

Quiver In The Cold — Fisher's Mid-Winter Dream

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Note to Reader: The English armies defeated the French and their “Indian” allies at the Plains of Abraham on September 13th, 1759. Although a treaty had been signed not to take sides, the Munsee Delaware had fought on both sides, and most felt loyalty to the French. At Napanoch, in New York’s Rondout Valley, on November 16th, 1761, under Chief Monolaup, one hundred local Delaware signed a new treaty to cease fire against English soldiers. As described in the first edition of *Native New Yorkers* (March 2002, p. 256-7) Monolaup sparred face to face with Major Levi Pawling, and both agreed to release prisoners of war. That process took five more months, but the effects of the surrender would affect Munsee Delaware descendants for centuries. This short story describes one fictional family’s ordeals into the 1900s.

“Your great-great grandfather was a great warrior!” Chief Long Eyes said as he punctured a small fish with a sharp stick and then thrust it into the campfire. “He fought in a great battle alongside our French brethren.”

He was staring into Fisher’s eyes. He was building up to an argument and eighteen-year-old Fisher wasn’t sure where this was headed. However, as he watched the poor fish, his namesake, now impaled on a skewer, roasting in the fire, he knew he was in for a grilling. Fisher’s own father had died while hunting deer, killed by white hunters who said it was an accident. He still had the newspaper article, from 1900. He knew that Chief saw his weaknesses, and was trying to be a tough father figure for the boy, poking at all the sore spots, trying to get him to let it all out. Usually it had the opposite effect.

“When was this battle?”

“That battle was back in 1759, and it changed the fate of our family’s history and its why we are here living off the land in this remote wilderness. He was fighting for us.”

“Did we win?” Fisher heard a great deal of pride in Chief’s voice but knew never to assume things. He knew he was going to get a lecture any minute about being more warrior-like, more of a man. It would not have been the first time.

“Win? Well, no, not really. He died at the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, and the French lost undisputed claim to North America, to Turtle Island. Our defeated Munsee Delaware warriors went back to the American colonies to the south. Twenty years later during the Sullivan Campaign they were defeated again and made their way through a tunnel-like walkway underneath Niagara Falls. It is still there. Thanks to that tunnel, your next generation of ancestors lived in Ontario, near Boston River, near the Haudenosuane, accepted by them as good neighbors but not as fellow Iroquois.”

“How come we didn’t stay there?”

Chief took a bite out of his fish, and his eyes seemed distant for a moment, like seeing a long distance but blind to his surroundings. Fisher then realized why he was called “Long Eyes.” He’d never had the nerve to ask. Now he’d never have to. It was the night of February 2nd, night of the new moon. Fisher thought he saw the faintest glimmer of a thin crescent moon, standing on the horizon like a giant bowman’s longbow, but then he blinked, and it vanished.

After a moment of silent chewing, Long Eyes turned back to the present moment and to the young Munsee man. “Our people gathered at the River Thames during the war of 1812, and we lost that war too. It was in October of the second year of battle that great Tecumseh died, and it was our family that buried

him, in the hole of an uprooted tree. We lowered that huge tree down on top of him to save him from American grave robbers. Which tree it is, none of us will tell. We hung on through some hard winters, just as hard as this one. Over time the English took a tighter grip on our affairs and tried to make us into White Men but of this we were not capable, nor interested. We went hungry waiting for rations from the government.

Most of our people were not as tough as Tecumseh, and allowed ourselves to become assimilated. That is why our side of the family left and headed for these wilds on the Quebec border. Even then there were French people here who remembered the stories of their grandfathers concerning of the heroism on behalf of the French cause, of your ancestor, Quiver. You could have learned a lot from him.”

“What? With a name like Quiver? He sounds like a darn coward!”

Chief jumped up, now finished with his small pickerel, and as he threw the stick in the fire, yelled, “He was no coward! You, boy are the coward!”

