

The Cold Dish Study Guide

The Cold Dish by Craig Johnson

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Plot Summary

A Cold Dish is a mystery in which Sheriff Walter Longmire must investigate two possible revenge murders. Two of four boys guilty of raping a young girl are murdered. The sheriff must figure out which one of the many suspects wanted them dead. The motive is obviously revenge since the boys had gotten off lightly for the crime they committed. Longmire needs to put his own feelings aside and bring the killer to justice.

A young man named Cody Pritchard is found shot to death in a sheep field. Sheriff Walt Longmire and his deputy, Victoria Moretti, investigate the suspicious death. Sheriff Longmire hopes it is a hunting accident, but evidence soon points to murder. The motive for the crime is easily arrived at since Cody was one of four young men who were accused of raping a young Cheyenne girl named Melissa Little Bird. The sexual assault was particularly heinous due to the fact that Melissa has fetal alcohol syndrome and the boys used objects such as bottles and bats during the assault. The boys got off lightly and served very little time for what they had done.

Since the murder is obviously a case of revenge, Longmire has to protect the other three boys who were involved in Melissa's rape. Bryan Keller, who watched the other boys but did not participate or stop them, is kept safe at the sheriff's office until the killer is caught. Jacob Esper, however, is shot and killed while preparing to go on a fishing trip. His twin brother George, who does not know of Jacob's fate but fears for his life due to Cody's murder, is continually running away from Sheriff Longmire. Henry Standing Bear, Longmire's best friend, is shot when George fears that Henry has come to kill him. George is shot when Longmire tackles him. The sheriff then has to carry an unconscious George down the mountain in a blizzard to his car. Next, he finds his way back up to where Henry is slowly bleeding to death and carries him down to safety as well. George escapes, but Longmire and Henry are rescued by the sheriff's deputies. Longmire continues to look for and lose George several times. The last time is on the Cheyenne reservation where George is seeking sanctuary from the killer. Unfortunately, just as Henry and Longmire catch up with George, so does the killer. George is shot in the arm, but he lives. Longmire is able to wound the murderer, but they get away.

The list of suspects for the murders of Cody Pritchard and Jacob Esper is a long one. Not only were the Cheyenne angry with the outcome of the trial and the punishment received by the four boys, but a number of townspeople were as well. The sheriff even has to consider the possibility that his best friend Henry could be the one responsible for the death of the boys. Henry is Melissa's cousin, although he is referred to as her uncle. He is well known for his shooting ability. Longmire has doubts about Henry every now and again, but deep down he knows that his friend would never have committed the murders. It is only when Longmire and Henry are facing off against the murderer for George's life that they both realize who the killer is. Once George is safely on his way to the hospital with Henry, Deputy Moretti and Longmire go after the wounded killer.

Longmire goes to the house of Vonnie Hayes. He has known her since they were children. He had a crush on her as a teenager and he had just begun to see her



romantically. They had even had a first date when she made him dinner at her house. He enters her house and finds her still clutching the rifle she used to shoot Cody, Jacob and George. Vonnie is wounded and losing a great deal of blood. Longmire tries to convince her to let him get her some help, but she does not want it. She tells him that she killed the boys as revenge for what they had done to Melissa. Vonnie was also a victim of sexual assault, but at the hands of her own father. He began assaulting her when she was a small child. He eventually killed himself with the very gun she used to shoot the three boys when his wife was going to tell the world what he had done. Just as her father did, Vonnie ends up shooting herself. Longmire is powerless to prevent her from suicide.



Chapters 1 - 3

Summary

In Chapter 1, the Absaroka County sheriff's office receives a call from Bob Barnes saying that he had found a dead body on the Bureau of Land Management land. Bob Barnes and his son, Billy, are not the most reliable witnesses since they are not sober a lot, so Sheriff Walter Longmire does not look forward to driving the long distance thinking all he will find is a dead sheep. Instead he takes his deputy, Victoria Moretti, off of traffic duty and sends her instead. As Longmire drives to find Vic and give her the new assignment, he remembers when he first met her. She was a career police officer who came from a family of police officers in Philadelphia. Her husband, however, was an field engineer for Consolidated Coal and was transferred to Wyoming. Two weeks after she arrived Vic came into the sheriff's office to apply for a job. She had been on the fast track back in Philadelphia and would have made detective. Longmire convinced her to take the deputy's job and is grooming her to take over his job when he retires. Since her husband is not coming home until late, Vic grudgingly agrees to go check out the dead body.

