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Murder at Coyote Canyon



AUDIO **CD-ROM**



CHAPTER ONE

The Earthquake

Portola Point, California, is a lovely town on the Pacific Coast, north of Los Angeles. It got its name from Gaspar de Portola, a Spanish explorer who explored the Pacific Coast in the 18th century. When he came to southern California, several peaceful American Indian peoples lived there. One of these was the Chumash people. During the 19th century the Spanish and American settlers took the land away from them and built roads, towns and cities. The last members of the Chumash went to live on a small reservation near Portola Point.

Bill and Michelle Martin and their family arrived at Portola Point in March. They came from Montego Bay, Florida. Bill was a tall, handsome boy of seventeen with brown hair and blue eyes. Basketball was his sport and he played on the Portola High team. He loved science and wanted to become a biologist.

His sister, Michelle, was a pretty girl of sixteen, with red hair and blue eyes. She played volleyball on the school team and wanted to become a journalist.

Their father worked for an airline and in March he was transferred from Miami international Airport to Los Angeles International Airport.

It was hard for Bill and Michelle to leave their friends at Montego Bay, but they often sent them emails and called them. They liked their new school, Portola High, and made friends there.

Our story begins in July, a hot, sunny month in southern California. School was over, and Bill and Michelle were enjoying their summer vacation in their new home.

"Well, today's the big day!" said Bill. "July third!"

"Yeah, in two hours we'll see Nick again!" said Michelle happily.

"What time is his plane landing?" asked Mrs Martin, a friendly woman of about forty.

"At a quarter past eleven," said Bill.

"The guest room is ready for him, and I hope you have a great vacation together," said Mrs Martin. "It's almost time to drive to the airport."

Nick Chan was one of Bill's best friends at Montego Bay, and he was coming to spend the month of July with the Martins. Nick was a Chinese-American boy of seventeen and a good basketball player. He loved animals and wanted to become a vet.

Nick's plane arrived on time and the three friends were together again.

"It's great to see you, Nick!" said Bill excitedly.

"We're going to have a wonderful July!" said Michelle.

"Thanks for inviting me," said Nick, smiling at Mrs Martin and his two friends.

"How's Rover?" asked Bill. Rover was Nick's dog.

"Oh, he's fine. He always wants to play," said Nick.

When they got back to Portola Point, Bill, Michelle and Nick spent the day talking and laughing together. They were in the garden when they suddenly felt everything moving around them.

"What's happening?" cried Nick. "Everything's moving!"

"Oh, no!" cried Bill. "It's an earthquake!"

"Another earthquake!" cried Michelle, who was scared. The three friends looked at each other - their faces were white. They didn't know what to do. Nick's glass of juice fell off the garden table to the ground.

Then suddenly the earthquake stopped.

"This is the third earthquake in two months!" said Michelle.

"The last one damaged several new houses in Coyote Canyon. That's where the expensive homes are. And they're building more there."

"The small cracks in our kitchen wall are from the first earthquake in May," said Bill.

"And the big, long crack in my bedroom is from the earthquake last month," said Michelle. "I covered it with a poster of U2."

"Well, this is my first California earthquake," said Nick, who was a bit nervous.

"Southern California is a beautiful place, but we're right on top of the San Andreas Fault," said Bill. "There are lots of earthquakes in California, and scientists say a big one is coming, but they don't know when."

"Gee...," said Nick, worried, "I read about the San Andreas Fault in my science book but you guys live right on it."

Suddenly everything started shaking again for about five seconds.

"It's an aftershock," said Bill, looking at Nick and Michelle nervously. "Let's hope these earthquakes stop before tomorrow."

"Yeah," said Michelle, "tomorrow's the Fourth of July, and there's a big parade, a western rodeo and a barbeque."

"You'll see some real American Indians from the Chumash Reservation in the parade," said Bill.

"Sounds like fun!" said Nick, trying to forget about the earthquake.

CHAPTER TWO

Wild Wolf

The next day was the Fourth of July, one of America's most important holidays. It was another hot, sunny day and everything in town was ready for the parade. Red, white and blue decorations and American flags were everywhere. The parade was the first event of the morning, followed by the town barbeque at Blue River Park and the western rodeo. Music, dancing and fireworks were part of the evening program.

Bill, Michelle and Nick had a big breakfast with fruit juice, eggs, toast, jam and milk before going to see the parade.

"Dad and I are coming to see the parade a bit later," said Mrs Martin, who was reading the morning paper. "We'll see you at the barbeque. Have fun!"

"Thanks for the great breakfast, Mrs Martin!" said Nick.

"Thanks, mom!" said Michelle, running out of the door with Bill and Nick.

There was a crowd of people on Main Street who wanted to see the parade. It started with the marching band of Portola High School with twelve majorettes in colorful uniforms. They were followed by the mayor of Portola Point, Carlos Rodriguez. He rode in a big car with other important men. The sheriff and his men followed on their horses. Then came a group of men dressed like George Washington, Benjamin Franklin and other patriots of the American Revolution of 1776.

Everyone shouted, "Hurrah!"

"When are the cowboys coming?" asked Nick, getting his digital camera ready.

"Here they come," said Bill, pointing towards the Town Hall. "Most of them come from cattle ranches in the Ventura Mountains." There were about thirty cowboys on their horses and they rode slowly down Main Street.

The Queen of the Fourth of July was riding in an open carriage pulled by two horses. She was dressed like a Spanish lady of the 1700s.

"Look, it's Julie Alvarez, the queen!" said Michelle to Nick. "She's in Bill's class and she was chosen by our high school."

"I can understand why," said Nick. "She's very pretty!" Julie had long dark hair, dark eyes and a friendly smile.

Several other floats went down Main Street and at the end of the parade there were the Chumash men on their horses. They rode bareback and wore their native costumes. They had war paint on their faces and on their horses. Some of them wore headdresses. Chumash women in their native costumes followed on their horses.

