

# **You Never See Apaches**

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**by Elmore Leonard, 1925-2013**

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BY NATURE, ANGSMAN was a cautious man. From the shapeless specks that floated in the sky miles out over the plain, his gaze dropped slowly to the sand a few feet from his chin, then rose again more slowly, to follow the gradual slope that fell away before him. He rolled his body slightly from its prone position to reach the field glasses at his side, while his eyes continued to crawl out into the white-hot nothingness of the flats. Sun glare met alkali dust and danced before the slits of his eyes. And, far out, something moved. Something darker than the monotonous tone of the flats. A pinpoint of motion.

He put the glasses to his eyes and the glare stopped dancing and the small blur of motion cleared and enlarged as he corrected the focus.

Two ponies and two pack animals. The mules were loaded high. He made that out right away, but it was minutes before he realized the riders were women. Two Indian women. Behind them the scavenger birds floated above the scattered animal carcasses, circling lower as the human figures moved away.

Angsman pushed himself up from the sand and made his way back through the pines that closed in on the promontory. A few dozen yards of the darkness of the pines and then abruptly the glare was forcing against sand again where the openness of the trail followed the shoulder of the hill. He stopped at the edge of the trees, took his hat off, and rubbed the red line where the sweatband had stuck. His mustache drooped untrimmed toward dark, tight cheeks, giving his face a look of sadness. A stern, sun-scarred sadness. It was the type of face that needed the soft shadow of a hat brim to make it look complete. Shadows to soften the gaunt angles. It was an intelligent, impassive face, in its late thirties. He looked at the three men by the horses and then moved toward them. Ygenio Baca sat cross-legged in the dust smoking a cigarette, drawing deep, and he only glanced at Angsman as he approached. He drew long on his cigarette, then held it close to his eyes and examined it as some rare object as the smoke curled from his mouth. Ygenio Baca, the mozo, had few concerns.

Ed Hyde's stocky frame was almost beneath his horse's head, with a hand lifted to the horse's muzzle. The horse's nose moved gently against the big palm, licking the salty perspiration from hand and wrist.

In the other arm Hyde cradled a Sharps rifle. His squinting features were obscure beneath the hat tilted close to his eyes. Sun, wind, and a week's beard gave his face a puffy, raw appearance that was wild, but at the same time soft and hazy. There was about him a look of sluggishness that contrasted with the leanness of Angsman.

Billy Guay stood indolently with his thumbs hooked in his gun belts.

He took a few steps in Angsman's direction and pushed his hat to the back of his head, though the sun was beating full in his face. He was half Ed Hyde's age, a few years or so out of his teens, but there was a hardness about the eyes that contrasted with his soft features. Features that were all the more youthful, and even feminine, because of the long blond hair that covered the tops of his ears and hung unkempt over his shirt collar. Watching Angsman, his mouth was tight as if daring him to say something that he would not agree with.

Angsman walked past him to Ed Hyde. He was about to say something, but stopped when Billy Guay turned and grabbed his arm.

„The dust cloud was buffalo like I said, wasn't it?“ Billy Guay asked, but there was more statement of fact than question in his loud voice.

Angsman's serious face turned to the boy, but looked back to Ed Hyde when he said, „There're two Indian women out there cleaning up after a hunting party. The dust cloud was the warriors going home. I suspect they're the last ones. Stragglers. Everyone else out of sight already.“

Billy Guay pushed in close to the two men. „Dammit, the cloud could have still been buffalo,“ he said. „Who says you know so damn much!“

Ed Hyde looked from one to the other like an unbiased spectator. He dropped the long buffalo rifle stock down in front of him. His worn black serge coat strained tight at the armpits as he lifted his hands to pat his coat pockets. From the right one he drew a half-chewed tobacco plug.

For a moment Angsman just stared at Billy Guay. Finally he said, „Look, boy, for a good many years it's been my business to know so damn much. Now,

you'll take my word that the dust cloud was an Indian hunting party and act on it like I see fit, or else we turn around and go back."

