.

Thus, betrayal became not just a disgrace. It became a death sentence. And the stench, worse than corpses, was purified by blood—at least for a moment.

After the first executions, a new fear spread through the camp. It was no longer just the fear of cannons or bullets. It was the fear that the man next to you might disappear one night—not by enemies, but by brothers.

Distrust crept through the ranks like a cold fog. One wrong word, one wrong look, and the others whispered, "Maybe he's one of them." Men who once fought shoulder to shoulder now looked at each other like strangers. Every pouch of whiskey was checked twice, every conversation with a white man was questioned three times.

Tecumseh saw it and knew: distrust is a double-edged knife. It keeps traitors at bay, but it can also sever one's own ties. "We must be vigilant," he said, "but we must not become blind to one another. Otherwise the whites will win without firing a shot."

But the fear remained. One person left the camp for too long, and the others started whispering. A chief spoke too kindly to a trader, and the stench of betrayal was immediately apparent, even if it was only salt and arrowheads that changed hands.

The old men murmured: “Too much distrust kills more slowly but surely than any bullet.”

Some warriors grew tougher, closed ranks, and swore to each other that no shadow would separate them. Others held back, remaining silent, knowing that every word spoken out loud could be their last.

And so the camp was divided – between the strength that grew from shared hatred and the weakness that arose from suspicion.

Geronimo later experienced the same rift. He, too, saw how distrust pitted brothers against each other, how men drew their own knives in the night because they feared betrayal more than the enemy. And yet he knew: better distrust than blindness.

The stench of betrayal hung in the air, stronger than smoke, stronger than blood. It made men sharper—and more fragile.

The stench of betrayal lingered not only within their own ranks. The hearts of the whites were also rotting. Tecumseh saw it, and he knew: Where men are greedy, they betray each other faster than you can draw a knife.

A uniformed officer sold damp gunpowder and pocketed the profits. A merchant promised arms deliveries but pushed half-empty crates across the river. And the men in Washington talked of honor while secretly tearing up treaties they themselves had written.

"They're no better than us," Tecumseh said by the fire. "Their ranks stink too. They sell themselves for gold, for whiskey, for an invitation to the table of the powerful."

He took advantage of this. If he caught a white trader betraying his own brothers, he publicly exposed him, just as he did with traitors among his own

people. "Look," he cried, "this is what an enemy looks like eating his own dog. Do you think such men can defeat us? They eat themselves before they even reach us."

The warriors laughed harshly, but it was a bitter laugh. They understood: betrayal stinks everywhere. And perhaps that was the only justice in war—that the enemy, too, should choke on its own filth.

The ancients said, "An empire does not fall by spears. It falls when its own men sell one another."

Geronimo later understood the same thing. He, too, saw whites tearing each other apart, generals spreading lies, merchants bleeding soldiers dry. And he learned: The enemy is never a solid wall. It always rots from within.

Tecumseh used this stench like smoke in the wind. He showed his warriors: "They are not invincible. They are already broken—they just don't know it yet."

Thus, betrayal became a weapon. Not just fear, not just shame—but also hope. For where the enemy rots, your own strength grows.

In the end, it wasn't the cannon the people feared most. Not the cavalry, not the heat of the fire, not the hunger. It was treason.

Bullets kill quickly. Hunger lasts for weeks. But betrayal – it eats you from the inside. It blinds you, it deafens you, it weakens you, even before the enemy arrives.

Tecumseh said it plainly: "One traitor is worse than a thousand guns. One gun kills you once. A traitor kills you every day."

The old men nodded bitterly. "A corpse stinks until the wind carries it away. But betrayal stinks through generations. Children carry it on. Grandchildren still taste it."

And so it became clear: betrayal was the deadliest poison of war. It didn't just consume men, it consumed villages, it consumed entire tribes. A tribe could lose ten battles and still live. But a tribe that sold itself was dead, even if its people were still breathing.

Geronimo later carried this lesson in his blood. He, too, knew: betrayal stinks worse than corpses. He sensed it when someone in the camp spoke too kindly to a white man, when someone laughed too much, when someone remained

silent for too long. And he struck harder against traitors than against soldiers, because he knew: soldiers die. Traitors rot.