Sheriff Longmire drives home to his partially finished house. He and his wife moved out of town. But, before they could finish the house, his wife Martha, died. So, Longmire has been living there by himself for four years with the intention of finishing it. Relaxing in his chair, Longmire thinks back to the report he had been looking at when the call from Bob Barnes came in. The crime happened three years before. Melissa Little Bird is a young Northern Cheyenne girl who has fetal alcohol syndrome. She was taken to a basement by four teenage boys and raped. The boys were Cody Pritchard, Jacob and George Esper, fraternal twins, and Bryan Keller. Melissa's teacher had noticed bruising on the girl's face and arms. When questioned she refused to say what had happened since she had promised not to tell. Sheriff Longmire came to talk to Melissa. He is friends with her uncle, Henry Standing Bear. Longmire gets Melissa to open up to him a little.

When Longmire runs out of beer, he decides to drive the short distance to the Red Pony, his friend Henry Standing Bear's bar, . The two men have known each other since grade school. They had served in Vietnam in some capacity. Henry was in the Special Forces where he discovered his ability to kill. When he returned from the war Henry tried college and participated in Native American political movements, but eventually came back to Absaroka County where he opened the Red Pony. Longmire is annoyed to learn that his daughter, Cady, has recently called Henry, but has not contacted her own father. He fears what the two may be planning for him. Henry is trying to replace a burnt out fuse, but does not have a new one. The two men give up on this endeavor and join the rest of the people gathered at the bar. One of the people in the bar is Vonnie Hayes. Her grandfather had owned thirty thousand acres of land. Her father killed himself when she was young and Vonnie had been sent to boarding school. She has become an accomplished sculptress over the years and only returned to Wyoming to care for her elderly mother. Cady had tried to fix Vonnie and her father up, but nothing



had come of it. While he is talking to Vonnie, the phone rings and it is Vic. She tells him that there is a dead body and it is that of a young male who has been shot to death. She identifies him as Cody Pritchard.

In Chapter 2, Sheriff Longmire has been at the crime scene for nine hours. Cody's body was found in the middle of a field where sheep were grazing. He has a large gunshot wound in his chest and is laying face down on the ground. The director of the Division of Criminal Investigation's lab unit, T.J. Sherwin points out to Longmire that Cody Pritchard was one of the boys who raped Melissa Little Bird, therefore making murder a very good possibility. Longmire hopes that it is merely a hunting accident and not murder. Longmire watches as an eagle feather is put into a plastic envelope at the crime scene. He sends Vic to Cheyenne with the Criminal Investigations team. Vic encourages him to call Omar. Due to the fact that the sheep had been grazing in the area for the length of time the body had been there, any useful evidence was not easy to find.

Longmire drives to the Pritchard's house to inform them of Cody's death. He learns that Cody had left the house twenty seven hours before. When the sheriff reaches home he gets a call reminding him that it is Pancake Day. Although he has not slept in twenty four hours he agrees to go since he plans to help Vic become the next sheriff when he retires and Pancake Day is an important day for getting votes. Walt drives into Durant and joins a small group of town authorities and business owners as they wait for their pancakes. The topic of the dead boy was raised by one of them. Walt tells them it was a hunting accident. No one believes that it was merely an accident and none of them feel any remorse for his death. It is believed that the likely suspects would be numerous due to his involvement in the rape of Melissa Little Bird. While at Pancake Day, Longmire receives a phone call. Vonnie Hayes is in the kitchen cooking pancakes when he takes the call. It is Vic reporting from Cheyenne. So far they have not been able to determine the type of gun used on Cody Pritchard. She can tell him that Cody's last meal was a cheeseburger with jalapeno peppers. Walt promises to talk to Dorothy at the Busy Bee about the meal. After his phone call, Walt takes some time to talk to Vonnie. She says that maybe they should have lunch sometime.

After Pancake Day, Longmire drives to the sheriff's office. He finds his deputy, Turk, already there. When he enters Turk comes out of Longmire's office. Longmire does not like Turk and only has him as a deputy because he is Lucian Connally's, the former sheriff, nephew. Lucien does not like Turk either. Turk has the dream of being the next sheriff and explains that he was just checking out the office since it might be his someday. Longmire sends Turk over to the Busy Bee to ask when Dorothy Caldwell last saw Cody. Longmire goes to check out some hunters staying at the Log Cabin Motel. The sheriff talks to one of the hunters. All of them are suffering from hangovers from celebrating the night before. He finds out that they are bow hunters and do not have any rifles. They did not see anything connected with the death of Cody Pritchard. They did, however, have a similar meal to Cody's at the Red Pony, which is owned by Henry Standing Bear.