"American Indians are great!" said Nick, taking pictures of them. "They're riding bareback - that's very difficult."

"Look!" said Bill. "That's Pam's uncle on the black horse."

"Who's Pam?" asked Nick.

"Pam's in my class and she's my friend," said Michelle. "She's a Chumash. But she doesn't live on the reservation, she lives with her parents in town. They have a big bookshop. You'll meet her at the barbeque."

"Wow!" said Nick. "An American Indian - I want to meet her." Suddenly a very old Chumash on a white horse appeared at the end of the parade. He had long white hair and wore a headdress. He was holding a big sign that said:

JACOB RICHARDSON, GET OUT OF COYOTE CANYON! STOP
BUILDING HOUSES ON OUR ANCIENT CEMETERY!

The noisy crowd of people was suddenly silent. The old man got off his horse and stood in front of the Town Hall. Then he took the microphone from the master of ceremonies, Linda Jones, and asked, "Can I talk to the people of Portola Point?" Linda was surprised and said, "Well, OK."

"My name is Wild Wolf and I live on the Chumash Reservation. I am the shaman and the Great Spirit Manito speaks to me. Yesterday's

earthquake and the other earthquakes are signs from the Great Spirit Manito. He is very angry because Jacob Richardson is building houses on our ancient cemetery at Coyote Canyon. No one must build there! If you continue, there will be bigger disasters. Go and build your houses in another place, or we will stop you, Jacob Richardson! Do you hear me? We will stop you!"

Wild Wolf looked at Jacob Richardson who was standing in the crowd. Then he gave the microphone back to Linda, got on his horse and rode away. The people in the crowd turned around and looked at Jacob Richardson. He was a short man of about fifty with gray hair and blue eyes. He was rich. He had a successful construction company and built expensive homes in Hollywood and Los Angeles. He was now building beautiful homes with swimming pools and big gardens in Coyote Canyon, the ancient Chumash cemetery.

"What does that crazy old man want?" Richardson said angrily. "I bought that land from the state of California and paid a lot of money for it. It's mine and I'm going to build there. Nobody's going to stop me! Ha! Ancient cemetery... what nonsense!"

CHAPTER THREE

The Ghost Warrior

"Tell me about the old Chumash cemetery and Mr Richardson," said Nick, as they walked to the barbeque at Blue River Park.

"Oh, you won't believe it, Nick," said Bill. "People at Coyote Canyon say that on nights when there's a full moon they see an American Indian warrior. He has a black horse and gallops through the canyon. They think he's a ghost and they're scared!"

"The ghost of an American Indian warrior?" asked Nick, surprised.

"Yeah," said Michelle, "and some people want to sell their new homes!"

"I'm sure Mr Richardson isn't very happy about that," said Nick.

"No," said Bill, "but he continues building there."

"He and his wife live at Coyote Canyon," said Michelle.

"Have they ever seen the ghost of the warrior?" asked Nick, laughing.

"No one knows," said Michelle. "But I'm sure Luke Langley's happy that Wild Wolf spoke at the parade this morning. He's the other builder in town and he isn't selling any of his new homes. People prefer to buy in Coyote Canyon because there's a beautiful view of the Ventura Mountains."

"Hi, guys!" said a tall, pretty girl with black hair, dark eyes and glasses.

"Hi, Pam!" said Michelle. "Pam Rivers, this is Nick Chan, our best friend from Montego Bay."

"Happy to meet you, Nick," said Pam, smiling.

"Me, too!" said Nick. "Bill and Michelle said you're an American Indian."

"Yes, I am," said Pam. "My grandfather, grandmother and uncle live on the reservation, but I don't. My Uncle George has a riding stable with a lot of horses. People go there to ride and he gives horseback riding lessons

too. It's the only business on the reservation and a lot of Chumash work there."

"A riding stable!" said Nick. "I love horses."

"I'm glad you do," said Pam. "You can come and visit one day."

"Thanks, I will," said Nick.

"Did you hear Wild Wolf speak at the parade?" asked Bill.

"Yes, I did," said Pam sadly. "The older Chumash are very upset about the homes at Coyote Canyon. They believe the earthquakes are a sign from the Great Spirit. They're afraid there will be stronger earthquakes and other disasters. Our ancestors are buried at Coyote Canyon."

"The Chumash are right," said Michelle. "There's a lot of land behind the canyon. Mr Richardson can go and build there."

"Wild Wolf is chief of the reservation," said Pam, "and two years ago he and my Uncle George went to talk to the mayor about this problem. At that time Mr Richardson wanted to buy the land at Coyote Canyon."

"What did the mayor say?" asked Nick.

"He listened but he didn't do anything," said Pam. "The people on the reservation protested in front of the Town Hall several times - the mayor and Mr Richardson are good friends."

"Gee, I'm sorry about that," said Nick. "I can understand your people. My parents come from China and traditions are important to them."

"I'm glad you understand, Nick." She smiled at her new friend. "Now, let's go and get something to eat. Everything smells good at this barbeque."

"Yeah," said Bill, "Look at those steaks!"

The four friends enjoyed the food and talked to other people they knew. The rodeo started late in the afternoon and it was an exciting show. Cowboys from all over California rode bucking broncos and bulls.

"How can the cowboys stay on those bucking broncos?" asked Nick.

"It takes years of practice," said Pam.

That evening everyone went to Blue River Park to listen to live music, dance and watch the beautiful fireworks.

Jacob Richardson did not go to the celebration at Blue River Park because he was angry. He stayed at home with his wife and they had dinner in their big garden. It was a warm, silent night and they talked together until about eleven o'clock.

"Those Chumash are going to make a lot of trouble for me, Meg," he said nervously.

"What are you going to do?" asked Meg Richardson.

"I'm going to talk to Rodriguez on Monday," he said. "I have to stop them."