Fisher cringed and threw his hood over his head. He paused then looked up in anger. “Why then was he called Quiver? That is a dumb name.” Not to be looked down on, Fisher stood up. He was six foot two, and at least as tall as Long Eyes. Living off the land had made him strong. Although he was a pacifist like the Munsee Papunhank, who followed the Moravian traditions of non-violence, he could only be pushed so far.

Chief placed his powerful hand on Fisher’s shoulder and stared at him, speaking at the top of his voice, “Because he would storm into battle with two sheathes, one over each shoulder, each one brimming with the sharpest hand-knapped arrows ever made, each one perfectly balanced in the fletching! Each one deadlier than the last.”

“Wow, Chief, you really need to calm down. Violence excites the flesh but deadens the spirit. It’s just such a strange name for a warrior. I’m sorry I reacted like that.”

Long Eyes continued. “Yeah well, okay, there’s more to the story. In the word play tradition for which our family is famous, there was a hidden meaning. In French there is the phrase “Qui Vive?”, which is yelled out loud when storming into battle. It means, “Which side are you on?” Apparently, a favorite phrase of your great-grandfather.”

“But I am not my great-grandfather, and these are different times,” the young man said, trying to keep a quiver from entering his voice. “These times call for more diplomacy. Can I leave now?”

Long Eyes lowered his voice in volume but not in intensity. “Diplomacy!” Long Eyes spit on the ground. “When the Indian Agents found us here in 1890 they saw you here in the papoose your father made for your mother, and they wanted to have you adopted into a white family. To be swaddled in cotton instead of leather and moss; to ride a hobby horse instead of a real stallion; to eat white bread instead of Journey Cakes made from our own corn; to buy everything you think you need with the white man’s debt money rather than trade for it honestly. I stood between your mother and the Indian Agents. I told them to go home to their own children and raise them as they see fit—and we will do the same.”

“Did they leave?”

“Aren’t you standing here, by this fire, a free man? Free as a wild stallion? Strong as an ox? Of course I made them leave, made them leave the barrel of my gun or *leave this world.*” He chuckled menacingly as he said “leave this world,”

“Oh my God! And now I guess I am supposed to be indebted to you, my uncle’s uncle. You gave me freedom from the whites, but not freedom from your long eyes! You see right through me and it makes me quiver. Our brother Jesus taught us to love one another. I know it’s hard sometimes but non-violence is best...when we can find the way to it!” Fisher pulled a small wooden cross from under his coat and held onto it like it was a crucifix. Although it lacked the statuary, it was one, a primitive one suitable for a peltier living in the wild. It was attached with a chain which he wore around his neck, proud to be enslaved—as his Uncle’s Uncle quipped—to Jesus, if that’s what it was.

“I haven’t finished!” Long Eyes’ words sounded like a trumpet amidst a retreat from battle. He continued. “Then six years later the Indian Agents came again to take you to an Indian Boarding School, to cut off your hair so the lice don’t kill you and to drive the Munsee language from your lips by locking you in a closet with no one to talk to. Again, I was the one who stood up for you. Again I drove them away. In fact we moved further into the wilderness to where they would never find us.”

“And now we are stranded here, alone, in this God forsaken place!”

“Alone? We are surrounded by these pine trees, these animals! These rocks. We are never alone! And only the wrong God would forsake us. Great Spirit, Manitou, is right here in front of our faces, where we can see Him.”

“Where?”

“In every rock and leaf. His voice is heard in the wind!”

“When I hear the wind it says, ‘You are alone.’”

“You grew up fatherless and your sweet mother just passed. The feeling is understandable. Four years after the Indian agents came your father died in a hunting accident but we here all know it was no accident. As your uncle’s uncle it was up to me to help look out for you. Now farmers have taken our bottom land and hunters have killed off most of our game and now times are hard, hard for you, hard for me....”

At that moment a tall figure sauntered up quietly behind the two. He was shrouded in leather from head to toe and smelled of bear grease. It was a cold night so his fondness for layers was not at all surprising. He slowly pulled back his hood and revealed the face of Hammer, one of the strongest men of their small band of stragglers. If invaders did ever find them, he was their first line of defense.

