

## **The Missing Manitou** by **Graham Masterton**

*The Manitou was written in the winter of 1974, on a kitchen table in Chiswick, West London, in five days flat. My wife Wiescka was expecting our first son, and I wanted to write a scary story about the unexpectedness of bringing a new life into the world.*

*In those days I was writing solely for US publishers, and I needed the story to appeal primarily to the US market. So instead of relying on supernatural threats from the Old World, I turned to America, which (as far as I know) had never been done before. I remembered an article I had read about Native American spirits - 'manitous' in The Buffalo Bill Annual, 1955. And I also remembered the mysterious Indian character Quamus that H.P. Lovecraft had created. Thus was born Misquamacus.*

*In looking for a way in which the re-emergent wonder-worker could be defeated, I adapted the idea that H.G. Wells had used for destroying the Martians in The War of the Worlds, and also drew on the (true) stories of the US Calvary distributing typhoid-infected blankets to Native Americans in order to wipe out whole tribes that had never before been exposed to European diseases.*

*Back then, one of the most virulent communicable diseases was 'Viet Nam Rose' - a gonorrhoea-type venereal infection which had been brought back from the brothels of Saigon by US soldiers.*

*When I submitted The Manitou to Andy Ettinger at Pinnacle Books, however, he said he wanted a more dramatic ending & a denouement in which the hero Harry Erskine played an active role. That was why I rewrote the last two chapters so that Misquamacus would be defeated by the 'white man's Manitou' - the technological spirit inherent in the Unitrak computer, against which the magic of the 16th century would have no defense.*

*The Manitou was an instant hit on many Indian reservations, and I still have the framed painting of Sitting Bull which was given to me in a special ceremony by his great-granddaughter.*  
GM, 2001

### **Chapter 7 - Past the Dusk**

**Wolf struck his cigarette-lighter, and turned the gas up full, and the tall yellow flame lit the room in a carousel of hideous shadows.**

Misquamacus, with an animal grin on his glistening face, was still crouched within the medicine circle, but just in front of him, on the floor, the red and white powders that Singing Rock had set down were shifting and sliding apart, like iron filings drawn away by a magnet.

'He's breaking it!' shouted Jack Hughes. 'Singing Rock - for God's sake!'

Singing Rock took a step forward and stood right in front of Misquamacus - only a couple of feet away from the deformed medicine man, and with only the rapidly-dispersing powders of the medicine circle between them.

He cast more powders at Misquamacus, and drew signs in the air with his bones, but Misquamacus simply twitched and flinched, as though he were batting away midges. From

Karen Tandy on the bed, we heard a soft and hideous laugh, dying away in a bellows-like hiss.

The last of the medicine circle slithered away, and now there was nothing between us and the hell-bent Misquamacus. I didn't know whether to stay put or run, but I knew that Singing Rock needed all of us badly, to support his sorcery, and so I stayed where I was, tingling with fear.

The naked Misquamacus raised himself as tall as he could on his stunted legs, and spread his arms wide. Out of his own lips, in a harsh and guttural voice, came a long Indian incantation, repetitive and involved, and then with one bony hand he pointed across the room.

I followed the line of his finger. He was pointing directly at the gory corpse of Michael, the male nurse.

Singing Rock stepped back quickly. 'Get out of here, *now!*' he snapped, and pushed us towards the door.

Just as I got out into the corridor, I saw something that literally started my teeth chattering. The bloody heap of Michael's body was *moving*: exposed arteries were pulsing, naked nerves were throbbing, and his inside-out lungs, like two dripping balloons, were drawing breath again.

By the feeble orange light of Wolf's cigarette-lighter we saw the shambles of Michael's body rise gorily to its feet. Deep in the bleeding tissue of the inverted face, two watery eyes stared out at us - squid's eyes, from a terrible submarine nightmare.

Then step by liquid step, leaving behind it a trail of viscous membrane, Michael's corpse started to walk towards us, smearing everything it touched with blood.

'Oh, Christ,' said Jack Hughes, in a desperate, horrified voice.

But Singing Rock was not idle. He fumbled in his pocket for his leather bottle, unstopped it, and poured some of its contents into the palm of his hand. With wide, sweeping strokes, he sprayed a pattern of magical liquid into the air, across and over the shambling wreck of Michael's body.

'Gitche Manitou, take life from this creature,' he muttered. 'Gitche Manitou, reward this servant with death.'

Michael's body sagged, and dropped to its knees, bare muscles sliding over exposed bones. It finally collapsed, and lay in a heap beside the door.

Inside the room, Misquamacus was at work again. We couldn't see him now, because Wolf's cigarette-lighter flame was rapidly sinking, but we could hear him chanting and talking, and tossing the bones and hair that Singing Rock had used to make his medicine circle.

'Wolf,' said Singing Rock. 'Go and fetch us a few flashlights. We must be able to see what we're doing. Misquamacus can see in the dark, and it's easier for him to summon his demons in the dark. Please - as quick as you can!'