"Oh, Jacob," said Meg, "please listen to my advice - stop building there! The Chumash are very angry. Try and understand them. There's a lot of good land behind the canyon."

"Coyote Canyon is the best place, Meg, and I'm not stopping!" said Jacob Richardson.

"What's that noise?" asked Meg, turning around to look at the tall trees at the back of the garden.

"It sounds like... a horse," said Jacob getting up and looking at the trees. In the distance he saw a rider on a black horse, holding a spear. He had long black hair, and his face and body had war paint. His horse had war paint too.

Meg Richardson screamed, "The ghost warrior!"

The warrior galloped towards Jacob Richardson, lifted his long spear and threw it at him. The spear hit him in the heart and he fell to the ground. The warrior galloped away into the night.

"Jacob! Jacob!" cried his wife, running to her husband, who was already dead. She was terrified and for a moment she couldn't move. She stared at the long spear in her husband's heart.

"Jacob, say something to me!" she cried. She took her cell phone and immediately called an ambulance.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Chumash Reservation

Early the next morning the Ventura County sheriff and his men were at Meg Richardson's home. They started investigating the murder.

"Mrs Richardson, what do you remember about the murderer?" asked Sheriff Pedro Lopez, who was a tall man of about thirty with dark hair.

Mrs Richardson was very upset and her voice was shaking. "It was dark, but the garden lights were on. He had long black hair and he was dressed like a warrior with war paint on his face and body. His horse had war paint too. At first I thought it was the ghost warrior... but he was real!"

"How old do you think he was?" asked the sheriff.

"I don't know" said Meg. "It was difficult to see his face because he had war paint on and I was scared. But I don't think he was old."

"Was he riding the horse with a saddle?" asked the sheriff.

"Oh, I don't remember clearly," she replied.

"Do you have any neighbors?" asked the sheriff.

"My closest neighbor is about half a mile away," said Meg sadly.

A good-looking man walked into Mrs Richardson's garden.

"Mrs Richardson," said the sheriff, "this is Professor Daniel Massey from Ventura University. He's the head of the Department of Native American Studies at the university. He's an expert on Californian Native Americans and he recently published a book about them. He'll study the spear that killed your husband. It could help us find the murderer."

"How do you do, Mrs Richardson," said Professor Massey quietly. "I'm very sorry about your husband, but I'm here to help you in every way."

Professor Massey was a tall, well-dressed man of about forty, with a tan.

He was bald, had blue eyes and wore glasses. He was a good friend of Wild Wolf and George Rivers at the reservation. He put on special gloves,

picked up the spear and examined it carefully. The spear had designs and three black feathers on top.

"This is a Chumash spear - look at the red and white lines and circles. The three black feathers are the sign of death," said Professor Massey.

"A Chumash spear!" exclaimed Sheriff Lopez. "Then this is a Chumash murder. Let's drive to the reservation and look around."

That morning Bill, Michelle and Nick heard about the Richardson murder on the radio.

"What a terrible way to die!" said Michelle.

"Horrible!" said Bill. "Yesterday the old Chumash was very angry and perhaps he decided to kill Richardson."

"Oh, I don't know," said Nick. "The radio said 'a middle-aged American Indian warrior with long black hair. Perhaps a Chumash'."

"The radio said he was riding his horse with a saddle," said Michelle. "That's strange because American Indian warriors ride bareback."

"Michelle," said Bill, "are you trying to solve another mystery?"

"Is this going to be another Peter O'Neill case?" asked Nick.

"Well, we helped the Miami Police solve the O'Neill case, with Rover's help," said Michelle. "I think we're very good detectives!"

"And we agree," said Bill and Nick.

The doorbell rang and it was Pam.

"Hi, guys!" said Pam. "Did you hear about the Richardson murder?"

"Yeah, we heard about it on the radio this morning," said Michelle.

"Terrible, isn't it?" said Pam. "Now the sheriff thinks a Chumash was the murderer. No one at the reservation liked Richardson but no one wanted to kill him. The Chumash are peaceful people."

"Please don't worry, Pam," said Bill.

"Hey, it's almost half past ten," said Michelle. "We don't want to miss the bus to the reservation."

When they got to the reservation they went to the riding stable. Outside the stable they saw the sheriff's car and a big black jeep with a personalized license plate.

CHAPTER FIVE

War Paint

"Hi, Uncle George!" said Pam. "These are my friends Bill and Michelle Martin, and Nick Chan. Can we show them the stable and the horses?"

"Happy to meet you," said Uncle George. He was a big man of about forty with long black hair, a silver necklace and friendly dark eyes.

"Welcome to our reservation! Come with me and we'll visit the stable. The sheriff and his men are here too, they're looking at the horses." Suddenly his eyes became sad; he was worried.

They entered the big stable and saw a sign on the wall: RIDING LESSONS ON TUESDAY, THURSDAY AND SATURDAY at 10 am and 4 pm. Some people were cleaning the horses and the stable, and others were getting ready to ride.

"This is interesting," said Nick, "a western stable with horses! Can I take some pictures?"

"Sure!" Uncle George laughed and gave Nick, Bill and Michelle some sugar cubes. "Here, you can give them to the horses. They love sugar cubes - it's a good way to make friends with a horse."

"Follow me," said Pam. "I want to show you Ginger, a beautiful Arabian stallion and my favorite horse. He loves sugar cubes."

When they left the stable they saw the sheriff and Professor Massey talking with Uncle George.

"We'll come back later today," said Sheriff Lopez. "Professor Massey wants to check something at the university." The sheriff got into his car and drove away.

Professor Massey smiled at Uncle George and said, "Don't worry, George, we're just checking a few things."

"Dan," said Uncle George, "we're old friends, you know me and my people, we're not murderers! Wild Wolf said a lot of strange things and he

didn't like Richardson, but he didn't kill him."

