


INDIGENOUS HORROR STORIES VOLUME II



WHISTLE
AT NIGHT
AND THEY
WILL COME

ALEX SOOP

FEAT. CARY THOMAS CODY

FOREWORD BY EUGENE BRAVE ROCK

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

WHISTLE AT NIGHT
AND
THEY WILL
COME



SAMPLE CHAPTERS

INDIGENOUS HORROR STORIES VOLUME 2

WHISTLE AT NIGHT AND THEY WILL COME

ALEX SOOP

FEATURING CARY THOMAS CODY
FOREWORD BY EUGENE BRAVE ROCK



Calgary, Alberta, Canada

SAMPLE CHAPTERS



DURVILE.COM



UpRoute Imprint of Durvile Publications Ltd.
Calgary, Alberta, Canada
www.durvile.com

Copyright © 2023 Alex Soop

Library and Archives Cataloguing in Publications Data

WHISTLE AT NIGHT AND THEY WILL COME
INDIGENOUS HORROR STORIES, VOLUME II

Soop, Alex; Author
Soop, Alex; Illustrations

1. First Nations | 2. Blackfoot | 3. Indigenous | 4. Supernatural | 5. Paranormal



The UpRoute “Spirit of Nature” Series
A “Tales of the Dark” Title

Series Editors, Raymond Yakeleya and Lorene Shyba

Issued in print and electronic formats

ISBN: 978-1-990735-30-1 (pbk); 978-1-990735-32-5 (e-pub)

978-1-990735-31-8 (audiobook)

Front cover design, Austin Andrews | Book design, Lorene Shyba.
Photos of Alex Soop, back cover and throughout, Dima Gulpa.

Durvile Publications recognizes the land upon which our studios are located. We extend gratitude to the Indigenous Peoples of Southern Alberta, which include the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai of the Niisitapi Blackfoot Confederacy; the Dene Tsuut’ina; the Chiniki, Bears paw, and Wesley Stoney Nakoda First Nations. We also acknowledge the Region 3 Métis Nation of Alberta.

Durvile Publications would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through Canadian Heritage Canada Book Fund and the Government of Alberta, Alberta Media Fund.



Printed and bound in Canada. First Printing. 2023.
All rights reserved. Contact Durvile Publications Ltd. for details.

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



I am deeply honoured to have Eugene Brave Rock and Cary Thomas Cody join me as storytellers and supporters in “Whistle at Night.” Working with you both has been a tremendous privilege, and I hope we can collaborate again in the future.

To the love of my life, Mary-Grace Pableo, your love and unwavering support since the beginning of our journey together mean the world to me. You are my rock. I also want to acknowledge my mother, Crystal Many Fingers, and my sister Patricia Soop, who have been my steadfast pillars of support. Sadly, we lost my stepfather, Barry (Pops), this year. He was a true father figure in my life, and may he rest in peace.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to my publisher and editors, Lorene Shyba and Raymond Yakeleya at Durvile & UpRoute Books, for their tireless dedication to perfecting my manuscripts. Your support and the opportunities you’ve given me will never be forgotten.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to the Creator for the gift of life and for surrounding me with wonderful people who have been a source of encouragement. I’m grateful to the many friends and family members who have read my earlier works and encouraged me to keep going. To my very first fans, you hold a special place in my heart. Thank you to everyone who has ever shared kind words about my writing. Your support means the world to me.

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

CONTENTS



<i>Foreword</i> , Eugene Brave Rock	
Our Stories and The Supernatural.....	ix
<i>Introduction</i> , Alex Soop	
My First Encounter with The Paranormal.....	1
PART I Short Stories	
It Comes at Night	9
Rising Sun	25
Hide-and-Go-Seek	37
PART II Feature Section	
Cary Thomas Cody	
Snapping Turtle	51
PART III Three Novellas	
Botched Landing	77
Black 'N Blue.....	113
When They Return.....	151
And Exclusive Excerpt from the Novel	
Thunder Amidst the Stars	205
About the Author	244

SAMPLE CHAPTERS



EUGENE BRAVE ROCK

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

FOREWORD



EUGENE BRAVE ROCK

OUR STORIES AND THE SUPERNATURAL

I AM WRITING this foreword to support Alex's talent and promote Indigenous storytelling. Like Alex, I am from the Blood Reserve, Kainai Nation, which is part of the Blackfoot Confederacy of Southern Alberta. I was raised by my grandmother, Florence Brave Rock, and spent time around the Elders with their storytelling, language, and respect for the Creator. Among their stories were tales of the Creator and the trickster, Napi. The Elders taught that each of us embodies Napi within.

I am working hard to preserve the Niisitapi Blackfoot language so we can educate our People, and a big part of that is the telling of stories. In addition to that, I am an actor and a stuntman and I feel that being an actor is the oldest way of expressing our traditions by sharing and connecting with others. I have a big platform to share our culture as Native American and I am very grateful and proud to have that connection and influence as a way of celebrating our land.

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

Indigenous stories and the supernatural go hand in hand. Our Indigenous stories are based around the supernatural. I've heard stories from Elders that are unimaginable; like superhero movies where you walk without obstacles. In Alex's writing, he shows that tribes has their own unique mythologies. Common among them is they have big fear factors but also important lessons to be learned.

In English our stories are a myth, fairytale, or legend. In our language, they are truth. I had the privilege lately of listening to a 94-year-old Elder telling a story in our language and it took me to a place where I could feel the temperature and the dampness of the cave, and the tastes, and textures in the story. That's how powerful it was ... and is.

There are comparisons between Alex as a writer and me as an actor. We are both living the stories and making decision on the fly so we can go in any direction at any time. In his writing style I have seen Alex pick and choose the foreshadowing and consequences in his stories and for me, as an actor, the stories of the Elders have empowered me to become who I am and to show that we are still here and to be proud of who we are.

One of these days I can see myself working with Alex to make a short or feature film out of one of his stories. In Indigenous filmmaking, there are writers' rooms opening up so that's where I see Alex going. Things are just going to get better, and better, and better. We are in an amazing time and an amazing space and I don't think our meeting was coincidence. I've heard Alex

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Foreword

say that one of his proudest moments was watching my performance in *Wonderwoman* and he said to me that he thought, “Hey that’s our language he’s speaking... in Hollywood!” By bringing a demigod, ‘The Chief’, back to life in that movie, I opened up our culture to the world, and I am proud that Alex found this meaningful.

My advice for Indigenous youth who want to pursue being creative in life is to connect with your inner selves to find what makes you happy and what makes you sad. You can learn your lessons and take them as blessings and keep your story going. My journey so far has taken me a lot of different places and I find this travel is creating who I am becoming to be. So, my advice is to live, learn, and travel.

In my life, when I was furthest from home is when I found out the most about myself as Niisitapi. There were times when all I had were my prayers. Experience is wisdom, so get out there and get it. I’m from Standoff, Alberta. If I can do it, anybody can.

—*Eugene Brave Rock, 2023*

SAMPLE CHAPTERS



~ FIVE ~

BOTCHED LANDING

PART I

THE MOUNTAIN AIR has a tinge of cool to it, even though it is midsummer. We are sitting at an outdoor patio where the smell of the newly installed planks mix with the aromas of barbeque grill and flowers in pots around the deck rail. The spread of nature past the sidewalk and parking lot is magnificent—a vast greenspace stretching wide, then monstrous mountains standing tall.

“You’re sure you’re ready to do this? It’s only been a year since ... well, you know? I don’t even wanna say it,” says Stan, my best friend for as long as I care to remember.

Sweet, raspberry flavour tickles my taste buds as I inhale a lengthy drag from my e-cigarette.

“You know those things kill you just as much as real cigarettes,” Stan says, breaking the silence which is starting to get uncomfortable—for him at least. I keep my eyes trained on the scenery and nod my head like I was hearing a song I liked.

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

“You’re sure you’re ready to do this, Chavez? Stan asks again. “You’re not even listening to me, dude. You gonna answer my question, or what?” Stan finally sounds off with a hint of anger brewing in his voice.

I stare on without speaking, still nodding my head. Stan and I are enjoying the ambiance of what was her favourite restaurant— a nice, somewhat inexpensive stop in the town of Canmore before we enter into overpriced Banff. A loud squeal emanates from Stan’s alfresco chair as he leans forward and smacks me hard on the kneecap.