Wolf handed me his hot cigarette-lighter, with its bead of diminishing flame, and ran down the corridor to the elevators. He almost didn't make it. As he turned the corner, there was a

blue-white flash of dazzling fire. It sent sparks crawling across the floor, and left a searing orange after-image on my eyes.

'Wolf!' called Singing Rock. 'Are you okay?'

'Okay, sir!' shouted back Wolf. 'I'll be right back!'

'What the hell was that?' said Jack Hughes.

'The lightning-that-sees,' said Singing Rock. 'That was what killed your friends, Harry. I thought Misquamacus would try to get him like that once he was away from me, so I diverted it.'

'It still went damn close,' said Jack.

'A miss is as good as a mile,' I commented. The lighter had almost dwindled away now, and I was straining my eyes to see what was happening in Karen Tandy's room. I could hear shufflings and bumpings, but it was impossible to make anything out.

Darkness enveloped us again. We kept a hand on each other's shoulders, so that we wouldn't be separated. It also helped to concentrate the force of Singing Rock's spells, whenever he cast them. With complete blackness pressing against our eyes, we kept our ears pricked up for the slightest sound.

After a few moments, we heard Misquamacus chanting again.

'What's he doing?' whispered Dr Hughes.

'Something I was afraid of,' said Singing Rock. 'He's summoning an Indian demon.'

'A *demon*?' asked Jack. 'Not exactly a demon in European terms. But the Indian equivalent. One of the ancient ones.'

'Do you know which one he's calling?' I said.

Singing Rock listened to the coarse, muttering incantation as closely as he could.

'I don't know. He's using a name from his own tribal language. Although the demons are all the same throughout North America, each tribe has a different name for them. This one is something called Kahala, I think, or K'malah. I'm not sure.'

'How can you fight it if you don't know which one it is?' I said.

I could imagine Singing Rock's lined lugubrious face.

'I can't. I'll have to wait and see when it appears.'

Clinging together, we waited for the ancient apparition to manifest itself. Through the darkness, we saw pale flickers of greenish light coming from Karen Tandy's room, and coils of pallid smoke.

'Is the place on *fire*?' asked Dr Hughes.

'No,' said Singing Rock. 'The manitou is being formed out of that smoke. It's like ectoplasm, you know, in European spiritualism.'

The green light faded, and then we heard more noises from inside the room. There was a sound like *scaly claws scratching the floor*, and then we heard Misquamacus talking. He spoke for at least a couple of minutes, and then, to my horror, I heard someone talking back to him. Someone who spoke in a grating, unearthly voice - guttural and cruel.

'He's telling the demon to destroy us,' said Singing Rock. 'Now, whatever you do, keep hold of each other, and don't try to run. If you run, you'll be out of my protection, and he'll get you.'

Two lines from *The Ancient Mariner* suddenly pounded through my brain - about the man who looks back and then no longer turns his head '*because he knows a fearful fiend doth 139 close behind him tread.*'

The scraping of claws on the floor of Karen Tandy's room began to move towards us. Through the gloom, I began to make out a tall dark shadow standing in the doorway, facing us across the corridor. It seemed to be like a man, and yet completely unlike a man. I squinted into the darkness, and made out things that looked like claws and scales.

'What is it...' hissed Jack Hughes.

'It's the demon we called Lizard-of-the-Trees,' said Singing Rock. 'He is the evil manitou of forests and woods and all trees. I think that Misquamacus had chosen him because he knows I am from the plains, and I have less control over the manitous of the forest.'

The dark being in the doorway started to move towards us, uttering a thin insect-like piping in its throat. Singing Rock immediately cast powders and liquid at it, and rattled his magic bones.

It could only have been two or three feet away when it stopped.

'You've done it,' said Jack. 'You've stopped it.'

'It won't kill us, because my medicine is too strong for it,' Singing Rock said breathlessly. 'But it refuses to return to limbo without a sacrifice.'

'A sacrifice? What the hell does it want?'

'A small piece of living flesh, that's all.'

I said: '*What??* But how can we give it that?'

'Anything,' said Singing Rock. 'A finger, an ear.'

'You can't be serious,' I said.

'It won't leave without it,' Singing Rock replied. 'And I can't hold it back for very much longer. It's either that, or we'll be torn to shreds. I mean that. This creature has a beak, like an octopus, or a pteradactyl. It can rip you open like a sack of beans.'

'All right,' said Dr Hughes quietly. '*I'll* do it.'

Singing Rock took a deep breath. 'Thank you, Dr Hughes. It should be quite quick. Stretch your hand out towards it. Give it your little finger. Fold all the rest of your fingers right back.'

I will try and keep most of your hand within the circle of my spell. Once it's bitten, take your hand away at once. As quickly as you can. You don't want it to take any more.

I could feel Dr Hughes shaking as he reached out his hand towards the shadowy bulk of the Lizard-of-the-Trees. I heard razor-like claws scraping on the floor as he stretched nearer and nearer, and that thin piping sound as the demon breathed.

There was a horrible excited rustle, and the claws skidded frantically on the corridor floor, and then a crunch like I never want to hear again.