"George," said Dan Massey, "I believe you. Today the sheriff's going to talk to Luke Langley. Langley hated Richardson, and everyone knows that - he never even talked to him. Richardson was his biggest competitor. No one wants to buy Langley's houses. He had a good reason to kill Richardson."

Uncle George and Massey talked for a few minutes, and then Massey got into his jeep and drove away.

"Oh - that cool jeep belongs to the professor!" said Nick. "Lucky!"

"And he has a personalized plate too," said Michelle. "Those plates are expensive. He's a cool guy."

After lunch Pam took her friends to visit the Chumash Museum. Before leaving the reservation they went back to the stable.

"Look, the sheriff's back again," said Bill.

"And he's talking to my uncle," said Pam. "Let's sit outside and listen."

"George," said the sheriff, "we think the horse of the Richardson murder comes from your stable. We found some war paint on several horses."

"Of course," said George Rivers calmly, "we put war paint on the horses yesterday morning before the parade. And yesterday evening we washed most of it off."

"Do you lock the stable doors at night?" asked the sheriff.

"We usually do," said George, "but it's not difficult to get into the stables. We always keep a few windows open for the horses, because they need fresh air. Anyone can get in through an open window."

"Where were you last night at about eleven o'clock?" asked the sheriff.

"Do you suspect me?" asked George nervously.

"I suspect all of the men on this reservation," said the sheriff calmly. "Please answer my question."

"I was here at the reservation with my father," said George. "We watched the fireworks."

"Did you see or hear anything unusual at the stable?" asked the sheriff.

"The stable is far from my house and the other houses," said George. "Sheriff, can I ask you a question?"

"Of course you can," said the sheriff.

"Did you find any fingerprints on the spear?" asked George.

"No," said the sheriff, "there were none. The murderer probably wore gloves. But the spear is a Chumash spear. There are many of them at the Chumash museum."

"Did you talk to Luke Langley?" asked George.

"Of course we did," said Sheriff Lopez. "He was driving to a party in Hollywood last night, but no one was with him. We suspect him too."

The sheriff walked back to his car and got in. Suddenly his cell phone rang and he answered it. He looked worried.

"This is an emergency call!" he said to his men. "I just talked to the Los Angeles Police. They said Luke Langley has just driven across the Mexican border! I gave the border police his name early this afternoon. He's left the United States, so it's going to be hard to find him now. I've got to contact the Mexican police."

The sheriff's car drove off quickly.

"Oh, good, he went away!" said Pam, going to her uncle. "What's happening?"

"Pam, things are serious," said Uncle George, "the sheriff suspects all of the men on the reservation. Did you hear the conversation?"

"We were sitting on the bench near the stable and we heard everything," said Pam sadly. "The sheriff's wrong - no one on the reservation killed Jacob Richardson!"

"How can we discover the truth?" asked Bill.

Everyone was silent and worried. Suddenly Wild Wolf came to the stable to talk to George. They spoke in Chumash. Then Wild Wolf looked at the four teenagers and smiled. "Perhaps there is a way to discover the truth," he said softly.

"How?" asked Michelle.

"There's a full moon tomorrow night," he said mysteriously. "Come back here tomorrow night - all four of you. George can pick you up at Portola Point and then he can drive you back."

"Tomorrow night?" asked Bill, confused.

"Yes, tomorrow night," said Wild Wolf, walking away.

CHAPTER SIX

A Night in the Forest

The next day Bill, Michelle, Nick and Pam were excited about their meeting with Wild Wolf.

"What's he going to do tonight?" asked Nick. "I'm curious!"

"I really don't know," said Pam, "but there's a full moon and..."

"And what?" asked Michelle. "Is this some kind of Native American magic?"

"Why does he need the full moon?" asked Bill.

"Wait until tonight and you'll see," answered Pam, mysteriously. "Well, it's another hot day," said Bill, looking outside the window. "Let's go to the beach and take a swim in the ocean. Then we can have a picnic lunch on the beach."

"Sure," said Michelle, "and we can play volleyball in the afternoon. Pam, let's wear our new swimsuits!"

"Good idea!" said Pam. "Let's wear the ones we bought at Surf 'n' Swim last week. We'll look super!"

"Let's go for it!" said Nick. "Don't forget the volleyball, Michelle!"

There were a lot of people on the long, sandy beach. Some young men were surfing. The ocean water was cold but the four friends took a long swim. After lunch they played volleyball with some high school friends - the girls against the boys - and the boys won.

At nine o'clock in the evening George Rivers drove the four friends to the reservation. "Wild Wolf's waiting for you in the forest," he said. "Follow me."

Bill, Michelle, Nick and Pam followed him to the forest. There was a full moon and Wild Wolf was sitting near a small fire. He was wearing his headdress, a silver necklace, a long, white robe and moccasins. There was a big bowl of water in front of him.

"Only the young people can stay," he said quietly. "The Great Spirit speaks only to those with a pure heart."

"This is an ancient custom of ours," said George. "It's called Scrying."

"What's that?" asked Michelle, Bill and Nick.

"Scrying is when a shaman looks into a bowl of water at night until he sees an image or a name," said George. "There must be a full moon. Wild Wolf is looking for the name of Richardson's murderer. He thinks the Great Spirit will tell him."

"Is this magic?" asked Nick.

"It's a custom of ours and only the shaman can do it," said George. "Our people did this before the white men came to North America. I'll come back later."

"This is interesting," said Michelle, looking at Wild Wolf. "Thanks for letting us take part."

Wild Wolf looked up and said, "I'm glad you're here. Please sit down."

The four friends sat down around the fire. Wild Wolf put out his hands over the big bowl of water and said some words in Chumash. He repeated the same words again and again. Then he looked at the bowl of water in silence. He moved his hands over the bowl slowly and repeated other words in Chumash. Then he was silent again. This went on for some time.

Suddenly Wild Wolf spoke. "The Great Spirit is speaking to us. I see the name!" The four friends quickly looked into the bowl of water. They could see five letters in the water.