Newfound feeling of annoyance, I swivel my head sharply and shoot him a cold look. “To answer your question. Yes, I am ready to do this.”

“You’re absolutely sure? Because I don’t want you freezing up at the last minute now.”

“I am. And please, have I ever frozen up before a jump?” I say as I suck back another long puff of my e-cigarette.

“She’d be really proud of you, cowboy, I mean the way you’ve been handling things. Hell, I’m even proud of you.” Stan leans forward again, and pats me on the shoulder.

Maria’s stunning face comes to mind, with her captivating eyes, and lips adorned in a shade of magenta, all framed by her ever-present smile. Her hair blows across her cheeks, which carry a warm caramel hue.

“Okay here we go,” says the short and curvy waitress as she toddles over to our table, one hand balancing a platter full of drinks. “You guys look thirty as caged lions,” she says. “...a tall, Long Island iced tea for you, and a mountain-sized Kokanee for you.” She places the frosty drinks in front of Stan and me. “Thank you, miss. That was fast,” says Stan in his most flirtatious tone.

The fit, blonde waitress flashes both of us a pretty smile, but I just continue to stare right through her at the outdoor scenery. “You are very welcome. And if you need anything

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

more, just go ahead and wave me back over.” She gives Stan a saccharine smile before scurrying off and disappearing into the shade past the open patio doors.

“She wants me,” Stan says smugly.

“I bet she does,” I say nonchalantly and stash my e-cigarette in my unbuttoned shoulder pocket. I grip my tall mug of beer and raise it into the air. “Cheers.”

Stan grasps his chalice-like glass and lightly taps the side of my hefty beer mug. “Cheers, bro.”

I take a huge inhale of the invigorating air before I take a long swig, smiling as I embrace the cool, crisp taste of the Rocky Mountain beer, still staring past, a thousand yards.

“What’s on your mind?” Stan asks curiously.

Everything from this and that is on my mind. Life’s fast lane of thinking. I’m finally able to pinpoint my focus on one thing. “That. Right over there.” I place my mug of beer down and point past the parking lot.

Stan diverts his attention to where my finger is directed. “What, thinking of getting a new car or something?”

“No, you meathead. Look beyond the parking lot.” Stan places his drink softly on the glass table and hovers half out of his seat for a better look. I snicker at his unnecessary action. “You don’t even have to get out of your seat to see it, bro.”

“Okay then.” Stan plops back down in his chair and gazes hard through the clear, tempered-glass barrier. “I see nothing but a long stretch of boring flats and some big ass mountains.”

“Exactly. You just said it, bro.”

“You’re losing me, dude.”

I take another swig of my frothy beer, keeping my persistent gaze fixed on the beautiful scenery of snow-capped mountains staring down at us from across the pristine, sun-soaked meadow. “A meadow, surrounded by mountains, just

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

like that one,” I blurt out enthusiastically like a kid making the ultimate discovery. “We’ll find a meadow like that way out in the heart of the mountain wilderness. That’s where we will make the jump.”

“Actually?”

“Actually,” I echo.

“Okay then.” Stan rubs his wiry chin stubble and gazes up at the baby blue, cloudless sky. “That sounds like one helluva plan. I’m game. Let’s drink to it.” We both raise our drinks, my own beer mug now one-third empty, and we smash glasses. The party that starts at that moment doesn’t stop until dawn.



“Have a shot, quick, before the pilot sees,” Stan says over the hum of the airplane engine. We are loitering around on the runway at the Banff airstrip, checking our gear and waiting for the pilot to give us the go-ahead to board. Drinking or even being hung over is strictly forbidden for skydivers. If the pilot has any idea of our drink-filled exploits from what feels like a mere few hours before, he’ll ground the plane and scratch the jump indefinitely. He’s a strict one.

Hangover notions get the best of me. I seize the silver flask from Stan’s grip and knock back a slug. The whiskey sizzles across my parched tongue and slams into the back of my throat like a breaking dam.

“Blech. That’s some pretty nasty stuff, bro,” I say with a sour face and hand him the flask like it took a nip at my hand. Pre-celebration. Stan’s insistence

Although this isn’t my first time being hung over before skydiving, I feel I am making a mistake by going ahead with it today, especially when I’m not feeling hundred percent. More like two percent at best. But everything has been

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

planned out and paid for. To back out now would leave us out nearly a thousand bucks each.

This jump isn't going to be a regular outing like the rest. Stan managed to grub up a pilot in Banff who is willing to fly Stan and me plus our buddy Gris and jumpmaster Frederik two hours into the remote Rocky Mountain wilderness. From there, we are to take a 13,000-foot jump and land into a small, pre-selected meadow clearing. We plan to set up camp for the night, and finally make our way back to civilization by means of inflatable raft. The trip is all in the name of my late fiancée, Maria. Besides being a champion jingle dress powwow dancer, she loved skydiving and took me out on my very first jump.

"Give it here. I need a cure too, badly, fuck." Stan snatches the flask out of my hands and upturns it until there is nothing but a drizzle of gold liquid trickling into his mouth. I nearly gag, imagining the taste of the whiskey blustering across his taste buds. Stan drank twice as much as I did last night, so I know he's gotta be feeling it.

"Alright, gentlemen. The plane is primed for flight, all set to take to the skies. Let's perform a quick equipment check, load up, board the plane, and get the hell outta here," says Frederik, who is our hired jumpmaster and who has also become a friend. He waits for my nod of agreement before returning to the purring plane. Frederik was present during the jump when I proposed to Maria after a 13,000-foot free fall over the sprawling Nevada desert. So, I found it fitting that he should be in attendance for the skydiving venture and campout dedicated to honouring her memory.

"How do I look?" asks Gris, a friend of ours since high school on the Rez. Gris, his nickname, stems from his youngster days of rodeo bulldogging as well as to his voluptuous, bear-like size.

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

“Like a grizzly bear in a jumpsuit, bulldogger. You’re lucky you were just under the maximum permitted weight by three pounds,” accuses Stan with a sly chuckle.

Gris grins a tobacco chew-stained smile at me.

Nope, not on my watch. “You better spit that shit out before we board the plane,” I snap. “I ain’t kidding, bro, I’m not riding for hours in a fuselage stinkin’ of that nasty shit.”

“Yeah, okay cap’n,” Gris says with a two-finger salute. “I’m gonna try to finish what’s left right now. What about smokes, can I at least bring those along? Fucking guy.”

“As long as you don’t burn the forest down around us, dumbass,” adds Stan.

“You have a lighter?” I ask Gris.

He pulls out a Zippo lighter emblazoned with a pinup girl graphic, and snaps it open with a flick of his wrist.

“Keep that thing safe. We may need it,” I say.

“Yes sir.” Gris stands stiffly upright and salutes me once more, British military style, with his palm facing the skies.

I nod, snicker, and summon the guys with a beckoning motion of my hands. “Okay dudes. It’s going to be hella loud in that plane for the next two hours, and only the pilot and the jumpmaster have headsets. So let’s get everything straight right now. First, let’s make sure we have everything we need and let’s pack in snug on the double. I don’t wanna get in the air and realize we didn’t pack our maps, or something stupid like that.”

“Why can’t we just use our phones?” asks Gris.

“Because, dumbass, there’s no cell service where we’re headed,” says Stan, rubbing it in.

Another friendly chuckle. “That’s right, bro. We have two detailed land maps. One for each raft, just in case we lose each other—which we won’t,” I say smugly.

“And the food. Check, a full menu of MRE ration packs,” says Gris.

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

“Man, always about the food with you, eh?” Stan says teasingly, nudging Gris with the tip of his elbow.

“Shaaht up.”

“Okay, maps. I just checked. Gris, you for sure double checked the food?” I ask. Gris nods at me with his full attention.

“Excellent,” I say. “And how about you, Stan? You’ve double checked our camping gear and inflatable rafts?”

“I sure did. Three times.”

“Good. Well that just leaves us to do a chute check, and then load up the plane. Let’s get ‘er done, pronto.”

We give each other high fives, double check our parachute rigs and then commence loading up the airplane with our gear. The plane is free of the paved runway and in the air within ten minutes.