"Aaaaahhhhh," shrieked Dr Hughes. He abruptly sagged and collapsed between us. I felt warm sticky blood pump over my legs and hand as I reached down to help him.

'Aaahh, shit, shit, aahh, shit,' he screamed. 'Oh God, it's taken half my fucking hand! Oh Christ!'

I knelt down beside him and whipped out my handkerchief. Working as well as I could in the dark, I bound up the bitten flesh. From what I could feel the demon's beak had scrunched off at least two or three fingers and half his knuckles. The pain was obviously unbearable, and Jack Hughes was twisting around and weeping with agony.

Singing Rock knelt down too. 'The creature has gone,' he said. 'It just faded and vanished. But I don't know what kind of spirit Misquamacus will summon up next. That thing was only a minor creature. There are far worse manitous than that.'

'Singing.Rock,' I said, 'we've got to get Dr Hughes out of here.'

'But we can't leave Misquamacus now. I don't know what he'll do if we let him alone now.'

'Dr Hughes is in terrible pain. If he doesn't have that hand attended to, he's going to die. It would be better to lose Karen Tandy than Dr Hughes.'

'That's not the point,' said Singing Rock. 'If we let Misquamacus alone now, he'll destroy the whole place. Hundreds of people could die.'

'Oh God,' wept Dr Hughes. 'Oh God, my hand, oh God.'

'Singing Rock,' I snapped, 'I've got to get him out. Look, do you think you can hold Misquamacus off by yourself for a few minutes? Keep that fire away from us while I take him up the corridor, then I'll get him to a medic and come straight back.'

'All right,' said Singing Rock. 'But don't take your time about it. I need at least one other person on my side.'

I lifted Dr Hughes up to a standing position, and wrapped his injured arm over my shoulder. Then step by step, I helped him down the corridor towards the elevators. He groaned in pain at every move, and I could hear his blood dripping on to the floor, but I found a new surge of strength to carry us on.

There was no lightning, and no attempt to stop us. Perhaps this was what Misquamacus had wanted - to get Singing Rock on his own. But as far as I was concerned there was no choice. Dr Hughes was too badly hurt to stay in the corridor, and that was all there was to it.

We finally made the elevator. Its small red light was still glowing through the darkness, and I pressed the button for UP. After an unbearable pause, the elevator arrived, the doors opened, and we flopped inside.

The light was so bright after the gloom of the corridor that it hurt my eyes. I sat Dr Hughes down on the floor, with his bitten hand across his lap, and crouched down beside him. We rose swiftly up to the eighteenth floor, and I helped him out.

There was quite a reception committee waiting for us in his office when I carried Jack Hughes inside. Wolf was there, with a party of male nurses and medics, all equipped with flashlights. Two of them carried guns, and the rest were armed with crowbars and knives. A red-faced balding doctor, in a white coat and spectacles, was standing with them.

When I came in, they gathered round and gently lifted Dr Hughes off my shoulder, and laid him down on a couch in the corner of the office. Wolf called for a first-aid pack and antibiotics, and they gave Dr Hughes a quick shot of novocain to ease the agony.

The red-faced doctor came up to me and introduced himself.

'I'm Winsome. We were just about to go down and help you out. What the devil's going on down there? From what Wolf says, you have an insane patient or something.'

I wiped the thick sweat from my forehead. Up here, in the calm light of the early morning, everything that had happened in the fetid darkness of the tenth floor seemed totally unreal. But Singing Rock was still down there on his own, and I knew I had to get back with help for him.

'Pleased you could come, Dr Winsome. I can't explain it all now, but we do have a very dangerous patient down there, yes. But you mustn't come down with all these people and these guns.'

'Why not? If there's an emergency, we need to protect ourselves.'

'Believe me, Dr Winsome,' I said shakily. 'If you come down with guns, lots of innocent people are going to be hurt. All I need is that influenza virus.'

Dr Winsome sniffed. 'This is ridiculous. You have a wild patient down there, injuring our doctors, and you want an *influenza virus*?'

'That's all,' I said. 'Please, Dr Winsome. As soon as you can.'

He stared at me with bulging eyes. 'I don't seem to recall that you have any authority in this hospital, sir. It appears to me that the best solution is for me and these other gentlemen to go straight down there and catch this patient before he tries to take bites out of any more of us.'

'You don't *understand*!' I shouted wearily.

'You're right,' said Dr Winsome. 'I don't understand at all. Wolf are you ready with those flashlights?'

'Right away, Dr Winsome,' said Wolf.

'Wolf,' I appealed. 'You saw what happened down there. Tell them.'

The male nurse shrugged. 'All I know is, Dr Hughes got hurt by that patient. We ought to get down there and sort it out once and for all.'

I didn't know what to say. I turned around to see if there was anyone else who could help me, but everybody in the office was ready for a vigilante raid on the tenth floor.

Then, from his couch, Dr Hughes spoke up.

'Dr Winsome,' he said hoarsely. 'Dr Winsome, you mustn't go. Believe me, you mustn't go. Just give him the virus. He knows what he's doing. Whatever you do, don't go down there.'