Ed Hyde's grizzled head jerked up suddenly. He said, "You're dead right, Angsman. There ain't been buffalo this far south for ten years."

He looked at the boy and spoke easier. "Take my word for it, Billy." He smiled. "If anybody knows it, I do. Those Indians most likely ran down a deer herd. But hell, deer, buffalo, what's the difference? We're not out here for game. You just follow along with what Angsman here says and we all go home rich men. Take things slow, Billy, and you breathe easier."

"I just want to know why's he got to give all the orders," Billy Guay said, and his voice was rising. "It's us that own the map, not him. Where'd he be without us!"

Angsman's voice was the same, unhurried, unexcited, when he said, "I'll tell you. I'd still be back at Bowie guiding for cavalry who ride with their eyes open and know how to keep their mouths shut in Apache country." He didn't wait for a reply, but turned and walked toward the dun-colored mare. "Ygenio," he called to the Mexican still sitting crosslegged on the ground, "hold the mules a good fifty yards behind us and keep your eyes on me."

EIGHT DAYS OUT of Willcox and the strain was beginning to tell. It had been bad from the first day. Now they were in the foothills of the Mogollons and it was no better. Angsman had thought that as soon as they climbed from the dust of the plains the tension would ease and the boy would be easier to handle, but Billy Guay continued to grumble with his thumbs in his gun belts and disagree with everything that was said. And Ed Hyde continued to say nothing unless turning back was mentioned. Since early morning their trail had followed this pine-covered crest that angled irregularly between the massive rock peaks to the south and east and the white-gold plain to the west. Most of the ways the trail had held to the shoulder, turning, twisting, and falling with the contour of the hillcrest. And from the west the openness of the plains continued to cling in glaring monotony. Most of the time Angsman's eyes scanned the openness, and the small black specks continued to crawl along in his vision.

The trail dipped abruptly into a dry creek basin that slanted down from between rocky humps looming close to the right. Angsman reined his mount diagonally down the bank, then at the bottom kicked hard to send the mare into a fast start up the opposite bank. The gravel loosened and fell away as hooves dug through the dry crust to clink against the sandy rock. Momentarily the horse began to fall back, but Angsman spurred again and grunted something close to her ear to make the mare heave and kick up over the bank.

He rode on a few yards before turning to wait for the others.

Billy Guay reached the creek bank and yelled across, without hesitating, "Hey, Angsman, you tryin' to pick the roughest damn trail you can find?"

The scout winced as the voice slammed against the towering rock walls and drifted over the flats, vibrating and repeating far off in the distance. He threw off and ran to the creek bank. Billy Guay began to laugh as the echo came back to him. "Damn, Ed. You hear that!" His voice carried clear and loud across the arroyo. Angsman put a finger to his mouth and shook his head repeatedly when he saw Ed Hyde looking his way. Then Hyde leaned close and said something to

the boy. He heard Billy Guay swear, but not so loud, and then there was silence.

Now, ten days from the time the message had brought him to the hotel in Willcox, he wasn't so sure it was worth it.

In the hotel room Hyde had come to the point immediately. Anxiety showed on his face, but he smiled when he asked the point-blank question „How'd you like to be worth half a hundred thousand dollars?“ With that he waved the piece of dirty paper in front of Angsman's face. „It's right here. Find us the picture of a Spanish sombrero and we're rich.“ That simply.

Angsman had all the time in the world. He smoked a cigarette and thought. Then he asked, „Why me? There're a lot of prospectors around here.“

Hyde did something with his eye that resembled a wink. „You're well recommended here in Willcox. They say you know the country better than most. And the Apaches better than anybody,“ Hyde said with a hint of self-pride for knowing so much about the scout. „Billy here and I'll give you an equal share of everything we find if you can guide us to one little X on a piece of paper.“

Billy Guay had said little that first meeting. He half-sat on the small window ledge trying to stare Angsman down when the scout looked at him. And Angsman smiled when he noticed the boy's two low-slung pistols, thinking a man must be a pretty poor shot with one pistol that he'd have to carry another. And when Billy Guay tried to stare him down, he stared back with the half smile and it made the boy all the madder; so mad that often, then, he interrupted Hyde to let somebody know that he had something to say about the business at hand.