An hour into the flight. I take a moment from studying the map to gaze out the window and appreciate the splendid view of the mist-enveloped mountain peaks below us. At 17,000 feet, the rugged, slow-moving terrain gives me the impression of a tidal waving sea in a hundred shades of green, grey, and brown, the low clouds hovering below the peaks acting as the calmer waters. Knife-edged peaks of a thousand monsters seem to be trying to claw at our airplane’s undercarriage.

A quick glance across the aisle and I establish the fact that the deafening roar of the airplane’s twin engines, mixed with the cruising elevation, are making Stan’s hungover head swim in wooziness. It was his idea to go so hard the night before. No pity for him. His skin is pale and he looks crazy, blinking his eyes tightly and shaking his head. He abruptly catches me staring and feigns a smile.

“Damn, I think I’m gonna be sick.” The words come out in silent mouthing as I stare at him from across the aisle.

I snicker at the sight of Stan, looking like he is about

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

to lose his stomach's contents at any given moment. I sure hope he skipped on a huge morning breakfast. "Dumbass," I mutter to myself, although I could barely hear my own voice over the drone of the airplane motors. Getting back to the task at hand, I return my concentration to the paper map through a small plastic magnifying glass until my eyes begin to strain and my head feels faint. My own hangover symptoms, probably.

Letting my eyes return to normal focus, I reach into my breast pocket. Hands shaking, I extract a pocket-sized picture of Maria encased in thin plastic. Her university graduation picture. My heart skips a beat every time. She looks stunning. Her flawless smile drew me in from the very first moment I set eyes on her. That same beautiful smile greeted me as I revealed to her my grandmother's gleaming diamond ring, from my one-knee posture.

Those happy days are now long gone.

I take in the scene of Maria's memory in my mind. Her lean silhouette against the backdrop of a swiftly moving river captivates me like a black hole's infinite gravity. I feel as though I am hovering as I take small, gallant steps toward her. For each step I take, she shifts further away from me and seems to be blending into the darkness of the evergreen trees looming all around us. I know it is her by the familiar scent of her vanilla fragrance, and by her distinctive posture. She slowly turns around, but her beautiful face is shrouded in midnight shadows.

I stutter her name.

With a violent bump, I am jolted by the plane's midair turbulence. Maria's name is still on my lips.

Feeling totally taken by surprise with a rising mingle of anxiousness, I survey the airplane's compartment. Gris is fully alert in his seat, staring with intrigue out of his circular porthole, earbuds jammed into his ears. Frederik, the

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

jumpmaster, and Jordan, the pilot, are sitting in the cockpit, deep in discussion as they chat with animated hand gestures. A look across the aisle. Stan is politely getting sick into a paper bag. No surprises there. A witty grin crosses my lips at his situation, and it brings some calmness to my battered nerves, still feeling the lingering effects of my own hangover.

Why, oh why, did I fall for Stan's insistence on going so hard the night before? I glance at my wristwatch just as the plane cabin grows substantially darker, like an evening under a raincloud, and the time only reads 2:32 p.m. It's approximately 30 minutes until the drop zone. Driving the anxious feeling away, I try to rest my eyes, but my darkened vision starts to spin like I am on a roller-coaster. The ultimate hangover dizziness. I peer out the fuselage porthole and see shifting, demon-faced storm clouds encircle the plane. The ground from 13,000 feet is virtually undetectable through the malevolent billows.

A hard tap lands on my shoulder, and I whirl around to meet Frederik's concerned gaze staring into mine. "We have trouble." I can't hear him at all over the roaring twin engines, but I manage to read his lips loud and clear.

"What is it?" I scream back over the deafening hum.

He hands me a headset with shaking hands, and I position them on my head as though my life depended on it. "What's the problem?" I ask.

"This storm." Frederik's voice crackles through the headset.

"Okay. It's bad, I get that. But what else is there?" I ask.

"It's a big one. We've lowered our flight altitude, but storm clouds are spread all the way down to a few hundred feet above the ground. We go any lower and we could fly right into a mountain face—and not to mention the fact that you want to do a thirteen-thousand-foot jump."

A blend of despair and anger brews in my head. I take a moment to dwell on the situation. Our safety is more of a

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

priority over which altitude we exit the plane at.

“What’s the highest altitude we can safely jump from without getting too tangled up in the storm clouds?” I ask.

“Three thousand feet,” Frederik crackles on the headset.

“Damn it, that’s so low though,” I groan. The disheartening news of having to do a jump at such of a low-slung altitude stabs me like a serrated blade. The boys and I did not wrangle up big money just to do a low altitude jump over such beautiful scenery, now sadly compromised by heavy rain and midday darkness.

“Well,” Jordan says, “for an extra four-hundred big ones, he’ll circle around for a bit until the heavy clouds dissipate over our jump zone.”

I didn’t think it over for but a second. “Let’s do it,” I blurt out. The boys and I will sort out the costs later.

A satisfied smirk creases Frederik’s lips. “You got it cap’n.” He nods at me, politely retrieves the headset, and stumbles back toward the cockpit.

I reach into my pocket and once again pull out the plastic encased picture of Maria. I stare hard into her tantalizing gaze. “Look out for us, baby,” I whisper and close my eyes. Her enchanting smile seeps through my mind’s eye once again. Without forewarning, I feel gravity rip hard on my chest and stomach as the plane gains altitude. My unsettled hangover nerves begin to quiver in sync with the vibrating airplane cabin.

Anxiety begins to make itself known.

Air sickness as well.

I breathe. Deeply. In and then out, keeping my mind focused on the calming aspects of an midair free fall from the plane, hopefully soon. My mind stays occupied by those thoughts working like a natural high until the pilot does a split-second nosedive indicating we are back to our intended altitude. Nausea hits me as my head goes weightless and

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

my stomach soars to my chest. I gaze out my condensation-smearred porthole to see that the skies are still dark. Flashes of dazzling white and blue scrape across the blackened skies, leaving trails of split-second light in their wake. No longer am I afraid. I am now enthralled by the brilliance of Mother Nature's fabrication that one would otherwise never get to witness from the ground.

Absolute beauty.

I stare through the window in astonishment like a kid at a fireworks display, when suddenly, the high-speed glimpse of a human form comes sailing past my peripherals. I twist my head around and see Frederik lying in a slumped position over his chute rig at the rear of the plane. My happy face drops. He is out cold. Panic makes me scream out for him and I grasp for my seatbelt. An enraged state of alarm triggers me to heave a barrage of unnecessary swears as I wrestle the buckle to free myself.

I am just free of the seatbelt when the plane jerks left, then right, and I am tossed around like a ragdoll. Regretting unbuckling myself, I clasp onto the sturdy armrests for dear life. As the plane levels out momentarily, I get a split-second to gather myself. I glance around the plane to check on everyone's well-being. Jordan is in the cockpit struggling to control the plane by himself. Stan is struggling to get out of his seat. I am unsure as to why he would want to do that. Gris is still seated with his head against his headrest; his earbuds no longer crammed into his ears. He is crossing himself and speaking lightly. A prayer, I presume, since Gris is Catholic.

I wait for a moment until I presume it's safe to go and check on Frederik, then let go of my death grip on the armrests and leap out of my seat. I bolt for the rear of the plane, working my body overtime to battle against the tilt of gravity slamming me on all sides. Frederik is out like an exhausted battery, but still, I try my best shake him conscious.

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

“Come on, someone give me a hand,” I scream to no one in particular, my voice barely making it through the noise of the cabin. Gris has heard me, or at least has seen my discernible hand gestures. He is out of his seat and wobbling toward me down the small aisle while Stan is staring at us with terror-filled eyes.

“Here, hold onto his head. I’m gonna go tell Jordan that we need to turn around and return to Banff,” I scream over the hum and wait for a reply from Gris. He only stares at me like a clueless dog. I make deliberate hand signals until he finally nods in comprehension.

I have to force myself up against gravity pinning from all sides as it yanks down on my 200-pound frame. I shakily make my way down the aisle toward the cockpit. First, I stop to tell Stan that we are heading home. He reads my lips and nods with worry swimming in his large brown eyes. I place a comforting pat on his shoulder and carry on down the aisle. The final few feet to the entrance of the cockpit are harrowing as I feel the forces of gravity pulling me back hard like an invisible cowboy tether. The weight of the parachute rig strapped to my back doesn’t make matters any easier.