Dr Winsome walked over to Jack Hughes' couch. 'Are you *sure*, Dr Hughes? I mean, we're all armed and ready to go.'

'Dr Winsome, you mustn't. But please hurry. Give him the virus and let him do it in his own way.'

Dr Winsome scratched his bald and crimson head, then he turned and said to the rescue party: 'Dr Hughes is in charge of this patient. I have to bow to his better judgement. But we'll stand by just in case.'

He went over to the desk, and produced a thin glass phial of liquid from a small wooden box. He held it out to me.

'This solution contains potent influenza virus. Handle it extremely carefully, or we'll have an epidemic on our hands.'

I took the phial gently in my fingers. 'Okay, Dr Winsome. I understand that. Believe me, you're doing the right thing.'

I was almost tempted to take a gun back with me, even though I knew it would be foolhardy and dangerous. But I did take a flashlight. I went swiftly back to the elevator, punched the button for ten, and sank into the darkness again.

When the doors opened, I peered cautiously out into the gloom.

'Singing Rock?' I shouted. 'It's Harry Erskine! I'm back!'

There was no reply. I kept my foot against the door of the elevator to prevent it from closing.

'Singing Rock?' I yelled again. 'Are you there, Singing Rock?'

I switched on my flashlight, and directed it down the corridor, but there was a corner in between me and the door to Karen Tandy's room, and I couldn't see any further than that. Perhaps Singing Rock couldn't hear me, way around here. I would have to go and investigate.

I knelt down and took off my shoes, and wedged them in the elevator door to prevent them from closing. The last thing I wanted was to be waiting for an elevator to arrive from the foyer while one of Misquamacus' grisly beasts came after me.

Then, keeping a pool of flashlight in front of me, I padded down the corridor towards Karen Tandy's room, and the battle of the medicine man. It was very silent down there - much too

silent for comfort - and I didn't feel like calling out to Singing Rock again. I was almost afraid I might get a reply.

As I approached the door to Karen Tandy's room, the thick sickly odour of blood and death came crowding into my nostrils again. I directed a long jet of light all the way down the corridor into the distance, but there was no sign of Singing Rock. Perhaps he was in the room, having a face-to-face conflict with Misquamacus. Perhaps he wasn't there at all.

I stepped softly and gingerly over the last few yards, pointing the flashlight into the gore-spattered doorway of Karen Tandy's room. I could hear something stirring and moving in there, but I dreaded to think what it was. I came closer and closer, keeping to the far side of the corridor, and then I rushed forward and shone the light full and square into the room.

I wished that I hadn't. Singing Rock was in there, on hands and knees on the floor. At first I thought he was all right, but when I shone the light towards him, he turned slowly in my direction, and I saw what Misquamacus had done to his face.

Crawling with terror, I flickered the light around the whole room, but there was no trace of Misquamacus at all. He had escaped, and was somewhere in the pitch-black twisting corridors of the tenth floor. I realized that I would have to go after him alone, armed with nothing but a flashlight and a small glass phial of infected fluid.

'Help me,' whispered Singing Rock. I walked across and knelt beside him. The white glistening of bone showed through the shredded flesh on his face. He looked as though he'd been rubbed against a giant cheese-grater.

'Where's Misquamacus?' I asked.

'Gone,' whispered Singing Rock. 'Help me.'

'All right,' I said. 'Can you walk?'

'I think so.'

'Come on up, and I'll take you to the elevator.'

I heaved Singing Rock to his feet, and together we made the long and painful journey down the corridor to the elevator. We turned the corner, and I expected to see the wide-open doors, with my shoes jammed in them, but instead there was nothing but another long corridor. I couldn't understand it. I must have taken a wrong turning. But that seemed pretty ridiculous, because there was only one turning to take.

With Singing Rock moaning beside me, I walked up the length of this next stretch of corridor. When we reached the corner, it was the same story. No elevator. Just another length of corridor, with another corner in the distance.

Then it occurred to me. The magic of Misquamacus was giving me delusions.

He was around here somewhere, making me feel as though I was trapped and had no escape. He had taken the element of doubt and fear and confusion in my mind, and used his sorcery to increase it to the point where I had actually passed the opened elevator without seeing it. I turned back, bearing the raw-faced Singing Rock along with me, and sure enough, when we came around the corner, the elevator was there.

I lifted Singing Rock into it, and put his finger against the button.

'When I leave the elevator, press that button and it'll take you up to the eighteenth. But whatever you do, have someone shut the doors to send it back down again. I don't want to be trapped on this floor with Misquamacus, and no means of escape. You get me?'

Singing Rock nodded. I prised my shoes away from the elevator doors, and he pressed the button. The elevator disappeared upwards.

I waited, with nothing but my flashlight for company, for the return of the car. After three or four minutes, it came back down again, and I wedged the doors with my shoes again. I'd seen too many films and read too many books where people didn't give themselves a quick exit route, to be caught like that myself.