Long Eyes turned and welcomed him warmly. “We have a lot to talk about, Long Eyes,” the man said. “There are many changes in the wind and our fragile village is in trouble.”

Long Eyes answered, “Yes there are. Yes it is. And I’m the whipping boy who is up for re-election. Please sit down at the fire and we’ll talk. Fisher, you sit down and listen. You need to know. Your wisdom may turn out to be valuable.”

“Ha. My wisdom? That’s interesting!”

“Yes, the peacemaking wisdom of women, spoken through a child, is wisdom none the less.”

“It’s too bad I’m not a child. Then I might eat less, and our provisions would be lasting longer.” Hammer spoke forth. “Long Eyes, that is what I want to talk about. Our provisions are not just thin. They are nearly spent.”

“What do you think we should do?” Long Eyes said as he stroked his chin. Sometimes it was hard to tell if he was thinking deeply or just posing for a daguerreotype.

“I think we should go back to the old ways!” Hammer said, almost mumbling, looking down in worry and fear.

“The old ways??” Fisher shouted. “Isn’t that exactly what’s killing us? The OLD ways? Its 1908! We are the last Indians living the old ways and the world doesn’t even know we exist! We’re not even on the census!” He stood up and spun around in amazement.

Long Eyes barked, “Sit down, and anyway, always spin clockwise, not wittershins like a Mohawk. Really!”

“Oh...kay! Fisher sat down and plunked his chin on his hand and pouted.

“There is a white man inside you trying to take the easy way. That’s ‘cause your mother was white.... And a Christian!”

“No, my mother was *half* white. Her mother was mixed blood Indian too. That makes me more than half.”

“And yes she was a Christian and a damn good one...”

“Not NOW, Fisher! Some other time. Now, Hammer, what do you mean by “old ways?” It’s the second of February and we are starving to death. As far as I remember, that WAS the old way.”

Hammer explained, “But before our time, the ancestors had a bear ceremony this time of year to hunt the bear and bring it to the Big House and then butcher it so that there could be a bear feast. By the time they were done with the feast, it was later in February, and then there were leftovers and broths, and then other game would return, and they’d get through to March and April.”

Long Eyes looked at Hammer with amazement. “Where are we going to find a bear?”

Hammer caught Long Eyes’ gaze and held it for a long time. “I saw bear sign in October....up on the hillside.”

“What kind of sign?”

“Tracks!”

“What size?”

“Biiig!”

“Woah! That is interesting. That explains why some of our traplines were empty last November.”

“Are you thinking what I’m thinking?”

Fisher was horrified. “What? You want to kill it? I thought the bear was the savior and protector of the Algonquin people! You men can’t just kill everything that gets in your way! Think of Saint Francis. He was at peace with the animals.”

Hammer patted the air as if patting Fisher's shoulders and said, "Hush down, Little Wooskie. Don't fret. Yes, Mr Bear is our protector, but there is a ceremony that is sanctioned by ancient traditions. It is designed so as to not violate ANY inter-species agreements. Think of it as Communion with our savior!"

"Yeah, RIGHT!" Fisher grumbled. "Leave my religion out of it!"

"Are you getting superstitious, Hammer?" Long Eyes said.

"Yeah, you could say that," Hammer answered, down in the bottom of his throat. If we kill the bea..." His voice stopped suddenly, and he began to whisper down low. "If we cchhhhh [he made the sign of cutting his own throat] "the one who eats the berries," we have to do it according to ceremony." He held his palm up next to his mouth as if to keep his thoughts secret from the astounding psychic powers attributed to the bear by his ancestors.

"So what's the ceremony?" Fisher asked, loudly, not understanding why all the whispering.

"The fire is dying out," interrupted Long Eyes." Go split some of those logs, Fisher. The good axe is over there against that tree, with the red handle. The white one is no good."