"The name is Y-U-K-A-T - Yukat - Yukat!" he cried. "It's an American Indian last name! But not Chumash."

"This is amazing!" said Bill. "I can see the name too."

"Me too!" said Michelle, Nick and Pam together. They stared at the bowl and were amazed.

Wild Wolf said other words in Chumash and then looked at Bill. "You and your friends have a pure heart. Now you have to find Yukat!"

"Who's Yukat? And how can we find him?" asked Bill.

At that moment George came near the fire. Wild Wolf told him what happened.

"Yukat is a last name that belongs to the old Tongva people that lived east of Los Angeles," said George. "Did Richardson know anyone called Yukat?"

"That's a big question," said Pam.

"Hmmm... east of Los Angeles," said George, thinking. "Did Jacob Richardson build homes near Los Angeles? Did he have any enemies there? How can we find out?"

"Gee," said Nick, "Is this another mystery to solve?"

"I think so," said Bill seriously. Everyone was silent for a moment.

"Well, the best way to find out about a name is the newspaper library of a big city," said Michelle. "A newspaper library's like a history book. It has all the newspaper articles about everything that happened in the past. And what newspaper has the biggest library in southern California?"

"The Los Angeles Gazette!" said Bill.

"You kids are smart!" said Wild Wolf. "You know everything!"

"We like solving mysteries!" said Nick proudly. "Bill, Michelle and I solved a big one in Montego Bay last year."

"Well, good luck on this one!" said George. "I really hope you can help us."

"The four young people will help us," said Wild Wolf, looking at them with his kind, dark eyes. "I know it."

"We'll try hard," said Bill.

"Scrying is hard to believe... it's magic!" said Nick.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Los Angeles

The next morning Mr Martin drove Bill, Michelle, Nick and Pam to downtown Los Angeles on his way to work.

"What a big city!" said Nick.

"Too big!" said Mr Martin. "It takes hours to drive across it. There's always a lot of traffic." He stopped his car in front of a tall building. "This is the newspaper office," he said. "Remember, the bus for Portola Point leaves at 2 o'clock. Don't miss it!"

"Don't worry, dad, we won't," said Michelle.

"Thanks for the ride, Mr Martin," said Pam and Nick.

"Good luck!" said Mr Martin, driving away.

The four friends went to the newspaper library of The Los Angeles Gazette on the 15th floor. A clerk helped them and they began investigating. Bill sat in front of a computer with his sister and friends next to him. He typed in the name Yukat and two newspaper articles appeared on the screen.

"Look at the dates!" said Pam. "These articles are from twenty-two years ago."

CONSTRUCTION WORKER FALLS

FROM 21st FLOOR AND DIES

Edward Yukat, 46, an American Indian construction worker, fell from the 21st floor of a new building and died yesterday afternoon. Yukat was working on the new Acme Business Tower in downtown Los Angeles when he hurt his foot and fell to his death.

Los Angeles Police Captain Michael Wright said, "Mr Yukat was an experienced construction worker for the J. Richardson Construction Company. Mr Richardson did not follow the safety rules of the state of California. He probably didn't want to spend money on safety equipment. And that's why Edward Yukat died."

The Los Angeles Police are now investigating Richardson's responsibility. Edward Yukat leaves a wife and a son of eighteen.

"How awful!" said Michelle.

"Look at the next article," said Pam.

YUKAT TRIAL

RICHARDSON NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ACCIDENT

Three months after Edward Yukat's death, Judge Marian Nelson of the Los Angeles Superior Court said, "Jacob Richardson is not responsible for the accidental death of his construction worker, Edward Yukat. The case is closed."

Richardson and his three lawyers from the Brannan Law Offices were very pleased with Judge Nelson's decision.

When Mrs Yukat and her son heard this, they were very upset. Mrs Yukat started crying and left the courtroom. Her eighteen-year-old son said,

"Jacob Richardson was responsible for my father's death. My father worked without any safety equipment like all of Richardson's workers..."

"Wow! Now we know who Yukat was," said Nick. "But that's not much!"

"I'm sure Richardson was responsible for Yukat's death," said Michelle, "but he had the money to pay the best lawyers in Los Angeles."

"The poor Yukats," said Pam sadly. "Construction companies often use American Indians to work on tall buildings because they're not afraid of high places."

"I wonder where Yukat's son is now. He has a good reason to hate Richardson," said Nick.

"Let's print these two articles," said Pam, "and show them to my grandfather and uncle."

"OK!" said Bill. "Then let's look in the phone directory - perhaps we can find a Yukat," said Bill. "There are a few directories at the front desk."

Bill looked in the Los Angeles phone directory and said, "There's not one Yukat in the directory!"

The four friends had lunch and caught the two o'clock bus for Portola Point. During the ride home they talked about the "Yukat case", but it was a mystery to them. Was Yukat's son living in California? And was he the murderer? How could they find out?

That evening there was a hot dog party on the beach to welcome Nick to Portola Point. Bill and Michelle organized it the week before and invited their high school friends. Everyone brought hot dogs and potato chips. Then they roasted the hot dogs on the open fire on the beach. Mrs Martin made a big bowl of potato salad and two apple pies. Pam brought plastic plates, cups and forks. Julie Alvarez and her boyfriend, Stephen, brought soft drinks. Barbara Andrews brought her guitar.

It was a beautiful, warm night on the beach, and they all sat around the fire. Nick sat next to Pam and they started talking. After eating, Barbara played her guitar and everyone sang old songs.

Then it was time to play "Anagrams". Each person said a word and the others tried to make the anagram.

"My turn," said Pam. "The word is lives."

After a few minutes Barbara said, "Elvis! Elvis!"

"Good!" said Pam. "That's a point for you."

"OK, my turn now," said Barbara. "The word is listen."

Nick thought for a moment and then said, "I have it! It's silent."

"Great!" said Barbara. "A point for Nick."