So this chapter ended not with a shot, but with a bitter oath: Better everyone die in the fire than let a traitor live.

The stench remained—a smell worse than any corpse. A smell that never went away.

The last bullet in the heartbeat

At the end of a war, there's never much left. No grand speeches, no sacred hymns, no shining medals. Only dirt, blood, and the clack of a final lock. A bullet resting in the barrel, cold, heavy, so small—and yet big enough to end everything.

The men knew it. Everyone who went into battle carried more than just arrows and powder. They also carried their last bullet. Not for the enemy. For themselves. So that Washington wouldn't get the satisfaction of putting them in chains. So that no bastard of an officer would boast, "We caught that dog alive."

Tecumseh said it openly: "Save your last bullet. Not for them—for yourself. Better a free death than a dog in a cage."

The old men nodded. "The last shot is yours. Anything else is theft."

And so it was an unwritten law in many camps: You can lose your rifle, you can shoot your arrows, you can lie in blood—but you keep one bullet. It lies in your pocket, close to your heart, like a dark promise.

The young people asked, "And if I don't need her?" The old people replied, "Then you're happy. But if you need her and she's missing—then you're a fool."

Geronimo later did the same thing. He, too, told his men: "The last bullet isn't for the enemy. It's for when you see no way out. Don't let your freedom be ripped from your body. Take it yourself."

And so the last bullet didn't just become lead. It became a symbol. A heartbeat of metal that said: Better the end than living in the shadows.

It wasn't a theory. Men actually used the last bullet.

One man—young, barely a beard on his face—was cornered. The whites had him in a semicircle, rifles at the ready, voices full of mockery. He knelt, took a last breath, felt the lead in his pocket. No hesitation. No prayer. Only the click of the lock and then the bang. He fell backward, and the whites stared as if they'd seen a ghost. "Shit," one muttered. "He stole our victory."

Another, older, already a father of three, stood on a hill. Wounded, with no chance of escape. The bullet lay in his hand, heavy as fate. He looked to the sky, not to pray, but to curse it. Then he put the muzzle to his chest, straight into the heart. A blow, a crack, and he fell to the ground like a stone falling back into the river.

The whites hated these deaths. They robbed them of the spectacle. No prisoner to parade. No broken warrior on his knees begging for mercy. Only corpses, silent, with cold eyes that said, "You don't have us."

Tecumseh knew those final shots were louder than any battle. "Look," he cried, "they're taking everything from us, but not the end. The end is ours."

The old people nodded: “Better a silent bang in one’s own heartbeat than a life on their chain.”

Geronimo later upheld the same rule. He, too, lost men who took the bullet at the last moment. And he said: "They are not dead. They are free. Free to the very end."

The final bullet wasn't a cowardly trick. It was the opposite: the ultimate proof that you are still master of your own end, even when the rest of your life has already been stolen.

And so, after each such bang, a silence remained that weighed more heavily than any battlefield. A silence that feared the enemy more than a dozen warriors with loaded rifles.

After every shot, which wasn't aimed at the enemy but at their own heart, the camp remained restless. The men argued, harshly, loudly, with anger and pain in their eyes.

"It was courage," one said. "He eluded those bastards. They wanted him in chains, so he gave them the finger."

"It was cowardice," another spat into the fire. "He could have fought, could have taken another one. Instead, he took himself."

The voices clashed like sparks flying from logs. No one remained indifferent. Everyone knew: The final bullet was no easy step. It was a decision—and every decision left its mark on the souls of the living.

An old man raised his voice: "Stop judging him. He has already been judged. You say courage, you say cowardice—what do you know? You weren't there, you didn't hear the crack of gunfire around you. You didn't see the circle closing."

The boys were silent. For them, it was a mystery: a bullet that could represent freedom or despair. They only knew that one day they would have to make the same decision.

Tecumseh clarified it: "The last bullet is not a judgment. It is a tool. Some need it, some don't. But everyone must have it. For whoever doesn't have the last bullet is already defeated."

The elders nodded. "The whites say we're barbarians. But what's more barbaric—a life in chains, or a heartbeat you take from yourself?"

Geronimo later picked up on this idea. He, too, said: "There is no false death as long as it's yours. There is only false life—the life they force upon you."