Just as Fisher muttered, "Figures!" and turned to leave, Hammer turned around and said to Long Eyes, "I have to consult with Top Eagle, our cook, ceremonialist and part time shaman but I think I can draw you a mental picture."

Whispering below a stage whisper, Hammer continued. "You see, the women try to dream where the bear is, the chosen one. Then we go and coax it out of its cave and then rope it and bring it to the Big House and then we cut its head off and butcher it, and then the feast goes from the new moon to the full moon."

"What time of year is this supposed to take place?"

"That's the tricky part. It has to be done at the right time, and not everyone agrees on that." Hammer pulled out a small leather pouch and untied it. He pulled from it a small white eagle bone whistle, only a few inches long, and then blew on it. A shrill tweeeee sound penetrated the forest, loud as an eagle's cry.

"What does that do?" Fisher inquired as he came over with some handfuls of the first split wood.

"Oh, that's to call Top Eagle to the fire."

"Does he know that? Asked Fisher. "I've never heard that sound before!"

"You have a lot to learn! Top Eagle, however, knows what a lot of things mean, although he seldom says anything. He'll be here shortly. Trust me."

They all waited by the fire silently looking into the flames while Fisher went back to the wood pile to split logs. "Stand back more, Fisher. Give it a good whack! Stand back further and let the weight of the axe pull your arms til they're extended. Then you'll see those splinters fly!"

Fisher just nodded. "I'm trying to do that!" he said.

Top Eagle came to the fire and sat down on his haunches between the other two men. "You called?"

Hammer whispered, “Yes, Top Eagle. When does the feast Ceremony start? For the One Who Eats the Berries?” Hammer gave Top Eagle a coffee cup filled to the brim with good black coffee, and a look filled with to the brim with worry as dark as the night sky. Top Eagle said nothing but Long Eye saw behind the man’s eyes and was worried.

“Well, it starts at the new moon, brother. Otherwise how could the 12 day feast end at the full moon?” Top Eagle was a quiet man, but relaxed within himself, and spoke with confidence. He knew his mind immediately about the mid-winter bear ceremony even though no one had asked about it in at least a dozen years if not more.

Long Eyes broke in. “Yeah, but my pop used to talk about the old ways and he said you can’t dig into the bear cave whilst they were hibernating and pull them out. All them mama bears are giving birth at the end of January and they don’t come out to eat til’ February 2nd. So the ceremony would have to be after that.”

Hammer mused, “So, right. So, Winter Solstice, December 22nd, is the beginning of winter, a holy day. New Years Day, which Algonquins know as “Forgiveness Day,” is obviously another holy day and it starts on the beginning or “dark’ of the Bear Moon. Mid-winter is literally February 2nd, so do the mid-winter ceremonies start at the end of the Bear Moon? Or Mid-winter, the day the bear comes out to look at his shadow?”

Top Eagle explained, “The way I see it, the time of the mid-winter ceremonies, the *Withke’katen*, start on February 2nd, no matter what, but they go on after that. Lots of ceremonies and gatherings are good to keep everyone’s spirits up when the days are so short. And a “moon,” any moon, has to start at the dark of the moon. And the Bear Ceremonies have to start at the new moon as well.”

“Even if its not the same new moon?” Hammer asked, sounding like he wanted to start an argument. “Look, I don’t want to kill the bear on the wrong day and have the ancestors all pissed off at us. We got enough problems as it is!”

“Yes, even if it’s not the same new moon.” Top Eagle’s voice was raised in self-defense. He almost sounded sarcastic. “Look! You can’t have the Bear Ceremony without the bear! And you won’t find hide nor hair of a bear anywhere until after February 2nd. In years where the first new moon is early in January, like this year, then the bear ceremonies can start the day after the bears come out of hiding.” Top Eagle saw an argument coming and was beginning to get testy with Hammer.

“But that means that the Bear Moon is over the day after the baby bears are born!” Hammer weighed in, sounding like he felt like he had a good point, opposing Top Eagle.