Ed Hyde told a story of a lost mine and a prospector who had found the mine, but was unable to take any gold out because of Indians, and who was lucky to get out with just his skin. He referred to the prospector always as „my friend,“ and finally it turned out that „my friend“ was buffalo hunting out of Tascosa in the Panhandle, along with Ed Hyde, raising a stake to try the mine again, when he „took sick and died.“ The two of them were out on a hunt when it happened and he left the map to Hyde, „since I saw him through his sickness.“ Ed Hyde remained silent for a considerable length of time after telling of the death of his friend.

Then he added, „I met Billy here later on and took to him 'cause he's got the nerve for this kind of business.“ He looked at Billy Guay as a man looks at a younger man and sees his own youth. „Just one thing more, mister,“ he added. „If you say yes and look at the map, you don't leave our sight.“

In the Southwest, lost-mine stories are common. Angsman had heard many, and knew even more prospectors who chased the legends.

He had seen a few become rich. But it wasn't so much the desire for gold that finally prompted him to go along. Cochise had promised peace and Geronimo had scurried south to the Sierra Madres. All was quiet in his territory. Too quiet. He had told himself he would go merely as an escape from boredom. Still, it was hard to keep the wealth aspect from cropping into the thought. Angsman saw the years slipping by with nothing to show for them but a scarred Spanish saddle and an old-model Winchester. All he had to do was lead them to a canyon and a rock formation that looked like a Spanish hat. Two days to collect the equipment and round up a mozo who wasn't afraid to drive mules into that part of Apacheria where there was no peace. For cigarettes and a full belly Ygenio Baca would drive his mules to the gates of hell.

IT WAS ALMOST a mile past the arroyo crossing that Angsman noticed his black specks had disappeared from the open flats. For the past few hundred yards his vision to the left had been blocked by dense pines.

Now the plains yawned wide again, and his glasses inched over the vastness in all directions, then stopped where a spur jutted out from the hillside ahead to cut his vision. The Indian women had vanished.

Hyde and Billy Guay sat their mounts next to Angsman, who, afoot, swept his glasses once more over the flat. Finally he lowered them and said, more to himself than to the others, „Those Indian women aren't nowhere in sight. They could have moved out in the other direction, or they might be so close we can't see them.“

He nodded ahead to where the trail stopped at thick scrub brush and pine and then dipped abruptly to the right to drop to a bench that slanted toward the deepness of the valley. From where they stood, the men saw the trail disappear far below into a denseness of trees and rock.

„Pretty soon the country'll be hugging us tight; and we won't see anything,“ Angsman said. „I don't like it. Not with a hunting party in the neighborhood.“

Billy Guay laughed out. „I'll be go to hell! Ed, this old woman's afraid of two squaws! Ed, you hear—“

Ed Hyde wasn't listening. He was staring off in the distance, past the treetops in the valley to a towering, sand-colored cliff with flying rock buttresses that walled the valley on the other side. He slid from his mount hurriedly, catching his coat on the saddle horn and ripping it where a button held fast. But now he was too excited to heed the ripped coat.

„Look! Yonder to that cliff.“ His voice broke with excitement. „See that gash near the top, like where there was a rock slide? And look past to the mountains behind!“ Angsman and Billy Guay squinted at the distance, but remained silent.

„Dammit!“ Hyde screamed. „Don't you see it!“ He grabbed his horse's reins and ran, stumbling, down the trail to where it leveled again at the bench. When the others reached him, the map was in his hand and he was laughing a high laugh that didn't seem to belong to the grizzled face. His extended hand held the dirty piece of paper ... and he kept jabbing at it with a finger of the other hand. „Right there, dammit! Right there!“ His pointing finger swept from the map. „Now look at that gold-lovin' rock slide!“ His laughter subsided to a self-confident chuckle.