And so the discussion in the camp remained lively. Courage or desperation? No one could really say. But everyone knew: The last bullet was a right. A dark, harsh right that no one could take away – except the man who carried it.

For some, the last bullet wasn't a secret escape route. They wore it openly. In a leather pouch around their neck, on their belt, in a small deerskin pouch. Not hidden—displayed, like a talisman.

"This is my freedom," said one, pounding his fist on the bag. "They can take everything from me—my wife, my horse, my land. But this bullet remains mine. As long as it's there, I'm not a slave."

Another had tied it to a string and wore it like the tooth of a slain animal. Everyone who saw him knew: The man was carrying the end of his body with him, and he was smiling while doing so.

The boys stared, wide-eyed. "Why are you showing them?" they asked. "Because it makes them nervous," he growled, pointing at the white men across the river. "They know they can't get me as long as I have them. I belong to no one, not even Death. I belong only to myself."

The ancients said: "A man who carries his last bullet openly is already half immortal. For he fears nothing anymore."

Tecumseh let them go. He knew that symbols are sometimes more powerful than weapons. "Let them see that you hold your end in your hands," he cried. "There are no chains for men who carry their own freedom in their purses."

And the whites felt it. They saw warriors going into battle with a bullet at their necks, and they understood: These men would not be broken. Even if they won, they would lose.

Geronimo knew this pride. He, too, had men who wore their last bullet like jewelry, as if to tell the world: "We are not victims. We are judges of our own destiny."

Thus, a piece of lead became a banner. Not a white cloth, not a piece of paper with signatures—but a ball that weighed more than any promise from Washington.

On some nights, the last bullet was a comfort. Men lying in the dirt, exhausted, wounded, hungry, reached into their pockets, felt the cold metal between their fingers, and whispered, "No matter what happens, I decide." They slept more peacefully because they knew: No enemy, no chain, no scaffold would determine their end.

On other nights, however, the bullet was a curse. It lay heavy in the bag, heavier than any knife, heavier than any hunger. Some stared at it for hours, turning it between their fingers, wondering: "Today? Tomorrow? When is the right moment?" And this question gnawed at them more than any fever.

A young warrior recounted, "Sometimes she whispers to me. She says, 'Use me. Finish it.'" An old man shook his head. "No, boy. The bullet doesn't speak. It's your pain that speaks. The bullet just waits."

Thus, she became a mirror: those who were strong saw freedom in her. Those who were weak saw temptation in her.

Tecumseh knew this. He warned the men: "The last bullet is not a toy. It is not a friend to comfort you at night. It is both judge and executioner. Use it if you must—but do not be seduced by it."

The old people murmured, "The ball is like fire. It either warms you or burns you."

Geronimo experienced the same inner conflict. His warriors also carried the final bullet—some like a torch, some like a stone in their hearts. And he knew: each man had to decide for himself whether the metal represented hope or fear.

So the last bullet was never just lead. It was a song that everyone heard differently. A song of freedom—or of escape.

Whites hated this bullet more than any tomahawk. Because it robbed them of what they wanted most: the triumph, the prisoner, the broken man they could parade.

A general roared with rage as a warrior shot his chest open before his eyes. "Damn it!" he cried. "He should have been our proof, our trophy!" Instead, only a corpse remained—silent, unyielding, like a mockery of victory.

"They're stealing our glory," growled one officer. "They'll die before we break them." "Then it's not a victory," muttered another, "it's just a pile of corpses."

And that was precisely the truth: The final bullet rendered every victory hollow. No warrior in chains, no chieftain on a rope, just blood in the dust. And blood was nothing special—war had plenty of it.

Tecumseh knew how much this was wearing on the whites. "They want you alive," he said, "because one living prisoner is worth more to them than a hundred dead. So show them that even your life is not theirs."

The warriors nodded. Some even swore: "If they want me, I'll give them smoke, not breath."

The ancients said, “A man who uses his last bullet is like a wolf who tears himself to pieces before he howls in his cage.”

Geronimo later understood the game even more deeply. He, too, used the last bullet as a threat, not just as an act. "Do you want me alive?" he asked. "Then come. But my last bullet is waiting. You'll only catch my shadow."