"OK, here's a hard one - the eyes," said Nick.

A few minutes passed and Michelle said, "They see!"

"Great, Michelle!" said Nick.

"I have a good one," said Michelle, "eleven plus two!"

"Hey, I'm not good at math!" said Julie Alvarez, laughing.

No one had the answer but at last Stephen said, "It's twelve plus one!"

"Super!" said Michelle. "Your point and your turn, Stephen." The game went on until half past eleven. Then they cleaned up, put out the fire

and went home.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Anagram

A few days after the hot dog party, Bill, Michelle and Nick went to the reservation to meet Pam. She promised Nick a riding lesson with her uncle at 4 o'clock. The four friends were sitting outside the stable when Professor Massey drove up in his jeep.

"Hi! Where's George?" Professor Massey asked.

"He's in the stable," said Pam. "He's finishing a lesson." Massey slowly walked into the stable.

"Hi, Dan!" said George. "Do you have any news?"

"Bad news, George - very bad news," said Professor Massey sadly. "The sheriff and his men are coming to arrest you for the murder of Richardson. I'm very sorry - you're one of my best friends."

"What!" cried Uncle George. "This is a terrible mistake, Dan. I didn't kill Jacob Richardson! You know that! What about Luke Langley, who escaped to Mexico? Isn't he a suspect? Why did he suddenly go to Mexico?"

"Please calm down, George," said Professor Massey. "You're right about Langley - but he's out of the country and the Mexican police will probably never find him."

"Is that a good reason to arrest me?" said George, who was very angry. "What will happen to the good name of the reservation and to our business here?"

The two men continued talking.

Suddenly Michelle started looking at Professor Massey's personalized license plate: TAKUY.

"Oh, no!" she said slowly.

"What's the matter?" asked Pam.

"Look at the professor's license plate - it's an anagram! Try reading it backwards!"

"An anagram?" said Bill.

"OK," said Nick, "let's read it backwards: Y-U-K-A-T... Yukat!"

The four friends immediately moved away from the stable and forgot about Nick's riding lesson.

Nick took out his digital camera and quickly took a picture of the license plate.

"This is amazing," said Bill. "Hasn't anyone ever noticed his license plate?"

"People don't think about license plates!" said Michelle.

At that moment the sheriff's car drove up and stopped in front of the stable.

Sheriff Lopez and one of his men went inside and arrested George.

When Pam saw her uncle walking out of the stable with the sheriff she ran to him and said, "Uncle George, what's happening?" She started crying.

"You know I'm not the murderer, Pam," said George, "and one day the truth will come out!" He got into the sheriff's car and was taken to Ventura County Prison. Massey followed in his jeep.

"Please don't cry, Pam," said Nick, taking her hand. "Everyone knows your uncle didn't kill Richardson. Together we can help him."

"We already have our first clue: Massey's license plate," said Michelle, looking at Pam. "Let's find out who Massey really is and why he has the anagram of Yukat on his jeep. Is he Edward Yukat's son?" Her friends stared at her.

"Let's go to your house, Michelle, and look on the web," said Pam, drying her eyes. "Maybe we can find something. But first, let me tell Wild Wolf and the others what's happening." She ran down the hill to the Chumash Museum.

When she came back her eyes were red and she said, "Everyone is terribly upset. No one on this reservation has ever been arrested. Wild Wolf said that we're the only ones who can help Uncle George. Do you remember the night in the forest?"

"Of course we do," said Bill. "Wild Wolf said we have a pure heart and we must find Yukat."

"Let's do it!" said Nick.

The four friends went back to Portola Point, bought some take-out pizzas and went home.

"Hi!" said Mrs Martin, opening the front door. "What are you doing with six pizzas?"

"Hi, mom!" said Bill. "This is going to be a long night. We're having pizza in my room and working on the web. I bought two extra pizzas for you and dad."

"Thanks!" said Mrs Martin. "Are you working on another mystery?"

"That's a secret for now!" said Michelle, running upstairs to Bill's room.

"Hi, Mrs Martin," said Nick, following Pam upstairs.

Mrs Martin looked at them and thought, "What great kids!"

CHAPTER NINE

The Web

After having their pizzas Bill, Michelle, Nick and Pam got on the web and started looking for information on Professor Massey.

They opened the University of Ventura site and clicked on the Department of Native American Studies.

"Hey, look guys," said Bill, "it says that Massey's an important professor. He's the president of the Ventura Ecological Society and he even wrote a book."

"There's his picture," said Pam, looking at all the information. "He's forty years old."

"Hmm," said Nick, reading the site, "he got his degree at the University of California, Berkeley - UCB, near San Francisco. It's a famous university."

"Let's look at the UCB students' site," said Michelle. "Perhaps there's a picture of him when he was a student."

After a few minutes she cried, "We found him! Here's his picture: Daniel Massey. It says he was the best student of his class, played football and received a scholarship."

"He looked different when he was a student," said Nick. "He had lots of black hair; now he's bald. And he didn't wear glasses."

"Yeah," said Pam, "but there's something strange about him in this picture."

"What?" asked Bill, Nick and Michelle.

"His eyes... his eyes are dark brown! But Professor Massey's eyes are blue!" said Pam.

"You're right!" said Bill.

"In this student picture he looks like an American Indian!" said Pam. "Look at the black hair and the dark brown eyes!"

The four friends looked at the computer silently.

"Gee, he's the same person but the color of his eyes is different," said Michelle. "But why?"

"Perhaps he's not the same person," said Pam.

"No, I'm sure he's the same person," said Nick. "Remember the anagram on his license plate."

"But why are his eyes blue now?" asked Pam.

"I know!" said Michelle excitedly. "He's wearing blue contact lenses!"

"You're right!" cried Bill. "He changed the color of his eyes with blue contact lenses."