From where they stood on the bench, the towering cliff was now above them and perhaps a mile away over the tops of the trees. A chunk of sandrock as large as a two-story building was gouged from along the smooth surface of the cliff top, with a gravel slide trailing into the valley below; but massive boulders along the cliff top lodged over the depression, forming a four-sided opening. It was a gigantic frame through which they could see sky and the flat surface of a mesa in the distance.

On both sides the mesa top fell away to shoulders cutting sharp right angles from the straight vertical lines, then to be cut off there, in their vision, by the rock border of the cliff frame. And before their eyes the mesa turned into a flat-topped Spanish sombrero.

Billy Guay's jaw dropped open. „Damn! It's one of those hats like the Mex dancers wear! Ed, you see it?“

Ed Hyde was busy studying the map. He pointed to it again. „Right on course, Angsman. The flats, the ridge, the valley, the hat.“ His blackcrusted fingernail followed wavy lines and circles over the stained paper. „Now we just drop to the valley and follow her up to the end.“ He shoved the map into his coat pocket and reached up to the saddle horn to mount. „Come on, boys, we’re good as rich,“ he called, and swung up into the saddle.

Angsman looked down the slant to the darkness of the trees. „Ed, we got to go slow down there,“ he tried to caution, but Hyde was urging his mount down the grade and Billy Guay’s paint was kicking the loose rock after him. His face tightened as he turned quickly to his horse, and then he saw Ygenio Baca leaning against his lead mule vacantly smoking his cigarette. Angsman’s face relaxed. „Ygenio,“ he said. „Tell your mules to be very quiet.“

Ygenio Baca nodded and unhurriedly flicked the cigarette stub down the grade.

They caught up with Hyde and Billy Guay a little way into the timber. The trail had disappeared into a hazy gloom of tangled brush and tree trunks with the cliff on one side and the piney hill on the other to keep out the light.

Angsman rode past them and they stopped and turned in the saddle. Hyde looked a little sheepish because he didn’t know where the trail was, but Billy Guay stared back defiantly and tried to look hard.

„Ed, you saw some bones out there on the flats a while back,“ Angsman said. „Likely they were men who had gold fever.“ That was all he said. He turned the head of the mare and continued on.

Angsman moved slowly, more cautiously now than before, and every so often he would rein in gently and sit in the saddle without moving, and listen. And there was something about the deep silence that made even Billy Guay strain his eyes into the dimness and not say anything. It was a loud quietness that rang in their ears and seemed unnatural. Moving at this pace, it was almost dusk when they reached the edge of the timber.

The pine hill was still on their left, but higher and steeper. To the right, two spurs reached out from the cliff wall that had gradually dropped until now it was just a hump, but with a confusion of rocky angles in the near distance beyond. And ahead was a canyon mouth, narrow at first, but then appearing to open into a wider area.

As they rode on, Angsman could see it in Ed Hyde’s eyes. The map was in his hand and he kept glancing at it and then looking around.

When they passed through the canyon mouth into the open, Hyde called, „Angsman, look! Just like it says!“

But Angsman wasn’t looking at Ed Hyde. A hundred feet ahead, where a narrow side canyon cut into the arena, the two Indian women sat their ponies and watched the white men approach.

ANGSMAN REINED in and waited, looking at them the way you look at deer that you have come across unexpectedly in a forest, waiting for them to bolt. But the women made no move to run. Hyde and Billy Guay drew up next to Angsman, then continued on as Angsman nudged the mare into a walk. They stopped within a few feet of the women, who had still neither moved nor uttered a sound.

Angsman dismounted. Hyde stirred restlessly in his saddle before putting his hands on the horn to swing down, but stopped when Billy Guay's hand tightened on his arm.

„Damn, Ed, look at that young one!“ His voice was loud and excited, but as impersonal as if he were making a comment at a girlie show.

„She'd even look good in town,“ he added, and threw off to stand in front of her pony.

Angsman looked at Billy Guay and back to the girl, who was sliding easily from the bare back of her pony. He greeted her in English, pleasantly, and tipped his hat to the older woman, still mounted, who giggled in a high, thin voice. The girl said nothing, but looked at Angsman.