The whites cursed, the officers wrote reports full of anger. They could win battles, but they couldn't break the spirit. For how do you break men who hold their own destiny in their hands?

So the last ball stole victory from White every time. They stood there with dead bodies—but without triumph. And that's exactly what drove them mad.

In the end, the last bullet was more than a piece of lead. It was a heartbeat that didn't belong to the enemy. A final breath that couldn't be bought, broken, or stolen.

In the camp, the old men told the stories of the men who had taken their last bullet. They told them not with tears, but in ragged voices that crackled like fire in the wind. "He died free," they said. "He gave them nothing."

The boys heard, and they understood: The last bullet wasn't cowardice, wasn't flight. It was a scream—a scream louder than any battle.

Tecumseh said, "The last bullet is our legacy. As long as someone carries it, we are not defeated. For no one can write our end but ourselves."

The elders nodded. "A warrior with one last bullet in his pocket is stronger than a general with a thousand soldiers. For he belongs to no one. He is his own master, until his last heartbeat."

Geronimo carried this truth with him like an invisible lead chain. He, too, knew: The last bullet makes us immortal. For it says: We do not belong to you. Not today, not tomorrow, not in death.

So every story told in the smoke ended with the same bitter, proud sentence: "They can take our land, they can break our bodies, they can burn our huts. But they'll never get the last heartbeat. That's ours."

And so the last bullet became a legacy – a silent thunder in the heart of every warrior, heavy as lead, free as the wind.

A warrior without a gravestone

There were many ways to die. Some were bid farewell with drums and songs, their name echoing through the village, children hearing it, women weeping, men vowing to carry it forward in battle. Others received a cross from the

whites, a wooden board that rotted, a name on a list that will one day be forgotten.

But the worst were those without anything. No song, no cross, no plank, no stone. Men who fell in the dust, who floated in the river, who rotted in the forest. Men who disappeared as if the earth had swallowed them.

"A warrior without a tombstone," the elders murmured, "is like a song without a drum. It only sounds in the air and is soon gone."

Tecumseh saw such men everywhere. Fallen soldiers no one could recover. Brothers whose bodies lay in enemy camps, bruised and desecrated. Names no one dared to speak anymore because they burned like open wounds.

The young asked, "And what remains of them?" The old answered, "Only memories. And memories are weak when they have no place to dwell."

Thus, the war wandered, full of ghosts. Not only the dead who were mourned, but also those who were forgotten. A warrior without a tombstone was a shadow that found no rest. It crept through the nights, it whispered in dreams, it tugged at the hearts of the living.

Geronimo experienced the same thing. Many of his men died in the desert, on the steppe, in valleys that no one ever found again. No grave, no stone, no song. Only the wind blowing across the sand.

And yet, sometimes these warriors were the strongest. For those without a stone could not be imprisoned by anyone. Their spirit wandered freely, everywhere, always, in every shadow.

A warrior without a gravestone was not forgotten. He was everywhere.

The dead without gravestones frightened people. Because if there was no place to mourn, grief itself would wander through the village, like an animal that can't find a roof.

So the people created substitutes. They whispered the names around the fire, over and over again, so they wouldn't disappear. An old man said, "As long as we say his name, he lives." And the young men nodded, even though they knew that the name alone wouldn't bring back a body.

Sometimes they painted symbols in the dust, a circle, an arrow, a sun wheel—little reminders for those who were never buried. Rain washed them away,

wind blurred them, but for a moment the warrior was there, as close as wood in the fire.

Tecumseh insisted that the nameless were not forgotten. "A warrior without a tombstone," he said, "is like an arrow without a target. It flies on. We must keep it in our songs, or it will be lost."

So they sang about men whose bodies no one found. They sang of brothers who drowned in rivers, of warriors torn apart by bullets who remained in the grass. Every song was a grave dug in the ear, not in the ground.

The women cried their tears into bowls and poured them into the fire, as if to say: “Here, drink our tears, and do not be forgotten.”

The old people murmured: "You can break a tombstone. But not a song. A song lives as long as it is sung."

Geronimo later understood this logic. He, too, let names speak, and he, too, sang of men who never returned. "Our gravestones," he said, "are the words. As long as we speak them, they are not dead."