"I think Professor Massey is Edward Yukat's son," said Michelle excitedly. "He was eighteen when his father died twenty-two years ago. And now he's forty. The dates match. For some reason he wanted to change his identity. He left LA and moved to northern California, where no one knew him and changed his name. When he graduated from UCB he shaved his head and got blue contact lenses, so no one could recognize him. And now he wears glasses."

There was silence in the room and the four friends looked at each other, amazed.

"With a new name and a new face he's very different," said Nick. "He doesn't look like Daniel Yukat anymore."

"If this man is really Yukat's son, then we have found Jacob Richardson's murderer!" said Pam.

"Let's go and talk to the sheriff about this tomorrow morning," said Bill. "I think we can help your uncle, Pam."

"That's great," said Pam. "Let's go to see the sheriff with all the information we have."

The next morning the four friends went to the Portola Point Sheriff's office.

"Can we talk to Sheriff Lopez?" Michelle asked.

"Certainly," said a young sheriff. "His office is the second door on the left."

When Sheriff Lopez saw them he smiled and said, "Please come in and sit down."

He closed the door and said, "How can I help you?"

Bill, Michelle, Nick and Pam explained everything to Sheriff Lopez and showed him the newspaper articles from The Los Angeles Gazette. He seemed quite interested and wrote some things down in a notebook.

"You're telling me some very surprising things," said the sheriff. "You're saying that Professor Daniel Massey is an American Indian called Yukat, and he's Edward Yukat's son! How is that possible?"

He called one of his men and said, "Fred, can you please check the name Yukat - Daniel Yukat - and see if there's a driver's license under that name? A driver's license has a picture of the person and other information. In California you can get a driver's license at the age of sixteen - I don't think he had blue contact lenses at that age! And then check the name Massey - Daniel Massey."

Fred came back after some time with two printouts in his hand.

"I found something interesting!" he said. "Here's a printout of Daniel Yukat's driver's license when he was sixteen. Here it says 'black hair, dark brown eyes, six-feet-two-inches tall'. And he lived in LA."

"Good work, Fred!" said the sheriff.

"And here's Daniel Massey's driver's license," said Fred, "it says 'bald, blue eyes, six-feet-two-inches tall, must wear glasses.' His home address is 25 Catalina Drive, Ventura Hills I ran both pictures through the ID computer program, and they match! These two men are the same person."

Sheriff Lopez stared at the printouts.

"Incredible," said the sheriff, "Daniel Yukat and Daniel Massey are the same person! He evidently changed his identity after his father died. But why? This is hard to believe - Dan Massey! We have to investigate. This man had a good reason to kill Richardson but Luke Langley and George

Rivers had good reasons too. And now that Langley's in Mexico it's going to be very hard to find him."

Sheriff Lopez was silent for a minute and then said, "I have to work on this case. There are some things I don't understand. We need more evidence. You people did some great detective work - thanks! If you have other information, let me know. But now, let me and my men do the work. Remember, murderers are dangerous people."

The four friends left the sheriff's office and Pam asked, "Do you think the sheriff's going to find any evidence against Professor Massey?"

"Well, we're going to try and find some!" said Bill.

"I really want to stay and help," said Pam, "but I have to go back to the riding stable. Now that Uncle George is in prison the people at the stable need my help. There's a lot of work to do."

"We'll call you and let you know what's happening," said Nick.

"OK, thanks, guys," said Pam. "You're wonderful friends! Bye!"

"Bye, Pam!" said Nick.

Bill, Michelle and Nick were walking by an ice-cream parlor and Bill said, "How about a cone? The chocolate here is great."

"Yeah!" said Nick and Michelle together.

"We need to find out more about Massey," said Michelle.

"Well, we know he's head of the Department of Native Americans Studies at Ventura University, where there's a museum," said Bill.

"And the museum is open to the public," said Michelle. "Why don't we go to Ventura and look around?"

Ventura University was open for summer classes, and Bill, Michelle and Nick went to the Native American Studies Hall and visited the small museum. They saw Chumash spears, arrows, blankets and other objects.

As they walked out of the museum, they saw Professor Massey and he recognized them.

"Good afternoon!" he said. "I didn't know you were interested in Native American Studies."

"Well," said Nick, "this is my first vacation in California and I want to see everything. The Chumash are very interesting people."

"Yes, they are," he said, "That's why I opened this small museum."

"You know a lot about American Indians," said Michelle. "Are you part Native American?"

Professor Massey's face turned red and his blue eyes became angry, but he smiled and said, "Me? No, no! Not with these blue eyes." He laughed nervously.

"Well, it's time to go," said Bill. "Goodbye, Professor Massey."

CHAPTER TEN

Revenge

When Bill, Michelle and Nick were out of the museum Michelle said, "Did you see Massey's face when I asked him that question?"

"As red as a tomato!" said Nick.

"And did you see what he was holding in his left hand behind his back?" asked Michelle.

"No!" said Bill and Nick.

"He had a bridle and reins!" said Michelle. "That means he probably has a horse somewhere - but where?"

"The address on his driver's license is Ventura Hills," said Bill. "That's a place where there's a lot of land; perfect for a horse."

"I'm going to call Sheriff Lopez and tell him about the bridle and reins," said Michelle. "I think it's important."

She called the sheriff and told him.

"Yes," said the sheriff, "he probably owns a horse. My men and I will investigate immediately. Thanks for calling, Michelle."

In the late afternoon Sheriff Lopez and three of his men drove to Ventura Hills to see Professor Massey.

"Dan," said Sheriff Lopez, "we have a search warrant and we want to look around your house."

"What!" said Massey angrily. "What's going on? Let me see that search warrant."

"Here's the search warrant, Dan," said the sheriff. "We're just doing our job."

"Fred, you stay with Professor Massey," said the sheriff, as he and his men started looking around.

Sheriff Lopez looked in the living room, the kitchen and the bathroom but did not find anything. Then he went into the bedroom and he was

amazed. On a shelf he saw a big photograph of an American Indian who was playing with a little boy.