Finally I reach the cockpit after what feels like wading through thick, viscous water.

I begin yelling for Jordan when I am suddenly sent soaring back from whence I had just so tediously trekked. I land hard in the middle of the cabin aisle, winded from the sudden plunge and the slam of my robust frame onto the floor. The force of gravity changes just as I push myself to a kneeling position, and I am sent tumbling toward the front of the plane like a rolling boulder. With quick reflexes, I catch myself hard on the aluminum frame of the cockpit entrance.

Jordan swiftly whirls his helmeted head around. “We might have to abandon ship,” he screeches, his distorted words easy to perceive.

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

As I look on helplessly through the porthole, I see nothing but brewing clouds and aggressive lightning, the thousand shades of the malicious clouds made more intimidating by these flashes of fleeting light. With Jordan hard at the helm, the plane finally levels out and I am able to stand tall. He hands me a headset and I hear him clear as day. “Get everything we need and prepare to get everyone out. Now!” he screams. He begins activating a makeshift autopilot using a stick and rubber band, then brushes thrusts past me.

I am hard at his heels. “What the hell are you talking about?” I demand as I trail him down the centre aisle.

“The GPS—hell everything electronic is fried. I won’t be able to safely fly us through this electrical storm. It’s best that we jump now while the plane is still at a safe enough altitude.” Jordan keeps on moving until he reaches the main fuselage access. He tugs on the safety latch and slides open the hatch. A squall of freezing wet wind infiltrates the calmness and overpowers the already loud cabin. I have to grab on to the roof suspended safety railing just to stable myself.

“Frederik’s hurt,” I say through the crackling headset.

“What?” Jordan stops what he is doing and faces me with shock-riddled eyes. “How bad?”

“I have no idea. He’s at the rear with Gris.”

“Okay—shit! We have to get him off the plane first. He’s priority. Someone will have to jump with him, maybe even two of us so we can guide him safely to the ground.”

“I’m on it,” I say. I begin striding toward the rear of the plane to begin assisting Frederik when another violent jolt of turbulence rocks the aircraft. I lose my relaxed grip on the safety railing, stumble a few feet forward like a drunk, and once more go tumbling down the uncluttered aisle.

There I go. Clean out the open hatch.



SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

PART II, Maria

Maria, you are always on my mind. These survival log notes are letters meant for your eyes. You have always encouraged me to be a writer, so here I go. I dream of you only. I know you are looking out for me.

August 16th, Day 1:

Dear Maria,

Yesterday I regained consciousness in a tree in a state of toxic panic, but your soft whisper breathed my name. Lucky me. Somehow, somehow, I was in a seated position on a large, bristly branch stabbing out from a thick tree trunk, staring through a tangle of ruffled leaves. The red ball of burning, daytime fire was situated far beyond a tall mountain peak, its rays of warmth barely enough to penetrate my freezing body and soul. I probed the grey skies hanging over top of me. An obvious path of man-made destruction draped above me in the forms of twisted and broken tree limbs. The white strings of my chute rig were tangled like Twizzler licorice and the canopy of my bright red, nylon chute was in tattered strands with jagged green leaves and branches stabbing through it.

I glanced at my sky-reflecting wristwatch, a great pawnshop buy of a once-rich-man's extravagant time piece—until he ultimately decided that it was time to buy another, more expensive piece, I suppose. It was either that or a good steal by a meth-head. One way or another, still a steal of a deal, but utterly worthless in my current predicament. The silver timepiece read 4:22. I'd been out cold and in the cradle of a half dead tree for almost two hours.

My throbbing head was still hungover, with an added touch of fatigue like I had suffered some kind of a beating in a forced boxing match. I ached, but pulled myself to a more comfortable position using one of the strings still attached

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

to my harness. Then that I realized that my whole lower body had gone numb from the hugging tension of my harness rig. I disengaged the clicking fasteners and my body dropped like a rock to the solid ground.

I landed hard, grunting as I hit the ground, feeling lucky to have only fallen a few feet. Well isn't that something lucky, if I knew any such luck. My face was lying in a heap of dead and damp leaves.

I pushed myself to my feet, looked around and tried to process my whereabouts. Nothing but the scraggly twists of sun-borne evergreen shadows surrounded me. I patted myself down and realized I had nothing on me but my uninsulated jumpsuit, with my \$6,000 parachute rig and harness still in the tree. Money wasn't an issue at the moment. I fished around my pockets some more, taking the time to feel around, until I found your picture, holding it for dear life in my numb, shaking fingers. A large bending crease was streaked across your beautiful face in the shape of a jagged lightning bolt. I ransacked some more and found my cellphone and my e-cigarette. Both were cracked. I tried the power button on the phone but it was as dead as the branches scattered all around me.

I felt defeated.

Fuzzy flashbacks of the preceding events streaked across my mind's eye. I scarcely recalled my choppy free fall, mere seconds after I had tumbled out of the open airplane hatch. My mind replayed the sounds of the deafening blasts of air as it ripped past my face and enshrouded my eardrums like a broken record player. The recollection of the plane's silvery fuselage, rapidly diminishing from my tumbling view and becoming just another speck amongst the dark clouds, suffused my thoughts like a bleary hallucination. I don't remember for the life of me how I recovered from my spinout and safely reached the ground by way of my open parachute.

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

Safely. Barely.

Then I remembered Frederik. A sudden sense of alarming shock overtook my senses. “Oh shit. The guys. Frederik,” I shouted to no-one in particular, well, or, maybe just to you, Maria. I have a wholesome feeling that the guys are faring just fine. Hopefully. Unlike myself. No, they have to be. They had Jordan at the controls; an ex-CF-18 fighter pilot (with experience in field dressing). The best in Canada by all means.

Feeling drained and sad, I gathered what was left of my primary shoot. I pulled the tattered strings from their tight grip winding around the unbroken tree branches. No way I was going to get out of this mess alive, only to leave behind a \$6,000 rig. It took me almost an hour just to piece together the nylon strings and canopy. Once I was finished stuffing my chute remains together, I shouldered it like a backpack and looked up at the empty skies of slow, shifting clouds.

Hearing nothing but the eternal whispering hush of the mountain breeze, the dreaded feeling of being fully alone ate at me. Only the faint chirps of far-off birds and the calls of the wild engaged my weary senses. I cupped around my eyes with my hands and carefully scanned the skies for a few minutes. There was absolutely no sign of any neon-coloured parachutes, or the drone of an airplane in search of me. Only ridge-lined mountain peaks and tree-covered mounds as far as my eyes could see.

I sighed again as my heart dropped into despair. But I have to stay strong and resilient for myself. Hope will get me through this. Hope ... and you.

I had to make a choice of taking a particular direction. And yet, I had no idea which route would eventually lead me to safety. If that. A literal life or death situation at its finest. It might be weeks of walking before I finally come across a logging or service road; my clothes nothing but rags, my body gaunt like the walking dead. If I even make it that far.

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

And still, even if I manage to survive that long with no food or water, it still could be an eternity of hiking absolutely nowhere into the expansive Rocky Mountain wilderness. Treading into an untouched world of oblivion with only my teenage air cadet training to rely on.

I loosened up my harness, closed my eyes and did a few spins. And then like a gambler, I played a game of absolute chance and chose to follow an animal path criss-crossing through a clearing. The lowest of the mountains surrounding me was my intended destination. Hope. Perhaps.

Falling asleep was almost impossible beneath the open, starry skies. I tossed and turned, trying to find the least bit of comfort. The gathering of pillowed leaves and solid ground for my bedding kept me in a lucid state of dreaming. My dream was that I was encircled by the swishing sounds of a swift river. Cool dampness from the soft grass tickled at my bare feet. I followed the waterway until it broke into a large Y intersection, where the river branch connected to smaller body of rapid, roiling water. Despair seeped in at the feeling of nothingness. But I decided, not-so willingly, to follow the more powerful of the streams with the setting sun parallel to the river's shifting horizon, its tint of rose gold rays leaping off the unsteady surface like a jagged mirror.