He said, *Como se llama* and spoke a few more words in Spanish.

The girl's face relaxed slightly and she said, „Sonkadeya,“ pronouncing each syllable distinctly.

„What the hell's that mean?“ Billy Guay said, walking up to her.

„That's her name,“ Angsman told him, then spoke to the girl again in Spanish.

She replied with a few Spanish phrases, but most of her words were in a dialect of the Apache tongue. She was having trouble combining the two languages so that the white men could understand her. Her face would frown and she would wipe her hands nervously over the hips of her greasy deerskin dress as she groped for the right words. She was plump and her hair and dress had long gone unwashed, but her face was softly attractive, contrasting oddly with her primitive dress and speech. Her features might have belonged to a white woman—the coloring, too, for that matter—but the greased hair and smoke smell that clung to her were decidedly Apache.

When she finished speaking, Angsman looked back at Hyde. „She's a Warm Springs Apache. A Mimbreno,“ he said. „She says they're on their way home.“ Hyde said, „Ask her if she knows about any gold hereabouts.“

Angsman looked at him and his eyes opened a little wider. „Maybe you didn't hear, Ed. I said she's a Mimbres. She's going home from a hunting trip led by her father. And her father's Delgadito,“ he added.

„Hell, the Paches are at peace, ain't they?“ Hyde asked indifferently. „What you worried about?“

„Cochise made peace,“ Angsman answered. „These are Mimbres, not Chiricahuas, and their chief is Victorio. He's never never made peace. I don't want to scare you, Ed,“ he said looking back to the girl, „but his war lieutenant's Delgadito.“

Billy Guay was standing in front of the girl, his thumbs in his gun belts, looking at her closely. „I know how to stop a war,“ he said, smiling.

„Who's talkin' about war?“ Hyde asked. „We're not startin' anything.“

„You don't have to stop it, Ed,“ Angsman said. „You think about finishing it. And you think about your life.“

„Don't worry about me thinkin' about my life. I think about it bein' almost gone and not worth a Dixie single. Hell, yes, we're takin' a chance!“ Hyde argued. „If gold was easy to come by, it wouldn't be worth nothin'.“

„I still know how to stop a war,“ Billy Guay said idly.

Hyde looked at him impatiently. „What's that talk supposed to mean?“ Then he saw how Billy Guay was looking at the girl, and the frown eased off the grizzled face as it dawned on him what Billy Guay was thinking about, and he

rubbed his beard. „You see what I mean, Ed,“ Billy Guay said, smiling. „We take Miss Indin along and ain't no Delgadito or even U. S. Grant goin' to stop us.“ He looked up at the old woman on the pony. „Though I don't see any reason for carryin' excess baggage.“

Angsman caught him by both arms and spun him around. „You guncrazy kid, you out of your mind? You don't wave threats at Apaches!“ He pushed the boy away roughly. „Just stop a minute, Ed. You got better sense than what this boy's proposing.“

„It's worth a chance, Angsman. Any chance. We're not stoppin' after comin' this far on account of some Indin or his little girl,“ Hyde said.

„I'd say Billy's got the right idea. I told you he had nerve. Let him use a little of it.“

Billy Guay looked toward Angsman's mount and saw his handgun in a saddle holster, then both pistols came out and he pointed them at the scout.

„Don't talk again, Angsman, 'cause if I hear any more abuse I'll shoot you as quick as this.“ He raised a pistol and swung it to the side as if without aiming and pulled the trigger. The old Indian woman dropped from the pony without a cry.

There was silence. Hyde looked at him, stunned. „God, Billy! You didn't have to do that!“

Billy Guay laughed, but the laugh trailed off too quickly, as if he just then realized what he had done. He forced the laugh now, and said, „Hell, Ed. She was only an Indin. What you fussin' about?“

Hyde said, „Well, it's done now and can't be undone.“ But he looked about nervously as if expecting a simple solution to be standing near at hand. A solution or some kind of justification. He saw the mining equipment packed on one of the mules and the look of distress left his eyes. „Let's quit talkin' about it,“ he said. „We got things to do.“

Billy Guay blew down the barrel of the pistol he had fired and watched Sonkadeya as she bent over the woman momentarily, then rose without the trace of an emotion on her face. It puzzled Billy Guay and made him more nervous. He waved a pistol toward Ygenio Baca.