Next to it there was a wooden box with three black feathers on it. The sheriff thought about Massey's words, "the three black feathers are the sign of death". He opened it and inside he saw several old newspaper articles about Yukat's accident and death, and about Richardson's business.

A few minutes later one of the sheriff's men came into the living room and said, "I found a black horse in a small stable behind the trees of the garden, and he still has some war paint on his body."

Sheriff Lopez looked at Massey, who was furious, and asked, "Do you have anything to say?"

"Yes, I have something to say: my father, Ed Yukat, can finally rest in peace because I killed Jacob Richardson!"

"Dan," said the sheriff loudly, "that's a confession! You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can be used against you."

"Anything I say can be used against me," said Massey, laughing nervously. "Well, I'm not going to remain silent. Yes, I'm Daniel Yukat, Edward Yukat's son and I'm proud of it."

"Dan, I can't believe this," said the sheriff. "There must be a reason..."

"A reason?" said Massey, looking at the sheriff. "Of course there's a reason. Jacob Richardson was responsible for my father's death and my mother's death; she died a few months after my father. Richardson destroyed my family and I wanted revenge! After the death of my parents I moved to northern California and changed my name. I wanted to start a new life."

He paused for a moment and smiled. "I became Daniel Massey. I went to UC Berkeley and got my degree. Then I decided to go back to southern California, but I wanted to change the way I looked. I shaved my head and changed the color of my eyes. I had a new identity and no one could recognize me. I became a respected university professor. But I still wanted revenge, because I never forgot what Richardson did to my father and mother. I've kept an eye on him all these years. When he started building in Coyote Canyon I was furious. My great grandmother was a Chumash and

she was buried there. He had no respect for us and our traditions. To him, we weren't like white Americans. So I decided to kill him and planned it carefully. The night of the Fourth of July was perfect."

"Where did you get the Chumash spear?" asked the sheriff. Yukat laughed. "The Native American Studies Museum at the university has all kinds of Chumash spears. Don't you know that, sheriff?"

Sheriff Lopez was getting angry. "You killed a man, Yukat, do you know what that means in the state of California?"

"I don't care what it means!" said Yukat angrily. "Richardson was an evil man. He only wanted to make money. He didn't care about people. He was responsible for the death of many other workers."

"Why did you put the anagram of Yukat on your license plate?" asked the sheriff, "I thought you wanted to change your identity. That's what gave you away."

He looked at the sheriff with a strange light in his eyes. Then he slowly said, "Because I am and will always be a Yukat." Both men were silent for a moment; there was a strange sadness in the air.

The sheriff continued, "Were you the ghost warrior who rode through Coyote Canyon at night?"

Yukat looked at him seriously and said, "No, it wasn't me."

The sheriff was disturbed. "Then who was it?"

"What's wrong, sheriff," asked Yukat, "don't you believe in ghosts? Don't you think the dead want to rest in peace?"

The sheriff turned to his men nervously and said, "Fred, John take this man to the stable. I think we'll find other evidence there." They walked behind the house to the small stable where Yukat kept his horse.

"Where are the black wig and the war paint, Yukat?" asked the sheriff.

"Try looking around."

The sheriff's men started looking around when the sheriff's cell phone rang, and he turned around to answer it.

At that moment Yukat jumped on his horse and galloped away.

"Yukat, come back!" cried the sheriff. "You can't go far - my men are everywhere!"

Yukat galloped away into the hills behind his home, and rode bareback.

Sheriff Lopez called his office and said, "Send two helicopters up into the Ventura Hills, north of Coyote Canyon, immediately. Daniel Yukat, aka Professor Daniel Massey, is Jacob Richardson's murderer. He confessed, and now he's escaping into the hills. He's riding a black horse and he's an excellent rider. We can't follow him in the car because there are no roads!"

The next morning the phone rang at the Martins' home.

"Hello, sheriff," said Bill. "Do you have any news for us?"

"I'll tell you the good news first: George Rivers is free and will go home soon."

"That's great!" cried Bill. "But what happened?"

"You kids were right about a lot of things," said the sheriff. "Let me tell you what happened yesterday at Massey's house. It will probably be in today's paper."

Bill listened and he was very surprised.

"I... I can't believe it," said Bill, his voice shaking.

"Just think, Dan was my friend," said the sheriff sadly. "Thanks for all of your help."

When Bill got off the phone, Mrs Martin walked into the house and showed Bill the front page of the newspaper:

THE LOS ANGELES GAZETTE

TRAGEDY IN THE VENTURA HILLS

Daniel Yukat, aka Professor Daniel Massey of Ventura University, galloped to his death Tuesday evening when he fell from his horse and broke his neck.

Earlier that evening the forty-year-old professor confessed to the murder of Jacob Richardson on the night of the Fourth of July. After his confession he suddenly jumped on his horse and galloped away into the Ventura Hills. Sheriff Pedro Lopez and his men could not follow him because there are no roads in the hills. Police helicopters looked everywhere for him. The strong lights of the helicopters frightened his horse, which threw him to the ground.

Many years ago Yukat's father, Edward, was killed in...

"Michelle, Nick, come here fast!" cried Bill. They read the article and were shocked.

"Gosh, he fell off his horse," said Michelle.

"And broke his neck," said Nick. "I can't believe he's dead - we saw him yesterday afternoon at the museum."

"He was an intelligent, successful man who couldn't forget his past," said Bill.

"His revenge cost him his life," said Mrs Martin sadly. Everyone was silent and sad for some time.

"Well," said Michelle, "Pam's uncle is free now and everyone at the reservation is probably very happy. Just think of Wild Wolf!"

"Let's go to the reservation and see our friends!" said Bill.

"Great idea!" said Nick. "I want to learn to ride a horse before going back to Florida... and I want to see Pam."

- THE END -

Hope you have enjoyed the reading!