Twenty paces inward and I saw a form standing at the riverbank's edge. A woman. I knew it was you by your long flowing hair waving, like a flag in the wind, and the scent of vanilla. Like a kid seeing Santa, I cheerfully trotted over to you. "Hey Hey!"

You had your back turned to me and you were completely motionless except for the wind fluttering your hair. You was dressed in an all-white satin gown which was bizarrely unmoving in the breeze.

I told you I was lost. You twirled around and your long hair was like a flowing river. The sun beams shone upon

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

your face like divine spotlights. I was torn from my trance of fear. Your familiar face struck warmth in my cold-running blood. I said your name like I've said it so many times over. "Maria."

You smiled, making your delicate, rosy cheekbones reflect the sun's warmth. Then you said, in my dream, "You have to trust him." Your voice came out like an angelic rustle on the breeze.

But who? Who am I supposed to trust?

You didn't answer me. You turned to face the river.

I called your name again, Maria. I took another step toward you with outstretched arms. My hand caressed your soft arm.

Thinking back, I know this survival log is keeping me sane. I will write more tomorrow for you, or for someone to find if I don't make it out of here

August 17th, Day 2:

This day got very strange, dear Maria.

Although I still felt useless and drowsy today, I fought against the cold attacking my nerves. I am so tired. The bed of gathered leaves is not enough comfort for my two hundred pounds. I wondered where the hell to go. My stomach grumbled, I was and I am so hungry.

The sun was high when I set out, almost directly above, so it must have been about noon. It was almost impossible to tell which direction was which. My legs were wobbly. Surrounding were three clearly visible mountain peaks towering over green valleys. I took a gamble and headed in the direction of the lowest valley, thinking there might be a river at its base. I hoped studying the map had given me some memorable knowledge of rivers or lakes in the vicinity.

First, I stopped to examine a grouping of tightly arranged

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

trees. No dice. The full ring of bark was void of any moss, indicating the direction of north.

I kept moving.

Summer is still in full swing. Thirst and hunger has invaded me. I walked for hours on end, dreaming of flowing waterfalls and immaculately detailed water fountains. The abundance of wild grass surrounding me was knee high and damp, marinating my polyester pant legs in an immersion of wetness I wished I could slurp up.

In a shadowed area, I paused to catch my breath. From my side of the hill, a splendid view of a steep, evergreen-lined decline presented itself. The thorny canopy tops rippled downward until they crashed into an opposite incline and again sloped up in a surge of hazy green, straight out of an enchanted dream.

Shit. I would love this had I'd not been so damned lost, and you would love this nature too, Maria. But all I felt was a long streak of loneliness and desolation. On my journey today, I listened closely for the sounds of a river. The pungent air was graveyard silent though, except for the constant whisper of Mother Nature's essence breathing through the foliage. Not even the sounds of chirping birds were around to break the serene quietness.

I found an animal trail and opted to follow it in hopes of coming across any signs of life.

Anything.

I walked carefully, keeping my eyes on the path and behind me, hoping a predator animal wasn't following my scent. Above my head, the greying pillows of clouds shifted slowly around the misty horizon, blocking the direct view of the mountain's summit. When the blistering sun made momentarily peeks through the clouds, I tried my best to keep my polyester-covered body hidden in the tree shadows. It was much cooler in the shade of the towering trees.

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

As much as a ten-degree difference. A difference my dehydrated body couldn't afford to ignore.

As I walked on through the never-ending Canadian outback, a dull cramp of pain began to bite at my calves. I forced myself to keep going until the trail levelled out, then I stopped to take another breather. Tiredness eating my body, I took a longer break than I should have, nearly passing out from exhaustion.

It felt like I closed me eyes for only a few minutes. Nope. A few hours later and the sun was setting over the horizon. West. Good. I knew if I kept on following my route, I would eventually come across a mountain town like Radium—or maybe one of the hot-springs streams that pours into it. Eventually.

Hopefully.

I carried on but my hope was waning. I trekked for another hour or so—up and down, and up and down—before the animal trail abruptly ended and the assembly of trees cleared into a large meadow. Meadows sometimes meant water, so I kept pushing forward, straining myself, even through the severity of swampy terrain. But at least there was water. The large meadow was a flat of muddy wetland, but I was sure I should not drink the smelly water. I trudged on, keeping my thirsty gaze fixed to the potholes of muddy water, just wishing I could hop face first and lap up until my dried-out stomachs content.

But of course, I didn't. Couldn't.

I had no other choice but to reach the other side of the meadow, hoping I would still have enough energy to set up camp. Hoping I wasn't being eyed by a ferocious and hungry bear or a pack of wolves.

Near the closing of the wide-open expanse, there was an even worse smell. Probably decomposing animals in the bog. Then I heard a crashing in the woods and my heart

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

began to race. I saw the unmistakable silhouette of a tall man striding casually near the rocky base of the mountain.

I bellowed out to him, "Hey!"

He stopped. He heard me.

"Hey. Over here!" I screamed as loud as I could. My voice sailed through the open air and bounced off the sheer rocky precipice perched beneath his place of stride. I knew for a fact that he had heard me. And he did, indeed. The mystery man stood still, just staring. I felt like I should turn and run the other way. But then the man started waving at me with two huge, flailing arms.

My welcoming gesture. I was saved.

Ignoring my aching legs and lungs, I broke out in an all-out dash for the hills. I moved like a gazelle and kept my eyes shifting from the man to the rough, rock-strewn ground, and back to the looming man. The smell remained in the air. I kept up a steady stride, leaping over ankle-breaking rocks and foot-luring marmot holes.

"I'm coming to you," I yelled. My spirit was as high as the pitch of my ecstatic voice. I took another few wide-footed strides before I finally stopped at the base where the wet, jerky ground met the inclined rock face, decorated in patches of green moss and dirt mounds. I glanced up; eyes full of teary optimism.

He was gone.

My heart and soul dropped. As did my face.

All I could do then is cry out, "No, no, no. Come back. I'm just lost, I'm not going to hurt you." Like a crazed and desperate animal, I was. I scabbled up the hill, dodging treacherous stones and skeletal tree branches that seemed to claw at me, preventing me from reaching the stranger.

"Hey wait. Don't go, don't go," I screamed at the stranger over and over again, until the mixture of climbing and yelling made me stop dead and plop face down

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

into a heap of pillowy moss. That's when I passed out from exhaustion.

When I woke up, the sun was setting. Then I remembered the man. I knew he wasn't a dream or a hallucination. He couldn't have been. Perhaps I had just spooked him off. Isolated locals surely wouldn't like strangers in their territory of pure freedom. And I understood that I might have looked crazy in the way I was dashing toward him like a rabid dog eyeing a would-be meal.

I got to my feet and for a second time I began my climb up the incline of the mountain. I was hard at the heels of the setting sun. As I hiked up into the uphill nothingness, I began to contemplate my sanity. I thought to myself, "Could I have hallucinated the man?" It's been known to happen. Besides, I was certainly dehydrated, to say the least.

My mind kept busy wondering about my sanity until the incline finally levelled out into a small, oval plain, dotted with shrubs, and evergreens. Tired and worn out, I decided to sleep under a large tree with a low-hung canopy for me to crawl under. Maria, tonight I was too drained of life to even build a comfortable camp.

August 18th, Day 3:

Dear Maria, Success, I'm alive to tell you about another day. I awoke today still feeling groggy. My body felt cold and achy but at least there was no fever, only aches and pains from the constant tossing, turning, and shivering. And hunger and thirst. Oh, the hunger and thirst. I hadn't felt that kind of hunger since my days as a kid growing up with a single mother of four.

I got up and carried on moving, still dragging my defunct chute rig. I chose to keep mounting the hill because a feeling kept nagging at me that there was hope resting somewhere

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

beyond the scraggly horizon. Maybe a 360-degree view of the surroundings. Of a town or village—or even a lake full of fresh, thirst-quenching water. Or the unusual stranger I saw yesterday.

At last, after hopeful hours of wearisome climbing, I reached a gentle incline and busied my conscience with deep thoughts of what to do next. Then my eyes caught a glimmer in the low-lying distance. It was like the fluctuating reflection given off when light hits water.