“That’s right. But here’s the thing. If the first new moon is not until say January 15th, then the baby bears will be born during the full moon. That just means that the Bear Ceremonies begin at the end of the Bear Moon, already half way through the Mid-Winter Season. It’s no biggie. It’s different every year, a twenty-nine- year cycle.”

Long Eyes, never one to avoid the tough questions, spoke up. “But this year we’ve got a big problem because the new year started on January 3rd. We had a full moon on January 18th, and now its new again, February 2nd. That means the bear went out earlier today to look at his shadow. By the look of the sky today, he’d have to be blind not to have seen it. The sky was blue with just a few high clouds. means we really need that...” he whispered, “...bear meat!”

Fisher brought more split wood and laid it by the fire. “Could you go over that again? I could hardly hear you. I thought February 2nd was Ground Hogs Day and that it was the ground hog who comes out of his

hole and looks for his shadow. If he sees it, it means its cold and that winter will continue for six more weeks. If it is cold it is also dry, with few clouds, and so the sky will be clear which means he will see his shadow. But if it is warm, the snow will be melting, causing a great deal of fog, or snog as some call it, and he won't see his shadow, meaning that warm weather is on the way."

Long Eyes gave Fisher a side-long glance of amazement, as if to say "aren't you full of yourself?"

Fisher caught the look in midair and retorted, "Yeah, I read it in a book, Unc. But answer the question."

"The white people changed it from a bear to a ground hog. I don't know why they have to change everything. I guess bears are scary." Fisher's Uncle's uncle was always poking fun at "the white man" but never in a mean way.

"The problem is the bear already emerged from his cave, and we are supposed to hunt the bear right at the new moon, and the new moon is almost passed," Hammer said. "I can't see any of us in our right minds running through a mile of snow on this cold night to wrestle with a bear."

Top Eagle said, "But if the bear was late getting out, and misses the new moon, we have to wait until the next new moon to start the ceremony."

Long Eyes stood up and yelled, "But we need food NOW! We can't wait another day! By the next new moon we'll all be dead!"

Top Eagle yelled back, "We need to pray about this. We need to plan! We need to have visions. We need a team."

Long Eyes yelled, "Hammer can do it! We need the food!" Long Eyes grabbed Top Eagle by his coat collar and then the Top Eagle did the same in turn and they started to tussle beside the fire.

Hammer yelled out, "Long Eyes!! Stop! Listen!:" Long Eyes looked over and Hammer said, quietly,

"There is another problem!"

"What?" Long Eyes didn't want any more problems but sensed they were just beginning. He let go of Top Eagle.

"Who's going to capture the bear?" Hammer shrugged his shoulders in an almost comical way, that held a secret meaning. A sheepish shrug that gave Long Eyes chills.

"Why, you of course. Hammer, you are the warrior among us. Why do you shrug?"

Hammer stood close to the fire and took off his outer robe of deer skin, revealing bare arms, arms that were bleeding with many deep red slashes and covered with poultice clay. "Top Eagle put the clay on early this morning. I had to take the wrappings off for a few hours. I'm hurt."

"How the heck did that happen?" Long Eyes asked. "Some days you get the bear and some days the bear gets you...and it looks like the bear got you! Are you in pain?"

In a whisper, Hammer, who was always so good at hiding his pain, nodded and said, "I was at the edge of the woods this morning. I had arranged a meeting with a mixed blood man from the next town. He had promised to bring me some supplies for our band here, and I was going to do some work for him on his

farm in exchange. But he pulled out a knife and started to try to stab me, and I fought him off with my arms flailing trying to knock the weapon out of his hands before I could even see it, and so I lost a bit of blood and my sores are weighing on me.”

“I’ll say. Do you know why he attacked you?” Long Eyes was alarmed.

“He said that neighbors told him they saw me, or someone from our band, stealing their cows, and he was so mad I could hardly talk to him.”

“How did you stop him from trying to kill you?”

“How do you think? I had no rope or gag or manacles. And he wouldn’t stop.”

“So you...killed him?”