Thus, memory became the only tombstone that no one could steal. No general, no officer, no bastard merchant could erase names burned into hearts.

The spirits of the Nameless found no rest. Without a grave, without a stone, without a song strong enough to bind them, they wandered through the nights.

The women said they heard them—the rustling of footsteps in the grass, even though no one was there. Children cried in their sleep because they heard whispering voices, the voices of men no one could name anymore.

An old man explained: "The earth bears no burden unless the body lies within it. That is why the nameless wander. They knock on doors, they sniff at the smoke, they make dogs howl."

Stories were told in the camp of warriors who saw figures in the darkness, shadows with half-hidden faces, bloody hands reaching for them. Some laughed it off—"just dreams, just fever." But even the toughest men sometimes woke up drenched in sweat.

Tecumseh took it seriously. "Our brothers without tombstones are looking for us," he said. "They want to know if we've forgotten them. That's why we must call out their names so they can rest in peace."

Thus, nighttime rituals were born. Ashes were thrown into the fire and the names of the dead were called out. Not because they believed they would return—but so that they could finally go somewhere.

But not everyone found peace. Some spirits persisted. One warrior swore that his brother's shadow sat by his side every night, staring blankly, until he spoke his name.

The old people murmured, "A gravestone is not just for the dead. It is for the living. Without it, no one remains safe."

Geronimo knew this feeling. He, too, wandered through nights when the nameless ones knocked at his heart. He, too, knew: As long as you don't lay a stone, the ghost will settle on your chest.

Thus, a warrior without a gravestone became not just a loss. He became a burden—heavier than a body, heavier than a battle.

Tecumseh knew: A people without graves loses its roots. So he created places for those who received no earth. No large mounds, no stones that immediately catch the eye—only small, secret places, deep in the forest, hidden by the river, inconspicuous as a shadow.

There, feathers were laid for the fallen whose bodies never returned. Small fires burned there, their smoke rising into the sky as if carrying the lost souls. Sometimes weapons, knives, arrowheads were buried—things that belonged to the Nameless, even if their bodies were missing.

"Here he rests," people murmured, even though no one was lying there. "Here he has his stone, even if it's invisible."

The young ones didn't understand at first. "But he's not here." The older ones replied: "He's everywhere. But here we're giving him a home."

They were silent ceremonies, without drums, without chants, just the crackling of the fire and the wind in the leaves. But they had an effect. The nights became quieter, the dogs howled less, and the shadows no longer crept so close to the fire pits.

Tecumseh said, "A grave is not for the body. It is for the spirit. If we don't lay a stone, we put a mark in the earth—and that's enough."

The women tied pearl necklaces to trees and let them clink in the wind like little bells. Each note was a greeting to the nameless.

The elders murmured: "A song fades, a stone breaks. But the wind remains. Therefore, we give them the wind."

Geronimo later did something similar. He, too, chose places where his fallen soldiers lay symbolically—in ravines, in sand dunes, in caves where stones were stacked, not for bodies, but for memory.

Thus, every warrior without a gravestone ultimately received a piece of earth, albeit an invisible one. A secret known only to his own people—but enough for his spirit to rest.

It wasn't long before even the secret places were desecrated. The white people smelled of land, of wood, of ore—they didn't look at stones or feathers, they only saw where they could cut roads, where they could lay rails.

A sacred grove, where feathers and beads hung for the Nameless, was felled. The trees fell like bound men, the chains rattled, and the blades devoured the wood as if they were consuming flesh. The chains of the saws sang louder than any funeral prayer.

At the river, where arrowheads had been buried, the Whites piled up gravel and pounded bridge piers into the ground. The ground shook, and the elders said: "Now the Nameless are homeless again. Their grave has been banished."

Tecumseh gritted his teeth. "They're not just killing our living," he snarled. "They're killing our dead, too."

And that was the truth: For the white people, even invisible graves were worthless. A place to pray was, to them, merely a clearing to be cleared. A tree with beads was, to them, merely wood to be sold.

The women wept when they saw the destroyed sites. They collected the broken beads, placed them in baskets, and whispered: "We will carry you on, even if your sites are stolen."