I raced for the glimmering speck, once again ignoring my stomach pains, wheezing lungs, and burning leg muscles. Within a few feet of the reflection, my weary mind was in a state of frenzy. The glimmer was a one-litre bottle of spring water. I snatched up the bottle, tore open the cap and slammed back until there was nothing left but a two-drop sprinkle.

I brought the empty water bottle to my shocked face and examined the clear container. Dasani spring water. Gris's favourite—if he had a choice for a favourite water.

I blurted out, “Gris, you sly son of a bitch of a bulldogger,” I looked around the surrounding area in search of more water bottles, keeping my twitching eyes bonded to the grassy ground and outlying treetops. After minutes of hopelessly searching, I was ready to give up in anguish. I looked up toward the skies, ready to scream at the heavens in distress.

And there it was. The bright, neon-yellow bag was wedged tightly between the thorny branch arms and tree trunk, a large tear slashed through its side. One of our emergency packs. The guys had managed to toss the bag of supplies out of the open hatch not long after they noticed me gone.

I calmed myself, eyed the sky once more, and gave them thanks, “Thanks, you guys,” I said right out loud to the cloudless azure.

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

I wasted no time and scaled the tree. Maria, remember me telling you how I'd spent many a summer climbing trees when I was young. Whenever I saw trees, I was immediately putting my climbing skills to the test. After what seemed like an hour of careful climbing, the bag was safely in my grasp. I attached it to my harness rings and descended the tree, grabbing onto the thickest of the branches. The climb down was rougher than the climb up.

Finally on the ground, I zipped open the pack and inspected the contents. To my complete satisfaction, the pack was crammed full of the good stuff: four bottles of Dasani water, space blanket, plastic tarp, waterproof matches, candles, tin bowl and cup, water purification tablets, durable LED flashlight, extra batteries, sunscreen, sun goggles, gloves, folding knife, first aid kit, and best of all, four MREs. Yes. One of our emergency kits.

But there was no compass and no map. Damn. Oh well. In that dire situation a beggar couldn't also be a chooser.

Then I came across the final items, which made me smile: Gris's pinup-decorated Zippo lighter and a tin of tobacco chew.

With a new state of cheerfulness brewing in my mind, I immediately got busy, setting up a camp for the evening on the oval hill crest overlooking an immaculate spectacle of oceanic shades of green. The small plastic tarp worked magic in its use as a temporary tent. I gathered up armfuls of wood and kindling did just fine for a small campfire. Sitting happy with my small inferno of mortal warmth, I tucked into one of the MRE's; slowly, so as not to make myself sick. Even after my small meal, I was still hungry, but I still chose to ration the remaining three, knowing I may be stranded for the long run.

I fell asleep for a good long while by the small red glow of the crackling fire coals, my stomach no longer growling. I

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

dreamed I was back at the Y intersection of the swift moving river, but, Maria, you were not there this time.

“Maria?” I called out for you but you did not answer my call. There was only the melodious hissing of the river rapids at my feet. I turned and started moving away from the river, when I heard a strange noise. I whirled around to face the river’s edge again. Still nothing. Cautiously I moved away from the swishing water and joined a trail that extended far through the shadows, snaking its way through a curved clearing beneath the impenetrable awning of trees.

The sound came again. It sounded like an owl’s screech, only larger and deeper, sending chills running down my spine. It was as though the bird was the size of my own physique—perhaps bigger. I turned again and saw it clearly. The large silhouette of the man was standing on the opposite shoreline, waving its arms as if to be saying: come over here.

Ignoring any sense of caution, I stepped to the rocky shoreline and carefully placed one foot in the water, followed by the other. The smooth rocks were cold and slippery. I paused to have a look at the man. He was still there, waving at me. Waving me over!

I called to him, “Hold on, please wait up for me this time.” I nearly lost my balance on the slick rocks. I resumed my upstream battle, taking another step against the raging current when I felt the oily-like substance scrape against my numbing foot. I immediately lost my balance on the slippery rock resting beneath the water.

Face first, I went crashing down to the icy water, hands out. My vision was obscured by the rush of the cool, biting froth, falling and rising, and plunging and climbing through my distorted field of vision. The sheer coldness compressed my chest like the pressurized deep of a bottomless ocean. My ears were filled with the rumbling ambiance of the rushing water as it sliced past my face. I began to feel myself

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

drowning in the murky iciness, my slashing limbs giving up their fight to get me to the surface.

A crash, loud and deafening, forced me to a sitting position before I was even fully awake. I pushed my lungs to try and breathe through a fit of coughs. My hands flailed wildly about, causing my makeshift tent to crumble on top of me, soaking me wet from the downpour of the freezing midnight rain.

Waking sleep is what I once read in an old high school textbook. It's a state in which the sleeper can hear and even respond to questions. In this case, the question was the roar of thunder which tore me from my sleep. I answered it. I rolled over onto my stomach in an effort to shield my face from the freezing torrent.

In a state of lingering misery, squirming my body to hide from the icy moisture attacking my body, I waited for the storm to pass. Rolling onto my back, I scanned the blackness of twinkling of stars, their glow broken in segments by the sprouting evergreen pine needles above my head. I wasn't beaten. Not yet.

In a desperate move full of aggravation, I folded the crackly space blanket tightly around my sopping body and shivered myself back to sleep. I wish you were really here with me, but your memory keeps me going.

August 19th, Day 4:

Dear Maria, I was parted from my diary for a few days, but I will remember as best as I can.

On Day 4, I was welcomed back into the world of magnificent sunbeams warming my face. My body was damp but not soaked; the benefits of polyester clothing.

Envisioning myself in the comforts of my bed, I lay back and stared up at the cloudless ether, thinking about what I

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

was going to do next. At least I had some provisions. And hopefully they were enough to keep me alive and going. But for how long?

Before I could get too comfy in my newly acquired bedding, I was up and nourished from my second helping of a spaghetti-flavoured MRE.

I walked to the middle of the oval clearing and took in the sights before me. Spread out on the opposite mountain's edge, lustrous shades of green spread downward and ended off in a steep precipice. Further beyond that, a heavy cluster of clouds hovered over a smaller mountain peak, with gloomy shades of green twisting around the hilly horizon.

For some reason, joy filled me entirely. The looks of the hills extending down the distance seemed promising. The kinds of promises that spelled out civilization.

I was packed and ready to move out within minutes.

Within a few hundred metres into my trek, the excursion was daunting—even though I was travelling downhill. Dead pine needles and loose dirt riddled the sharp pitch of the downhill climb, which made me stumble. I managed to scrape my exposed arms on the thorn-like tree branches reaching for me like emaciated fingers.

In the shadows, my spirit began to dwindle. I kept up my feeling of chirpiness by fantasizing about hot showers, a fat steak and egg meal, and a warm bed. With you.

The entire day was spent trudging downhill, as I tried not to lose my footing and tumble the whole way down, killing myself in the process. You don't realize how hard it is travelling downhill through dense bush until you've spent an entire day balancing yourself with your aching calf muscles.

At least I knew I was still heading west, when the sun began to conceal itself beyond the western horizon of a black, thorny ridgeline. Without a compass I was only able to depend on the sun.

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

I kept my mind busy by pondering over my thoughts and ambitions. Ambitions like me taking the time to study the stars, much like my ancient forefathers. At last, I reached another gentle incline, and trekked upwards. But the endless hike got the best of me. So, I forced myself to set up camp even though it had grown dark. I whistled a tune as I made my encampment on a small flat of open ground and cracked open the third MRE. Steak and rice flavoured.

Feeling somewhat full, I dozed off into sleep. This time my sleep was dreamless and peaceful, until it turned for the worst, as I was torn awake by a bad smell and the sounds of my makeshift tent being violently shaken, sounding like a large sail flapping in a squall. Adrenaline at full tilt, my heart felt like it was beating in the centre of my throat. In a desperate hurry I wriggled out from under the tent, grabbed the trusty flashlight and flicked it on. Curiosity getting the best of me, I skirted around the tent perimeter and scanned the darkness enshrouding me. The LED light beam lit up anywhere it touched with the brilliance of a white sun.

Could I have been imagining it again? Much like the man I thought I had seen? I was dehydrated and delirious before. Now I was not. I skulked back to the tent to investigate the outer shell. There was no wind, so therefore, it would have been impossible for it to flutter like a rogue flag. I sprayed the bright beam over the slanted sides and came across what looked to be a large mud-smeared, humanoid handprint. My blood ran icy. My heart jumped back up my throat.