I decided to make a systematic search of the tenth floor. I would walk up and down every corridor and look in every room, all in numerical sequence. Every door was numbered, 10000 through 10225, which meant two hundred and twenty five rooms to check. If Misquamacus was there, I'd flush him out all right, and if Dr Hughes' guess about viruses was right, I would at least have a fighting chance.

Room 10000 was right next to me, so I opened the door, and ran my flashlight around in there. An empty store-room, packed with towels and bandages and surgical dressings and sheets. I shut and locked the door and went on to 10001.

By the time I'd reached 10060, it was light outside, and now when I opened each new door, a ray of wan six o'clock sunshine came beaming in. I was beginning to feel that time was on my side now, because it was much more difficult for Misquamacus to summon his manitous in daylight. Instead of locking the doors, I left them wide open, so the sun would penetrate to the corridor.

It was half-past six by the time I had gotten to room number 10075. A small operating theatre, with an empty operating table. I investigated a dark corner with my flashlight, but there was nothing there.

Feeling more satisfied and confident, I left the door open and turned into the next corridor. I almost jumped with shock. Standing in the middle of the corridor, naked and black and scowling, with his malformed legs trailing on the floor, was the medicine man Misquamacus.

I froze. His eyes were open, and he was staring at me with his glittering yellow pupils, but he seemed to be looking far beyond me, into another time and another place.

'Misquamacus,' I said. 'I have come to parley with you.'

He remained motionless, supporting himself on his muscular arms. His hard coppery body was patterned with mystic symbols and pictographs, and there was even a snake-like decoration around his curled-up penis.

'Misquamacus,' I persisted. 'I want to pow-wow. Talk.'

What happened next was so weird that I couldn't believe it. I suddenly felt my lungs contract and expand, and my own lips move without my own volition. Misquamacus was using *my own voice* to talk to me.

'There - is - nothing - about - which - we - can -parley,' I said to myself in a strangely coarse voice. 'You -are - white - devils - from - the - ocean - and - I - will -destroy - you - just - as - you - will - destroy - the - tribes-'

'Misquamacus,' I replied. 'You have been reborn nearly three hundred years in the fliture. The red man's tribes have already been conquered, and they now live at peace with the white man. Things have happened which have changed everybody's way of life. Men can now fly in the sky - ordinary men, not medicine men. Men have wagons which move by themselves. Men have flown to the moon, and walked on it.'

'You - lie,' breathed Misquamacus, through my own throat. 'These - things - are - not - possible.'

The bitter irony of the situation suddenly struck me. Here was a magician from the past, denying the magic of the future. The manitous and sorcery of Misquamacus seemed as usual and ordinary to him as motor cars and space rockets did to us - yet both in their different ways were magical.

'Misquamacus,' I told him. 'I will show you. Come with me, and look for yourself.'

Sweating, I stepped into the nearest room, and went to the window. His face stern with suspicion, Misquamacus heaved himself after me on his knuckles and pulled himself up to the window ledge.

Ten floors below us, the early morning traffic was dense and noisy. In the distance, you could see the Chrysler building and the Empire State. The helicopter shuttle from JFK was beating its way toward the Pan Am building, and a Boeing 747 was crawling distantly across the pale snow-laden sky.

Misquamacus gazed at all this for a good four or five minutes. In spite of the fear I felt, it was fascinating to see a man from the seventeenth century suddenly coming face-to-face with one of the most sophisticated cities of the twentieth.

My throat contracted again, and I felt myself speaking disembodied words.

'I - do - not - understand - this. Where - am - I?'

'Misquamacus, this is Manhattan island.'

He turned to me, with a cold and evil stare in his eyes.

'You - are - deceiving - me,' I whispered to myself. 'This - is - all - sorcery - '

'It's true,' I insisted. 'Can't you feel that it's all real?'

'No - ' he said. '*This* - is - real- '

A strange windy feeling blew across my mind, and for a few moments I thought I was standing on a cold shoreline, looking out to sea. Across the glittering silver bay, I could see a large sailing-ship at anchor, flying a colourful flag. I was actually *there*, in seventeenth century Manhattan, inside Karen Tandy's dream. The feeling faded as quickly as it had come, and I was back on the stuffy tenth floor, facing the sinister bulk of the medicine man.

'I - will - destroy - you -,' I said to myself. 'You - have - no - sorcery-'

I stepped back. 'That's where you're mistaken,' I said. I held up the glass phial of influenza virus.

'What - is - that - '

'Misquamacus, I know why you fled from the white men. I know why you went through this reincarnation. It was because of the death that no man can see and no man can fight. Your people were dying and you didn't know why. None of your medicine worked - even *your* medicine, the medicine of the great Misquamacus. It was the death that flew in the air on invisible wings and couldn't be caught.

'In here, in this bottle, I have trapped some of the death. If you try and harm me, I will let it out. It will kill you surely and quickly, and you won't even know how.'

Misquamacus heaved his body towards me.

'You - lie,' he said, through my own lips.

I retreated a little further. 'I am not lying, Misquamacus. Inside this bottle is the very death you were most frightened of. Do you want me to let it out to prove it?'

At that moment, the door banged shut by itself, and bottles and kidney bowls whirled around the room in a shower, smashing and clattering all about us.