“It was an accident. I got him to the ground, and tried to throw him over face down, but I accidentally broke his neck. He died on the spot. The ground was so frozen I could not bury him except under a foot of snow. The first warm day and the body will be discovered. Then it gets interesting!”

“Ho-o-ly Moses! I’ll say,” Long Eyes said, “Now we are doomed. Not only can’t you hunt the bear, no less wrestle with him, but now we have no food and can’t go out to the edge of the forest to get supplies! And eventually they will come after us, and not for cows.”

“I took his knife, and then cut down a nearby dead tree with it and made it look like the tree fell on him, breaking his neck. But we’d better be careful anyway.”

“If not you, who do we have that is strong enough to hunt the bear?” Top Eagle said. “I myself am very old and not likely to succeed.”

“No one, right now. All our men are in doubtful condition, sick, hungry, wounded. Several died around Christmas.” A look of fear crossed Long Eyes’ face, something no one had ever seen there before.

“There is one strong man among us.” Top Eagle glanced from side to side.

“He can also pass for white.” Top Eagle looked over to the wood pile where Fisher had returned to his labors.

“You’ve got to be joking,” said Long Eyes. That boy doesn’t like hunting animals. He told me he wanted to be trained as a pipe carrier so that he would not have to hunt. He knows our traditions when it suits him, apparently!”

“That’s true,” answered Hammer. “We don’t ask pipe carriers to hunt or kill, so that they keep their medicine strong. So, did you train him?”

“Just getting started, and he has no pipe, so there’s no way he can claim exemption from hunting yet. I think he is the one physically strong enough to handle the bear in case things don’t work out.”

Long Eyes looked very upset with all the bad news at once. He said, “We’ll need to move the entire village over the ridge and have someone stand guard on top to look for vigilantes from the white town. We also need to construct a sort of Big House lodge or at least a *Maysingwe* pole in order to fulfill tradition.”

Top Eagle said, “We don’t have a Big House any more. We destroyed it ourselves when we moved to get away from the Indian Agents. But...there were times when the bear feast was at someone’s home and not in the Big House.”

Hammer said, “I think we should all go to bed and get some rest, and see if any signs come to us in our dreams. Our people have been hiding here for 80 years, holding to our traditions as best we could. Now we are being tested. At the end of this next moon, I would have been more completely healed and the young man could have helped me to the cave of the black bear. Now it will be me helping him, if I’m strong enough. Have hope my friends, even though it be a hollow word!”

The next morning, there was a gathering in the village. Top Eagle reported no dreams or signs. Hammer revealed to the village the situation with the murder of the man who had falsely offered to help. It was self-defense, but the Mounties would surely be told lies, and there was no one to stand up for Hammer. They could only hope that the tree across the man’s neck was sufficiently convincing. And no one could cover up tracks in the snow better than Hammer. Top Eagle gathered up the men right after breakfast, and it was then that he told Fisher that he had been picked to deal with the bear, and as soon as possible. Fisher was enraged. “Kill a bear?” he cried. “I don’t even like bear meat!”

The other men said, “But what else are we going to eat? There is very little to eat even in warmer weather on the other side of the ridge. You are the only one who can rope that bear. Perhaps he will respond to you. You know it is important to show respect for the bear during the ceremony!”

Fisher heard but was not happy. Nonetheless, he had to agree there was nothing else to eat and the winter was a cold one, draining the energy from their bodies.

Fisher came back the following day to the circle and revealed that he had met a woman in the village who said that she was bear clan. He asked the circle, “If I were to be married to the woman in the bear clan, wouldn’t that mean I could not by tribal law, hunt the bear?”

The men could see that Fisher was very much opposed to killing a bear, but also had great respect for the laws of the village. Top Eagle stood up very straight and said, calmly, “According to our laws and customs, if you were bear clan, you would not be asked to kill or even eat a bear. However, even though by marrying this woman you would by tradition move in with her, marrying a bear clan woman only makes your children bear clan. It does not make you bear clan, and therefore does not exempt you from killing the bear.”