And then I heard it. A deep, guttural growl from behind me. I pivoted around as fast as my throbbing calves would turn my body and flashed the beam like I was carving through the air with a sharp sword.

I counted six sets of closely spaced eyes. They reflected the bright LED beam, giving them the appearance of twelve lone stars in the dead, blackness of space. My fear sent me

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

sprinting in the opposite direction of the perilous sets of eyes. Over my heavy breathing, I could clearly hear the wolves' ground-thrashing footsteps and growls gaining on me. I kept moving, keeping the flashlight beam shining ahead on the path.

I had no choice but to slow my pace as the grassy ground before me curled downward like a closing fist. A cliff's edge. And before I even had a chance to fully stop and think.

I was airborne.

The splash clouting my ears was all I heard before my face was shrouded in freezing murkiness. I saw the flashlight beam tumble like an out-of-control car as it careened from my grasping fingers and got lost in the depths.

This time it was not a dream.

I kicked wildly until my legs gave up and stabbing pains jolted through my lower body. I was left pitching and tossing like a weightless puppet through the airless murk of black. I held my breath and closed my eyes.

Through sheer luck, my partially numbed bare foot touched the grainy bottom. I pushed up with what strength I had left, taking a crucial gasp of air before my head was sucked back beneath the raging current, which tossed me in all directions. I repeated the action three or four times until my knees eventually scraped a rocky undersurface with my head still above the water's bustling shallow.

I crawled out of the freezing water and, like a broken man, collapsed onto the gritty shore. I rested, shivering and coughing until my breathing normalized. My inner voice told me, "Get the hell up."

The full moon glided from its cover of black clouds, drowning the surrounding area in a cold white light, similar to my bright LED flashlight—now lost forever in the raging black river. A treeless, sandy beach spread out, the moonlit sand extending to the water. The sloshing, white-light-glistening

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

river was bent like an elbow. Just beyond the raging water, a steep rocky cliff soared upward, looking like the devil's mural of a thousand deformed faces, with its jagged features, snapping at me. Trying to take me in.

“Holy mother—”

My words of surprise were abruptly cut off by the siren-like whines of the wolves chanting and wailing their songs of failure. Failure at having lost their chance at a late-night snack. I tried my best to ignore the wails which pierced my waterlogged ears.

“At least I found water,” I said to myself.

Hope was restored once again.

August 20th, Day 5:

Dear Maria, Between day 4 and 5 I stayed awake all night like a sentry on duty, contemplating my imminent death. Death, which was just a hidden monster, ready to jump at me when the right moment arrived.

At last, the rising sun made itself visible on the eastern horizon, the warming rays battling to cut across the mountain and evergreen tops. But I waited, fighting my shivers, until there was sufficient sunlight and I was dry enough to be comfortable. My mission was to get back to my gear. I backpedaled the sand and rock-riddled shoreline until I was able to find a shallow spot in the river where it met the lowest elevation of the cliff. Lucky for me, I had taken those rock-climbing classes, remember that, Maria? I was ready to use those barely recollected skills. As cold and miserable as I was, it was also the morale-upping thought of another MRE which was enough to make my body spurt some energy out of nowhere.

The placebo effect. I was in full energetic mode.

I scaled the cliff in no time and was back at the top, edging along the overhang until I reached the spot where I

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

had stepped off, right into the raging river below. I skulked, hunched over and slowly craned my head to take a peek over the grassy verge. There were no signs of the peckish wolves in wait, ready to devour me. I took a look behind my shoulder. Distant ridgelines crisscrossed each other, giving the outline the appearance of a sideways view of a glass-encased ant farm. I looked down. From the top of the grassy cliff edge, I wondered how I managed to not get seriously hurt after taking such a fall.

I recalled my cadet survival instructor saying that falling into raging water is safer than falling into calm waters. Who knows if that is really true, but it was what I heard in my mind as I scurried up the incline and back to my campsite.

Canine footprints were evident in the soft, damp ground surrounding the camp. But something else also caught my eye. It looked as though the wolves had been involved in some sort of melee with another animal. A much larger animal. The abnormal set of strange footprints sent another jolt of shivers through me. It looked like a bulky bear's paw with lengthier fingers—and no visible claws.

I shuddered at my mind's depiction of such a larger, more prehistoric creature, and myself just barely missing meeting it head on. My body might have been the tug-of-war rope between the skirmishing beasts.

I had to leave, and fast.

First, I examined my belongings. Miraculously, my remaining MRE was untouched by the hungry visitors in the night. This notebook was right where I'd left it. I realize, Maria, that if I am going to make it out of here I need to keep my mind on my escape, and I must be vigilant of the strange man and the wolves. Please know you have helped my body and soul survive, and I love you.

••••

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

PART III

Survival in the Present

I waste no time gathering my gear and wrapping up my tent. Like a fully equipped soldier, I hike back to the cliff's edge and scale back down. By the time I reach the bottom, my heart is on fire and my body is drowned in sweat.

Once at the bottom, I fill my empty bottles with the clear river water and drop in the purification tablets, just in case. I work on another steak and rice MRE, gathering my thoughts of how to go about the next leg of my journey. I choose to follow the raging current of the river, keeping my senses acutely attuned to my surroundings. Wolves are cunning, and they will stop at almost nothing to get their anticipated meals. This I knew.

The large foaming river twists and snakes through the bush. At some intervals, I am forced to distance myself from the river's edge, because the ground becomes too soft and deep with mud.

The setting sun is falling directly ahead of my path when I see two specks of glimmers spread out on the flat horizon. I keep my pace going until the river splits into the shape of a Y.

I already know this Y intersection. It is where Maria was standing in my dreams, looking beautiful and unmoving in her motionless white gown, saying, "You need to trust him." Thinking back at that, I wonder who she means I need to trust. My radar will be up. I choose to take the branch of the river with a more powerful current. Just like in my dream of Maria.

I seem to be walking more and more into the world of nowhere. *Deja vu* strikes me hard while I peer up at the crimson sun aligned with the river sequence, its transcendent shafts of light piercing the water surface in a crisscross of golden rays.

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

An eerie and overwhelming feeling seizes me, and I am forced to stop. I shoot a sideways glance over my right shoulder.

There he is again.

He is closer than ever. The stranger stands tall, on the opposite shore, waving at me with both arms like a madman jumping out in front of a moving vehicle. And there is that rotten smell again.

I turn my head away, biting my tongue, and gaze down at the thick undergrowth of rippling knee-high grasses gliding past my unseen feet. I mutter, "You're losing it, man. You're absolutely fucking losing it." First the man at the meadow, then the shaking of the tent . . . now this? I am going nuts.

I keep my head trained to the ground and walk a few paces until curiosity gets the better of me. Taking my sweet time I look back at the gleaming river surface.

The man is still there, seeming to have walked in step with me along his side of the riverbank. He is no longer waving, but is now unmoving with broad shoulders and tree trunk arms resting at his sides. I feel his shadow-concealed eyes staring hard at me. The realness of him feels genuine. I know that I am not dreaming or seeing a mirage.

"What the hell do you want?" I ask him. My loud voice sails across the rushing river surface.

Still, he doesn't move, only stares at me.

"Fine," I scream. I tightened up my shoulder straps and storm into the raging river. It is not as cold as I thought it would be. I just take another step when I feel and hear the rumble of footfalls coming from behind me. I turn, almost losing my balance, my keen eyes catching the swaying movement of the bush tops lining the river's edge. And just like that, like a parade—a deadly parade—the pack of wolves jumps out of the bushes in unison, the biggest of the pack lunging and stopping just before the water. The large

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

snapping teeth and snout just miss my outstretched hand, both my arms spread out for balance, as I stop and stand motionless. Fear has gotten the best of me.

Then I face the man on the opposite shore, looking for an answer to yet another disastrous situation. Maybe it was how abruptly I turn my head but I lose my balance, my feet slip on the slick, rocky riverbed, and my low back slams into a concealed rock. My vision turns black, then a hundred tones of white and grey as my head submerges below the water's surface.