'I - will - destroy - you - slowly,' said Misquamacus. 'I - will - peel - each - layer - of - your - skin - one - by - one - until - you - are - raw - '

He moved forward again, and that's when I pulled the stopper out of the bottle and flung the contents into his face.

## **Chapter 8 - Into the Light**

**With the back of his hand, Misquamacus contemptuously wiped the fluid away from his face, and swung himself towards me.**

'You - will - certainly - die - now - little - white - brother,' he whispered.

Without warning, seven or eight surgical scalpels leaped into the air from a tray on the opposite side of the room, and flew like silver darts towards my face. I put my hand to shield myself, but two or three of them stuck in the muscles of my arm, and another one grazed my cheek.

'You - *doubt* - my - magic - ?' said Misquamacus.

I plucked out the scalpels and dropped them one by one, on to the floor. I circled slowly and warily towards the door, keeping my eyes on the medicine man's hard and contorted face, and he heaved himself after me with a wolf-like grin.

As I neared the door, I reached behind me for the handle, and opened it. Then I stepped back quickly into the corridor, slammed it and locked it.

I needn't have bothered. Without a sound, the whole thing burst apart in my hands, in a shower of wood and veneer, and I was left holding a useless handle and a half-turned key. Misquamacus rocked himself towards the wreckage, and followed me into the corridor.

'Misquamacus,' I said. 'I want to tell you something. You are already infected with the invisible death. You are going to die, whether you believe it or not. If you agree to help us, we will give you medicine to make you well again. But if you don't, the invisible death will surely kill you.'

The medicine man ignored me, and came sliding after me on his useless and dwarfish legs.

I turned and ran, trying to make my way towards the elevator. But there was something running after me, something dark and quick around my ankles like a rat. It jumped and twisted between my legs, and nipped me with intensely painful teeth, and yet when I stopped running, and turned to kick it away, there was nothing there at all.

I started running again, and the black rat appeared again, biting and tearing at my legs. I stopped abruptly. It was gone.

At the far end of the corridor, panting with the effort of heaving himself along on his shrunken legs, Misquamacus appeared, working his way steadily towards me, bent on revenge.

I walked away slowly, at almost the same pace as he was advancing, and the rat-thing did not appear any more. Fifty yards apart - hunter and hunted - we made our way along the silent hospital corridors. If I was lucky, he wouldn't try and hit me with the lightning-that-sees, or send any more of his terrible manitous after me, but I couldn't count on it. I thought that by now he would be tired, his magical powers would be at an ebb, and that might save me from the worst.

For half-an-hour, an hour, Misquamacus stalked me around the corridors of the tenth floor. Every time I neared the elevator, he cut me off, and I had to move away again and try to approach it by a more circuitous route. I was exhausted and sweating by now, but the strain of this game was beginning to show on the medicine man too. I could see the gleam of perspiration running down his body, and he seemed to have stopped working magic at all. No demons came after me, no knives flew through the air, no doors exploded.

I checked my watch. It was gone seven. Misquamacus came heaving and straining after me round yet another corner, and by the look of it, he was in a bad way. He suddenly stopped, put a hand to his head, and seemed to reel.

'It - is - just - as - you - have - said,' I whispered to myself. 'You - have - set - your - invisible - death - on - me.'

I ran quickly up the corridor and stood beside him. He was shaking and trembling, and he had to lean against the wall for support. Under his coppery skin, his face was grey with strain, and the sweat was running in great drops down his body.

'Misquamacus, I *warned* you,' I said. 'You are now infected with it, and I am the only one who can save you. The medicine man slid further down the wall, his doll-like legs twisted up underneath him.'

'If- you - do - not - save - me - my - manitou - will - haunt - you - for - all - time,' he breathed.

'My medicine is powerful,' I lied. 'I can deal with your manitou. I will only save you on one condition.'

'Tell - me - your - condition,' he said.

I knelt down beside him. His eyes looked bloodshot and feverish, and his lips were white and trembling.

'You must give back to the girl who bore you the manitou that you took from her,' I demanded. 'She must live again.'

Misquamacus thought for a moment, then nodded his assent. Second by second, he grew sicker and weaker. I could almost watch the flesh sag, and the deathly paleness of fatal illness shift over his face like ashes.

He raised himself a little, and began to mutter a long incantation, lifting one of his arms from time to time to draw figures in the air. The whole ritual took nearly ten minutes, and towards the end he was sucking the air in great anguished gasps, and clawing at the wall to keep himself steady. After he had spoken the last few words of the manitou-transference, he sank to the floor, and lay there in a pouring sweat, twitching and shivering.

I stood up and went briskly to a wall telephone. I dialled Dr Hughes' office. It was answered immediately by Dr McEvoy.

'Dr McEvoy? This is Harry Erskine.'

'Thank God! Are you all right?'

'I splashed the virus on Misquamacus, and he's collapsed. He's done the ritual to save Karen Tandy, but I don't know whether it's worked yet. You can send down a medical crew right now. Bring something to cure influenza. If we don't save Misquamacus, his manitou could pursue us for the rest of our lives. And, believe me, that won't be amusing.'