„Hey, Mazo! Get a shovel and turn this old woman under. No sense in havin' the birds tellin' on us.“

THE SCOUT RODE in silence, knowing what would come, but not knowing when. His gaze crawled over the wildness of the slanting canyon walls, brush trees, and scattered boulders, where nothing moved. The left wall was dark, the shadowy rock outlines obscure and blending into each other; the opposite slope was hazy and cold in the dim light of the late sun. He felt the tenseness all over his body. The feeling of knowing that something is close, though you can't see it or hear it. Only the quietness, the metallic clomp of hooves, then Billy Guay's loud, forced laughter that would cut the stillness and hang there in the narrowness until it faded out up-canyon. Angsman knew the feeling. It went with campaigning. But this time there was a difference. It was the first time he had ever led into a canyon with such a strong premonition that Apaches were present. Yet, with the feeling, he recognized an eager expectancy. Perhaps fatalism, he thought. He watched two chicken hawks dodging, gliding in and out, drop toward a brush tree halfway up the slanting right wall, then, just as they were about to land in the bush, they rose quickly and soared out of



sight. Now he was more than sure. They were riding into an ambush. And there was so little time to do anything about it.

He glanced at Hyde riding next to him. Hyde couldn't be kept back now. The final circle on his map was just a little figuring from the end of the canyon.

„Slow her down, Ed,“ Billy Guay yelled. „I can't propose to Miss Indin and canter at the same time.“ He laughed and reached over to put his hand on Sonkadeya's hip, then let the hand fall to her knee.

He called out, „Yes, sir, Ed, I think we made us a good move.“

Sonkadeya did not resist. Her head nodded faintly with the sway of her pony, looking straight ahead. But her eyes moved from one canyon wall to the other and there was the slightest gleam of a smile.

Angsman wondered if he really cared what was going to happen. He didn't care about Hyde or Billy Guay; and he didn't know Ygenio Baca well enough to have a feeling one way or the other. From the beginning Ygenio had been taking a chance like everyone else. He thought of his own life and the odd fact occurred to him that he didn't even particularly care about himself. He tried to picture death in relation to himself, but he would see himself lying on the ground and himself looking at the body and knew that couldn't be so. He thought of how hard it was to take yourself out of the picture to see yourself dead, and ended up with: If you're not going to be there to worry about yourself being dead, why worry at all? But you don't stay alive not caring, and his eyes went back to the canyon sides.

He watched Hyde engrossed in his map and looked back at Billy Guay riding close to Sonkadeya with his hand on her leg. They could be shot from their saddles and not even see where it came from. Or, they could be taken by surprise. His head swung front again and he saw the canyon up ahead narrow to less than fifty feet across. Or they could be taken by surprise!

He flicked the rein against the mare's mane, gently, to ease her toward the right canyon wall. He made the move slowly, leading the others at a very slight angle, so that Hyde and Billy Guay, in their preoccupation, did not even notice the edging. Either to be shot in the head or not at all, Angsman thought.

Now they were riding much closer to the slanting canyon wall. He turned in the saddle to watch Billy Guay, still laughing and moving his hand over Sonkadeya. And when he turned back he saw the half-dozen Apaches standing in the trail not a dozen yards ahead. It was funny, because he was looking at half-naked, armed Apaches and he could still hear Billy Guay's laughter coming from behind.

Then the laughter stopped. Hyde groaned, „Oh, my God!“ and in the instant spurred his mount and yanked rein to wheel off to the left.

There was the report of a heavy rifle and horse and rider went down.

Angsman's arms were jerked suddenly behind his back and he saw three Apaches race for the fallen Hyde as he felt himself dragged over the rump of the mare. He landed on his feet and staggered and watched one warrior dragging Hyde back toward them by one leg.