All I can think of at that moment is the unidentified man. To hell with the wolves. To hell with the sudden onslaught of another dip in a raging river. I use my hands and elbows to push my face to the surface, twist my body so that I am belly down in the water. There he is. Still there in my wobbly, water-withered vision. Standing tall, the man remains unmoving. I feel my short-lived sense of reassurance sweep away as I am carried down the river, the man once again just another speck disappearing into boundless wilderness.

Have I finally given up? Accepted the fact that I am meant to die alone out here in the Canadian wilderness? I turn to lie on my back, sipping small breaths as my body and head dip below the surface. Bad turns to worse as I feel the rubbing rocks withdraw from the balls of my feet, the water turning deeper and colder. Even the banks seemed to be retreating from my teary field of view.

But no, I am not going to give up. I duck under the water again, to try and push off a bedrock with my flailing legs. But the water is too deep. I panic, the river now trying in vain to make me whole with it, dragging me under with its magnificent undertow.

I scream, accidentally taking in a mouthful which stings my lungs. Too late. I am surely dead. My body goes limp, my thrashing arms go still.

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Botched Landing

But what is this?

My head strikes something floating on the river's wild surface. My elbow bends and stays put on what feels like rough wood bark, giving me enough of a boost in morale to regain some strength and pull my head out from the water. First my head, then my other arm, plunging from the cold and wrapping around the log. Yes, it is a log. A thick log with the circumference of a garbage can that had saved me.

I try to pull myself up so that I can sit safely aboard the thick cut of tree trunk. It is futile. But at least I am safe from the icy depths of this unknown river, half my body out of the water. I watch, holding tight, as the river carries me down its treacherous rapids. I would surely have drowned by that point had the log not appeared from out of nowhere.

Or did it? In either case.

Sleep comes fast, like the breakers I was riding down. In no time I fall into a tumbling world of slumber.

••••

My eyes open. Rushing water is at my back. I am holding onto my pack for dear life with the remnants of my shoot, my soaking wet notebook, and probably still that pesky tin of chewing tobacco. Then I remembered the log that had appeared from nowhere to save my life. It was now long gone. But it isn't the thought of a log that snaps my eyes fully open. No, it is a different sound. A sound that makes my senses jump in pure and utter joy.

Traffic. The not-too-distant hum of passing motorists.

I am instilled with energy that comes from the heavens. I push myself to my feet and run. I don't care how dark it is, but I run. Run until my feet touch the road pavement. I follow the road until I come across a sliver of light in the distance. Streetlamp glow. But I have no more energy to run. I

SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Whistle At Night and They Will Come

slog my way up the slight incline until I finally meet with the first piece of man-made construction I have seen in five long days.

The sign is lit up by an overhead lamp. My mouth drops at what it is painted in black on the yellow sign. Its arms are as thick as legs, the same brawny outline I have seen three times in the past five days. It is the stranger.

The sign reads, just below the black silhouette of a large, ape like man. The man I had encountered. Barely.

“Sasquatch X-ing.”

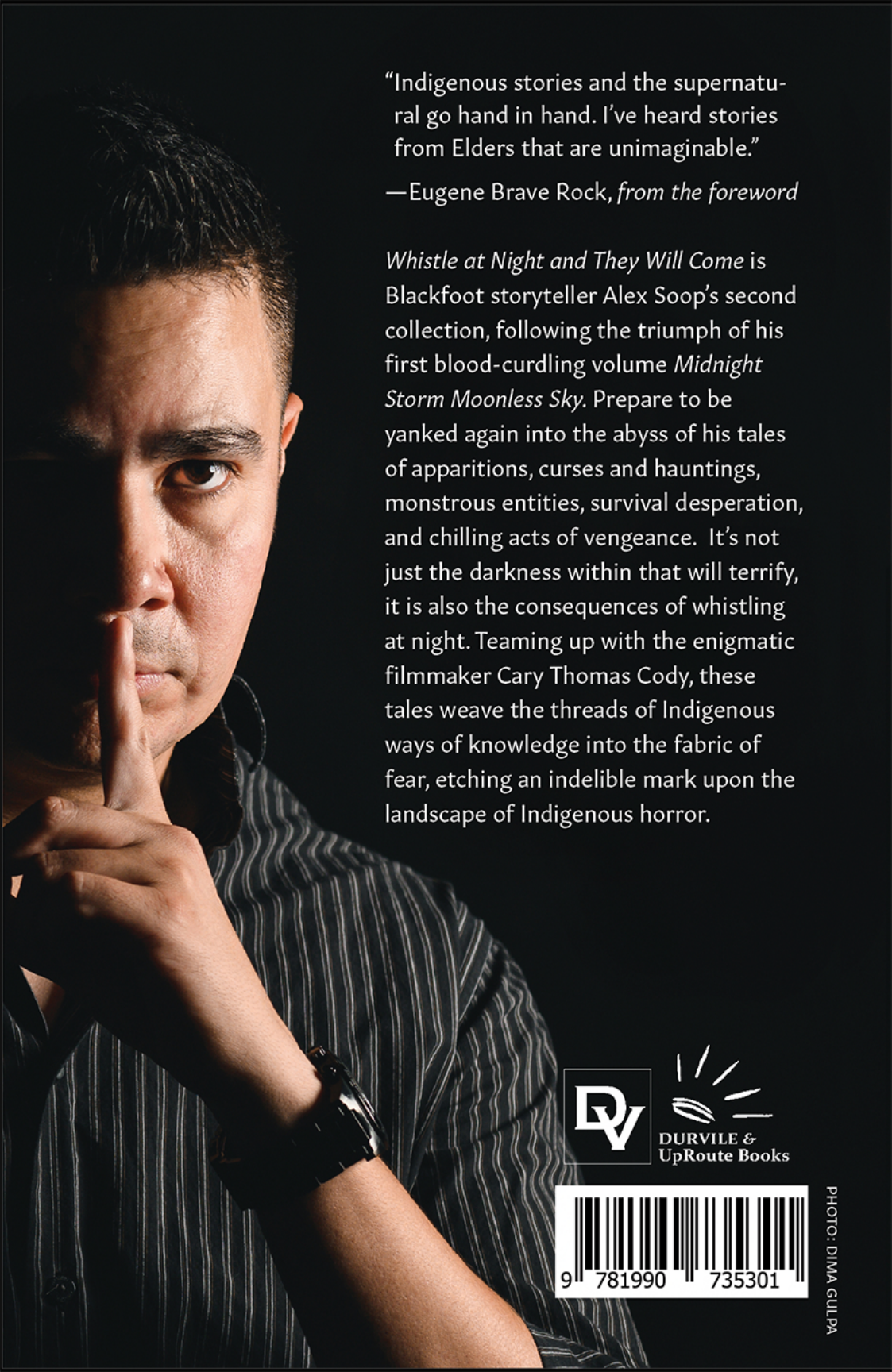
SAMPLE CHAPTERS



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ALEX SOOP

Alex Soop of the Niisitapi Blackfoot Confederacy authentically voices his stories from First Nations Peoples' perspective. While striving to entertain with his bloodcurdling tales, Alex also integrates issues that plague Indigenous Peoples of North America. These specific issues include alcohol abuse, systemic racism, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and residential school after-effects. He also incorporates stories from Indigenous traditional knowledge, such as folklore, ghostly spirits, and the afterlife. Alex's urban home is Calgary and his ancestral home is the Kainai (Blood) Nation of southern Alberta, Canada.



“Indigenous stories and the supernatural go hand in hand. I’ve heard stories from Elders that are unimaginable.”

—Eugene Brave Rock, *from the foreword*

Whistle at Night and They Will Come is Blackfoot storyteller Alex Soop’s second collection, following the triumph of his first blood-curdling volume *Midnight Storm Moonless Sky*. Prepare to be yanked again into the abyss of his tales of apparitions, curses and hauntings, monstrous entities, survival desperation, and chilling acts of vengeance. It’s not just the darkness within that will terrify, it is also the consequences of whistling at night. Teaming up with the enigmatic filmmaker Cary Thomas Cody, these tales weave the threads of Indigenous ways of knowledge into the fabric of fear, etching an indelible mark upon the landscape of Indigenous horror.



DURVILLE &
UpRoute Books