'Okay,' said Dr McEvoy. 'We're on our way down. By the way, do you have the elevator jammed down there?'

'It's my shoes,' I said. 'I'll go and fix it,' and I went to do just that.

The medical teams came down quickly and quietly. Three of them slid the congealing remains of Michael into a black PVC bag, and removed him. Others helped to wheel Karen Tandy's bed out of the blood-spattered room, and take her into a fresh room with clean sheets and new equipment.

A third team, on my instructions, went down the corridor to pick up the shivering body of Misquamacus. I told them he was suffering from chronic influenza, possibly with serious respiratory complications, and left it at that. I was sure that Dr Winsome could save him.

Dr McEvoy plugged Karen Tandy into the electric diagnosis equipment. He didn't seem very hopeful, but then Karen was looking ghastly. Her body was as shrunken as a Belsen victim, and the loose sac of torn white skin still hung from her back like a shroud.

'I don't think we can hold out any hope,' he said shortly, fixing up the meters to register any signs of pulse or brain activity.

When everything was ready, he switched on and we waited. The dials showed zero readings for pulse, zero readings for brain activity, zero readings for nervous response. Dr McEvoy looked at them for a moment, and then shook his head.

'I'm sorry, Mr Erskine - she's dead.'

He was about to switch everything off again when I held his arm.

'Look at that,' I said, pointing to one of the dials. 'Isn't that moving?'

Dr McEvoy bent forward and scrutinized the dial more closely. 'You're right. It's definitely moving.'

'And look - that one.'

The second dial began to beat, and soon every dial on the whole diagnostic machine was surging upwards, gaining strength with every minute that passed. Karen's body temperature rose, her pulse quickened, her brain activity was restored. The manitou that Misquamacus had stolen from her had returned.

'Put her on a drip feed solution,' Dr McEvoy ordered his junior doctor. 'What we want to see now is some flesh on those bones.'

'Right away, sir,' said the junior medic. He looked totally baffled at Dr McEvoy's apparent miracle cure, but was too shy and nervous to ask how it was done.

'Now let's go take a look at Misquamacus,' said Dr McEvoy, and we walked along the corridor to a room marked ISOLATION.

'You'll need a mask and robes in here,' Dr McEvoy told me. 'The first thing we do is take the patient into completely sterile surroundings.'

We dressed up in green surgical kit, and went through the swing doors into the isolation ward. Misquamacus was lying in a bed, surrounded by medics and nurses, and he looked as though he was in a very bad way.

'You really want to save this man?' asked one of the medics. 'After everything he's done?'

'Let the courts judge that,' snapped Dr McEvoy. 'Our job is to save lives, and that's where it begins and ends. If you want to worry about morality, go and take a job on *Marcus Welby, M.D.*'

'Sorry, sir.'

'Don't let it worry you. I know how you feel. How's the patient responding, Dr Clare?'

'Not too well, sir, I'm afraid. We've given him massive doses of antibiotics, but he may be too far gone.'

'Well, keep trying, and let me know if there's any change.'

'Right away, sir.'

We stripped off our surgical robes, and went back up to the eighteenth floor. Dr Hughes was there, his hand heavily bandaged, and drowsy from pain-killing drugs, but in reasonable humour.

I sat down and helped myself to one of his cigarettes. I felt so tired and shaky that I could hardly move.

'How's it going down there?' asked Jack.

'Pretty good,' replied Dr McEvoy. 'Karen Tandy appears to have recovered, and after a few weeks of nourishment she should be able to get around again. I'm not so sure about your medicine man, though. He's in very bad shape.'

'How long ago since you gave him the virus, Harry?' asked Jack Hughes.

I rubbed my eyes and yawned. 'About an hour ago, I guess.'

'An hour? Is that all? And now he's almost dying?'

'Well, don't ask me,' I said. 'I don't know anything about viruses. I just splashed the stuff on him and hoped for the best.'

Dr Hughes frowned. 'That seems like an awful short time for a virus to take hold - even in someone who doesn't have any built-in resistance.'

'Maybe he caught something else - before we gave him the influenza,' I suggested.

'Well, that could be,' said Dr McEvoy. 'You say you only splashed the stuff on him - you didn't inject him or anything?'

'Inject him? You have to be kidding. No, I splashed it.'

Dr Hughes picked up his phone and rang down to the isolation ward.

'Dr Clare? How's that Indian friend of yours? Listen, we have reason to think that it might not be influenza after all. Would you take a look at him and run a few tests? As quick as you can. Okay, thanks. Ring me back when you know something.'

He put the phone down. 'All we can do now is wait. But I'd like to thank you, Harry, for getting me out of there. That had to be the worst experience of my whole life!'

'How's Singing Rock?' I asked. 'Will he live?'

'Oh, he'll live all right. The lacerations were pretty bad, but we've sent him to Dr Schabitzky, the plastic surgeon. He'll never be quite the same, but he'll have a face he can live with.'