The elders murmured: "Whoever takes away a people's graves takes away their past. And without the past, the future also dies."

Geronimo later experienced the same shame. His sacred places were also bulldozed, hills were blasted, rocks were blasted to make way for railroad

tracks, beneath which bones still lay. And he, too, knew: This is more than war. This is a mockery, a slap in the face of the spirits.

So the Nameless Ones wandered again, restless, angry. Their invisible graves were destroyed, and their stench hung in the air—bitter, cold, louder than any sermon.

There came a time when the nameless began to speak louder than the living. Not in words, but in signs. Dogs howled in chorus every night. Fires went out of themselves, as if extinguished by smoke. Men heard whispers in the wind, even when not a leaf stirred.

"They're back," said the elders. "Not as friends. As a warning."

Tecumseh took advantage of this. "You see?" he called to his warriors. "Our brothers without tombstones continue to fight. They won't let us rest until we strike back."

And the men believed it. They saw the spirits not as a burden, but as a torch. Every shadow in the forest, every whisper in the grass became a cry: "Rise up, fight, don't forget us."

The whites, on the other hand, became afraid. Soldiers setting up camp at the edge of the forest swore they saw figures among the trees—men without faces, bloody shadows moving through the smoke. Some ran away, others drank twice as much whiskey to numb the trembling in their hands.

An officer wrote in his diary:*"We're not just losing to the living. We're losing to the dead."*

The ancients said: "The Nameless have no rest. But their restlessness is our strength. As long as they haunt us, we are not alone."

Geronimo understood this better than anyone else. He, too, told his warriors: "Our dead without gravestones are with us. They ride in the night. They are faster than horses, louder than cannons. They make the whites sick with fear."

Thus, the Nameless themselves became a weapon. Not a bullet, not a spear, not a knife—but an invisible rage that swept through the forests and made even the tough white men tremble.

A warrior without a gravestone was not forgotten. He was stronger than anyone with a stone.

In the end, they realized: A warrior without a tombstone was not lost. He was immortal.

Those with a stone, with a cross, with a mound—they remained in one place, trapped in the ground. But those without a gravestone? They were everywhere. In the wind, in the water, in the thunder. No one could imprison them, no one could bury their names.

Tecumseh said it: "The white people believe that our dead will disappear if they don't find a stone. But they are mistaken. Without a stone, they wander. They go wherever they will. They are stronger because no one can hold them."

The old people nodded. "A grave makes death silent. No grave makes it loud."

Thus, the "warrior without a gravestone" became a symbol everyone recognized. He was the memory that needed no place, that lived on in every step, in every cry. Children learned early on: "Fear not the enemy, fear being forgotten. For a forgotten one will find you in the night."

The whites could win battles, could burn villages, could scatter bones. But they could not kill the Nameless. For what has no stone has no chains.

Geronimo carried this thought further. He, too, said: "Our fallen, who have no place, are not lost. They are everywhere. Every shadow, every gust of wind is a knife in their flesh." And his men believed it—because they felt it.

So the chapter ended not with silence, but with a threat that hung in the air like smoke: "We are those without a tombstone. We are those you cannot grasp. We are everywhere, as long as you breathe."

And that sentence burned harder than any bullet, harder than any contract. For a warrior without a tombstone was a spirit that never died.

The great river devours the dream

The river had always been there. Broad, black in the moonlight, foaming in the storm, sluggish in the summer. It was a road, a border, a promise, and a threat all at once. The elders said: "The river takes everything. Wood, flesh, blood, dreams."

Tecumseh didn't just see it as water. For him, the river was a living animal, devouring everything that came near it. Entire villages were swept away by its floods, fields submerged, boats swallowed, and men drowned, their screams drowned by the roar.

"Look," he said, "the river makes no distinction. White or red, rich or poor—it eats everyone."

And so the river became a symbol of war. War, too, made no discrimination. It took the young, the old, the strong, and the weak. A warrior with an arrow and a farmer with a hoe – both ended the same when the current caught them.

The women told each other that the spirits of the dead lived in the water. Each wave was a finger reaching out to the living. Children feared the sound of the river, as if they heard voices in it, voices crying for help.