Hyde was screaming, holding on to the other leg that was bouncing over the rough ground.

Billy Guay had jerked his arms free and stood a little apart from the dozen Apaches aiming bows and carbines at him. His hands were on the pistol butts, with fear and indecision plain on his face.

Angsman twisted his neck toward him, „Don't even think about it, boy. You don't have a chance.“ It was all over in something like fifteen seconds.

Hyde was writhing on the ground, groaning and holding on to the hole in his thigh, where the heavy slug had gone through to take the horse in the belly. Angsman stooped to look at the wound and saw that Hyde was holding the map, pressed tight to his leg and now smeared with blood. He looked up and Delgadito was standing on the other side of the wounded man. Next to him stood Sonkadeya.

DELGADITO WAS NOT dressed for war. He wore a faded red cotton shirt, buttonless and held down by the cartridge belt around his waist; and his thin face looked almost ridiculous under the shabby wide-brimmed hat that sat straight on the top of his head, at least two sizes too small.

But Angsman did not laugh. He knew Delgadito, Victorio's war lieutenant, and probably the most capable hit-and-run guerrilla leader in Apacheria. No, Angsman did not laugh.

Delgadito stared at them, taking his time to look around, then said, „Hello. Angs-mon. You have a cigarillo?“

Angsman fished in his shirt pocket and drew out tobacco and paper and handed it to the Indian. Delgadito rolled a cigarette awkwardly and handed the sack to Angsman, who rolled himself one then flicked a match with his thumbnail and lighted the cigarettes. Both men drew deeply and smoked in silence. Finally, Angsman said, „It is good to smoke with you again, Sheekasay.“

Delgadito nodded his head and Angsman went on, „It has been five years since we smoked together at San Carlos.“

The Apache shook his head slightly. „Together we have smoked other things since then, Angs-mon,“ and added a few words in the Mimbres dialect.

Angsman looked at him quickly. „You were at Big Dry Wash?“

Delgadito smiled for the first time and nodded his head. „How is your sickness, Angs-mon?“ he asked, and the smile broadened.

Angsman's hand came up quickly to his side, where the bullet had torn through that day two years before at Dry Wash, and now he smiled.

Delgadito watched him with the nearest an Apache comes to giving an admiring look. He said, „You are a big man, Angs-mon. I like to fight you. But now you do something very foolish and I must stop you. I mean you no harm, Angs-mon, for I like to fight you, but now you must go home and stop this being foolish and take this old man before the smell enters his leg. And, Angs-mon, tell this old man what befalls him if he returns. Tell him the medicine he carries in his hand is false. Show him how he cannot read the medicine ever again because of his own blood.“ For a moment his eyes lifted to the heights of the canyon wall.

„Maybeso that is the only way, Angs-mon. With blood.“

Angsman offered no thanks for their freedom, gratitude was not an Apache custom, but he said, „On the way home I will impress your words on them.“

„Tell my words to the old man,“ Delgadito replied, then his voice became cold. „I will tell the young one.“ And he looked toward Billy Guay.

Angsman swallowed hard to remain impassive. „There is nothing I can say.“

„The mother of Sonkadeya speaks in my ear, Angs-mon. What could you say?“ Delgadito turned deliberately and walked away.

Angsman rode without speaking, listening to Hyde's groans as the saddle rubbed the open rawness of his wound. The groans were beginning to erase the scream that hung in his mind and repeated over and over, Billy Guay's scream as they carried him up-canyon.

Angsman knew what he was going to do. He'd still have his worn saddle and old-model carbine, but he knew what he was going to do.

Hyde's leg would heal and he'd be back the next year, or the year after; or if not him, someone else. The Southwest was full of Hydies. And as long as there were Hydies, there were Billy Guays. Big talkers with big guns who ended up lying dead, after a while, in a Mimbres rancheria.

Angsman would go back to Fort Bowie. Even if it got slow sometimes, there'd always be plenty to do.