'I'm glad of that,' I said quietly. 'Singing Rock gave a lot tonight. More than most of us. He knew that Misquamacus could have killed him.'

Dr Hughes nodded. 'I guess we all gave a lot. I just hope that it was worth it. What do you think will happen now?'

I shrugged. 'It's hard to say. But Misquamacus won't bother us again. A medicine man will always accept the superior magic of another medicine man, and acknowledge it as greater. Misquamacus thinks that we are greater medicine men than he is, and so he won't get out of line.'

'I was just wondering what we can do with him,' said Dr Hughes. 'A primitive savage, with crippled legs, in twentieth-century society. He came out of one hell into another, didn't he?'

Dr McEvoy sniffed. 'There's nothing to get sentimental about Jack. That guy killed Michael, savaged you, and tore up Singing Rock's face; and just about fried two friends of Harry here. I don't think that deserves much sentiment. He's nothing but an Indian savage.'

Dr Hughes looked a little sad. 'It's bullshit, isn't it, all this talk about feeling guilty about what we did to the Indians? If we were faced with the same situation today, we'd do it all over again. Last night, we met up with a primitive savage, who had nothing to use against our modern technology except primitive magic. And he almost won. But we didn't treat him with sympathy or respect, any more than our forefathers treated Indians with sympathy or respect. They were wild, they were savage, they were cruel and they were powerful. They were in touch with all the forces of nature, and they had tremendous occult strength. They were also civilized in their own way, and they had their own nobility.'

'But I can only say *that* because I don't have to live with them. It's pretty easy to be charitable when the problem's over. If I'd been out there on the frontier, I'd have taken a gun in my hand just like every other frontiersman, and I'd have shot Indians like everyone else. And so would most of the people who go around today saying "how terrible we were to the Indians, how savage we were to massacre them". It's bullshit. And the sooner we recognize what crap it all is, the sooner we can actually stop wallowing in pretended guilt, and get on with being what we are: white devils.'

Dr McEvoy raised his eyebrows. 'That's a speech-and-a-half, Dr Hughes.'

Dr Hughes went to rub his eyes with his bandaged hand, then remembered it was injured, and used his other hand instead.

'I don't know,' he said. 'When you come to think about, Misquamacus didn't really stand a chance.'

His phone beeped, and he reached out for it across his untidy desk.

'Hughes here.'

A worried little voice prattled away on the other end of the line.

'I see. Okay. All right, I'll tell them.'

With his weariness showing openly, he laid down the phone. He lit a cigarette, awkwardly and one-handed, before he said anything.

'What is it?' asked Dr McEvoy.

'Misquamacus died ten minutes ago.'

'Well,' I said, 'that's it. It looks as though we're going to have uneasy lives. His manitou won't stop hounding us until he gets his revenge.'

'What did he die of?' asked Dr McEvoy.

Dr Hughes puffed his cigarette. 'You won't believe this. He died of venereal disease. A particularly virulent form of gonorrhoea called Saigon Rose. It was imported into this country by GIs returning from Vietnam.'

'*Gonorrhoea*?' said Dr McEvoy, his eyes screwed up in amazement. 'Where the hell did an ancient Indian get gonorrhoea?'

We looked blankly from one to the other.

'Then he didn't die of influenza at all,' I said. 'In fact, it sounds as though he had contracted this venereal disease before we went anywhere near him.'

Dr Hughes looked across at me sagely, and I knew what he was thinking.

'Maybe it's a good thing he did,' he said. 'Otherwise you might not be sitting here right now, safe and well.'

'I know,' I said softly. 'I know.'

He came to see Karen Tandy on the sixth day of her recovery. She was still very pale and thin, but she was able to have visitors, and some of her elfin prettiness was coming back. Her room was filled with flowers from Florida, and there were books and chocolates beside her bed. She was getting on so well that her parents had returned to New England.

I bumped into him as he was leaving. I was just coming in, with magazines and candy for my favourite patient.

'Hi,' I said. 'I'm Harry Erskine. I'm a friend of Karen's.'

'Hi,' he said, smiling. 'She's told me a lot about you. I want to thank you for helping to save her life.'

'It was a pleasure,' I grinned back. 'Listen, do you mind if I have a quiet word with you?'

'You mean now?'

'It won't take a second.'

'Okay.'

I smiled and waved to Karen through the open door. But then I took the tall young man with the short-cut blond hair down the corridor a way, and I looked at him seriously.

'Were you ever in Vietnam?' I asked him.

'Sure. These are my medal ribbons. This one, and this one.'

'I hate to tell you this, but you brought home another souvenir as well.'

'I don't understand you.'

'Captain, you have the clap.'

'The *clap*? How in the hell do you know that?'

'Painful urination?' I asked. 'Any sign of soreness or irritation?'

'Well, sure, but- '

'See a doctor about it,' I said. 'It's only fair on Karen. And anyone that you - or she - might be closely connected with.'

The captain frowned and pulled his arm away from me angrily.

'Listen, smartass,' he said. 'I don't need any medicine man.'

I looked at him and sighed. 'The feeling,' I said, 'is probably mutual''

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