Tecumseh saw deeper: The river was not just nature, it was also a border. The white men crossed it, bringing boats full of weapons, barrels full of whiskey, chests full of treaties. Every stroke of the oars was like a hammer blow to the heart of his people.

"The river is devouring our dream," he murmured. "For everything that destroys us comes upon it."

Geronimo later understood the feeling just as well. He, too, saw rivers cutting through the land like open veins. Waterways through which the enemy came, while the dreams of his own people sank into the mud.

Thus, the great river was not just water. It was a maw that swallowed everything—wood, flesh, blood, and ultimately: the dream itself.

The river could have been a bridge. Water that nourishes everyone, that provides fish, that carries boats. But it became a border. Not created by nature, but by humans.

The whites drew lines on maps as if the river were a line in the hand of a scribe. "Here your land ends," they said. "Here ours begins." And suddenly the water was no longer a gift, but a wall.

Tribes that once camped together on its shores now faced each other. On one side, those who said, "We will hold." On the other, those who whispered, "Perhaps we should trade, perhaps buy, perhaps seek peace."

Tecumseh hated it. "The river divides us," he cried. "Not because it wants to, but because they make it so."

The old people remembered: The river used to be free. People hunted, fished, and crossed it without fear. Children played in the water, unaware that one day it would become a border.

Now every crossing was a risk. A boat could bring trade—or cannons. A warrior swimming across the river could meet a brother—or an enemy.

The women saw it more harshly: "The river took what we had. It divided us. And divided peoples die faster."

Geronimo later saw the same wound. In his country, too, rivers became borders, artificially drawn lines that said: "You may live here, not here." And he understood: water, meant to give life, could also mean separation.

Thus, the great river became not just a maw that devoured dreams. It became a knife that cut through families, tribes, entire nations—clean, cold, unstoppable.

The whites immediately understood the river as prey. For them, it was not a sacred place, not a mirror of spirits, not a song. It was a road, and roads belong to those who control them.

So the ferries came. First, small boats carrying barrels of whiskey and crates of iron. Then, larger barges packed with guns, powder, and goods that caused more harm than good.

Then came the bridges. Beams upon beams, iron upon wood, nails like teeth, biting into the bank. Where children once played in the water, now stood pillars like shackles, hacking the river to pieces.

And finally, the trading posts. Small huts on the bank, smoking, smelly, always with a barrel of alcohol outside the door. Each post was like a hook digging into the river's skin.

"They're spreading nets over our blood," the old people murmured. "The river belonged to everyone. Now it belongs to those with bridges and ferries."

The warriors watched as their shoreline shrank. A place where bison hides had once been dried was suddenly restricted, "property." A beach where canoes had once been pulled was suddenly controlled by men in uniforms.

Tecumseh roared, "They force the river to work for them. And every blow of water against their bridges is a blow to our hearts."

The women knew: It wasn't just land theft. It was soul theft. For the river was no longer free. It was occupied, enslaved, tamed like a caged animal.

Geronimo later saw the same thing. In his country, too, the Whites bound rivers with dams, bridges, and cities. They cut the water into pieces and called it progress. But for him, it was just a knife cutting deeper into his chest.

Thus, the river became a stranger forever. No longer a friend, no longer a brother. Only a chain that wrapped itself around the land – and crushed the dream.

The fighting on the banks was fiercer than anywhere else. The river was no longer a neutral border—it was a front line. Every step toward the water could be the last.

Arrows whizzed, bullets hissed, men fell into the water and drifted away, eyes open, mouths full of foam. The current knew no friendship: it took warriors and soldiers alike, carrying them side by side until both disappeared into the mud.

“The river drinks blood like whiskey,” muttered an old man as he saw the water foaming red.

Tecumseh cried: "Look! Even the river knows this is not peace. It spits our dead back onto the banks for us to see!" And indeed: corpses were stranded on the sandbars, bloated, scratched, their faces eaten away by fish.

Sometimes the screams of the wounded could be heard echoing across the water long before the current swallowed them. Children covered their ears, women wept, men clenched their fists – but no one could tame the river.

The whites saw it differently. For them, every body the river took was one less problem. "Let them drift," the officers said. "The water will do the work."

The old people murmured bitterly: “The river used to be food, now it is a dealer in corpses.”