Fisher just said “Shit!” and sat down abruptly with his face in his hands. Top Eagle quipped, “And anyway, when this bear clan woman finds out you married her just to get out of helping the tribe, you’ll be battling a more fierce opponent than any bear.”

Fisher got up slowly at the edge of the circle and said, “I am at the end of my rope! I need another night to sleep on this. I will ask for a vision, and then decide if I am, as you seem to say, worthy to have this communion with the bear.”

Top Eagle answered, “Sometimes our ancestors were delayed a day or two by weather or by not finding the cave right away, but as long as the crescent moon was not too bright, they went ahead. The moon will still be in its fullness twelve days from tomorrow. We are treading a path here that is as narrow as the first moon of winter. I say let the man try to dream dreams, and perhaps be given an omen or sign as to what we should do.”

That night Fisher took his tent out to the edge of the forest and slept far away from the others. Before he slept he poured a great deal of tobacco on the ground as he prayed. He smudged himself for a long time with his beloved sage plant, and then went to bed.

That night, he dreamt that Jesus and his ancestor Quiver were both walking through the woods in the snow with a big black bear, guiding it on two ropes. The bear did not look angry at all, but had an a saintly look on his face. Fisher walked up to them, and shook hands with Jesus, and then with Quiver. Quiver handed the end of the rope to Fisher and then pulled out a beautiful quiver made of smoked leather, and gave it to Fisher. Fisher responded, "What then will you hunt with, my ancestor?" Quiver pulled forth yet another quiver from his back and said, "I always carry a spare!"

At that moment, Fisher woke up in astonishment. The dream brought so many answers at once, it made him weep for a long time. He went and told Top Eagle the dream, as he had been the Dream Keeper for the village since Fisher was born. Fisher told his wise elder that he felt sure now that this was his fate, even if it meant death to his physical body. He told this elder that although he was shaking with fear, he knew that if he died he would be walking in Heaven with Jesus and with Quiver.

Top Eagle stared at Fisher with great astonishment, and smiled from ear to ear. "I myself always thought those stories of the bear walking with the hunter to the Big House were too miraculous for my level of initiation, but I kind of think you might just be the one! We've got a lot of work to do, and one day to do it!"

Long Eyes walked up and asked what was happening. Top Eagle told him the dream as Fisher looked embarrassed. Long Eyes put his hand on Fisher's heart and said, "You might well think we are trying to kill you, but we are certainly not. With you lie our hopes for the future of this band. I hereby declare you my sub-chief, and upon completing this task successfully, you will be installed as such, and in line for inheriting my Eagle Staff as soon as I step down, and as soon as a fair election can be held. A chief, after all, is answerable to the people. But they trust my judgment....sometimes! We have a lot of work to do. Tomorrow morning, as long as the moon is not visible in the western sky, the wounded warrior Hammer will help you to capture the bear for the Mid-Winter Bear Ceremony so that we won't starve. And you can help Top Eagle cook the soup that lasts for twelve days to the full of the moon. But there is one thing we need you to do before that."

"What is that, Chief?" Fisher's head was spinning with a new-found sense of excitement. His heart was light, but anchored with the loving weight of responsibility.

Long Eyes answered, "Today, though it is already February 4th, we will build a sweat lodge for you, followed by a naming ceremony. You are a warrior now, and you need a warrior name. We will give you the name Great Spirit has already given you. Quiver!"

Fisher's heart was beating strongly and yet he felt an inner peace he had never had before. He finally knew who he was—a quivering warrior, but a warrior nonetheless. If it was a good day to die, it was also good to be good and scared about it as well!

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Epilogue: On March 17th, 1908, just before the end of winter, having completed the bear feast, Quiver rode for the first time on the Atlantic Oriental Railway to be present at the opening of the Plains of Abraham Federal Park in Quebec City. On that day the battlefield was finally turned over to the French. While there he met with a leader of the provincial government of Quebec who knew of Quiver from the history books and the two men began working on a plan to protect Quiver's remnant band from extinction.