Geronimo later experienced the same thing. He, too, saw rivers filled with dead bodies, horses and people floating side by side. "The water," he said, "carries their bullets until even the fish drink blood."

Thus, the river became not just a symbol. It itself became a battlefield, a fetid maw that swallowed more corpses than any village could count.

The great river was no longer a brother. It was a gravedigger who sang no songs.

It was as if the river had betrayed itself. First, it was free, raw, an animal that knew no chains. Then the white men came with fire and iron and made it their tool.

The first steamships wheezed across the water like metal beasts. Black smoke spewed into the sky, the paddle wheels churned the water as if whipping the river. Men stood on the decks, uniforms gleaming, cannons staring over the railings.

"Look," said Tecumseh bitterly, "the river now carries their armies. What once nourished us now consumes us."

And it was true. From every steamboat spewed soldiers, crates of gunpowder, sacks of coins, bottles of poisoned whiskey. The river was no longer a friend—it was the artery through which the poison flowed directly into the heart of the country.

Harbors, wooden walkways, and warehouses sprang up along the banks. Merchants shouted prices that sounded like blows. Native Americans who built a boat were chased away. "Property!" the whites yelled, as if the word itself had shackled the river.

The old people murmured, "We thought the river was as free as the sky. But they sold it like a horse."

Warriors who once proudly glided across the water in canoes stood on the banks and watched as the steamboats dominated the current. Their boats seemed like toys by comparison, fragile, ridiculous.

Geronimo later experienced the same betrayal. Steamships, railroads, and boats full of soldiers arrived in his country as well. Rivers that had once been borders of pride became chains that bound him.

So the great river doesn't just eat dreams - it digests them until nothing remains but smoke, trade, and cannons.

And with every beat of the paddle wheel, you could hear a hammering: The dream dies. The dream dies. The dream dies.

At some point, the river itself began to act like a traitor. It no longer helped; it swallowed.

Warriors attempting to cross it were swept away by currents just as they should have reached the battle. "The river is fighting against us," they murmured, as boats capsized and men disappeared into the whirlpool.

During rainy seasons, it overflowed its banks and drowned fields that had been laboriously cultivated. Corn plants lay in mud, children stood hungry, women screamed. "The river no longer feeds us," the old people said, "it spits us out."

Tecumseh sensed it: "He was once our brother. Now he is their soldier." He meant not just the steamboats and bridges, but the feeling that even the water was turning against the tribes.

The men became superstitious. They threw offerings into the water—tobacco, pieces of meat, sometimes even animals. But the river remained cold. It took everything, without response, without thanks.

A young warrior said, "The river used to sing. Now it is silent or roars." And he was right. The roar, which once sounded like music, now sounded like a threat.

The ancients said, “If even the river leaves us, then we are alone.”

Geronimo later felt the same bitterness. He, too, saw rivers that didn't help him, but rather betrayed his tracks and made his escape more difficult. "The river," he said, "is no longer a friend. It's a knife that stabs us in our sleep."

Thus, the great river became the final enemy. No longer a mirror for spirits, no friend for children, no path for boats. Only a maw that swallowed—land, flesh, blood, and dreams.

And everyone knew: You can fight an enemy. But how do you fight water?

In the end, the great river was no longer water. It was a grave. No song, no mirror, no brother—only a black mouth that swallowed everything.

Tecumseh once stood on the bank, the sky gray, the river heavy. He looked across, where smoke rose from the trading posts, where bridges stood like iron shackles. "This is it," he murmured. "The river has devoured our dream."

The elders nodded silently. They knew there was no return. What had once been free now belonged to the whites—and the water that once carried them now only washed away corpses, whiskey barrels, and treaties.

The women wept when they heard the river rushing. Not because it was loud, but because it was silent. The river no longer had a voice for them. It spoke only in foreign words—in coins, in cannon shots, in steaming iron.

"The river is full," said the old men. "It has devoured land, people, dreams. Now it is digesting us."

Geronimo later saw the same hunger in the rivers of his country. He knew: once a river is sold, there's no going back. It will drink you until nothing remains of you.

So the dream ended not in fire, not in a final scream, but in the rush of water that took everything away.

The great river devoured the dream – and it spat nothing back.

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