In Chapter 3, Longmire awakens after fourteen hours of sleep to find Henry Standing Bear in his kitchen cooking. It was one of their traditions to watch football together when



the Broncos and Chiefs played one another. Longmire's house is such a mess of boxes and unfinished work that Henry has a difficult time preparing food. Henry reminds Walt that his wife, Martha, has been dead for four years and it is time that he cleaned up his life and started living better. He also informs his friend that he has a plan to get his life back on track. Walt likes the part about finding him a woman, but is wary of the remaining ones. The first part of the plan is to work on fixing up Longmire's house and Henry knows two young men who can do the work. The second part is to get him into shape. Henry tells Walt that in order to get a woman he will have to work on parts one and two.

Longmire brings up the subject of Cody Pritchard having his last meal at the Red Pony. Henry tells him that Cody came into the Red Pony drunk and he refused to serve him alcohol. Instead he gave him a Mexican cheeseburger deluxe with fries and a Coke. Twenty five minutes later Cody had an argument with Charlie Small Horse and Pritchard was asked to leave and escorted to the door. He drove away in his truck. Henry tells Walt that he did not like Cody, but he did not know anyone who did. The list of suspects for the murder would be a numerous one. Longmire tells him that there is not a lot of evidence about what type of gun was used to shoot Cody, but the person could be someone Cody knew thus allowing them to get close enough to shoot him with tremendous impact. Henry has invited Vonnie Hayes to watch the game with them as an incentive for Walt to fix his life. The three have an enjoyable evening, and Walt drives Vonnie home when she has had too much to drink. He leaves her on her couch covered with his coat.

Analysis

Walt Longmire is feeling apathetic. He is obsessing about a case from three years ago as he sits in an unfinished house by himself four years after his wife has died. He is stuck in the past and unable to motivate himself to fix the things that are wrong in his life. His daughter wants to help, but she can only do so much.

The death of Cody Pritchard is not mourned by the town. He was not liked. The connection with the Little Bird rape case that Walt is obsessed with does not help Walt's general mood of apathy. Longmire wants Cody's death to be an accident because he does not want to have to look into a connection between the rape case and the murder. His best friend is the girl's cousin.

Walt does not like the political side of his job. He goes to the Pancake Day because he needs the people's support if he wants Vic as his replacement. The alternative is Turk Connally and Walt cannot stand the idea of him being sheriff. He believes it would be detrimental to the sheriff's office and the county if Turk became sheriff.

Henry and Walt are good friends. Henry wants to help his friend get his life in order and actually live. This entails Walt getting someone to finish his house and exercising. Once he does these, he can concentrate on finding a woman with which to share his new and improved life.



Discussion Question 1

Why does Sheriff Walt Longmire send his deputy on the call of the suspected dead body? Why does he not find the telephone call reliable?

Discussion Question 2

What is the relationship between Longmire and Henry Standing Bear? Do they seem like friends or foes? Why?

Discussion Question 3

Why are Longmire's friends worried about him? Why do they feel he needs help with his life?

Vocabulary

dissemblance, unbridled, unadulterated, accentuate, beveled, peripheral, seminal, refute, patina, familial, avuncular, conceptual, lupine, cocksure, spurge, pertinent, resonated, derisive, consensus, allusion, armament, apolitical, tenacious, constituted, strata, sallying, inclination, aforementioned, altercation, proficiency, apportion, decedent, impeding, absolution, accoutrements, dissuade, absconded, sensibilities, clandestine, exquisite, enticement



Chapters 4 - 6

Summary

In Chapter 4, Henry makes Walt go running. He asks about Walt's evening with Vonnie. He just tells him that he drove her home. Walt pushes Henry down and runs to beat him back to the house. Henry overtakes him and pushes him into a ditch. When Walt makes it home, Henry is there with the men from Red Road Contracting. They discuss putting a porch on his home and the cost. He then leaves them to it and goes to shower to get ready for work. Walt talks to one of the builders, Charlie Small Horse, about his altercation with Cody Pritchard in the Red Pony. He tells the sheriff that Pritchard did not like Indians and said stuff and he said stuff back.

When Walt gets to the office, he has five Post-its stuck to his door. Vic has been there and left them for him. She has written on the Post-Its what he needs to do that day. He has an envelope from the FBI on his desk. It contains a report saying that the foreign chemical compound found on the ballistics sample is Lubricant SPG or Lyman's Black Powder Gold. It means a black-powder shotgun was used to kill Cody Pritchard. Walt is confused why since an antique gun could explode in the person's face. Everyone in the county owns an antique shotgun. Walt even owns one himself. He asks Ruby, the dispatcher, to track down Omar.

Walt reads his Post-It notes. One says they have an occupant. He asks Ruby who. It is Jules Belden. Walt goes out to get the prisoner some breakfast at the Busy Bee Café. Dorothy Caldwell runs the café and it is the gossip center of the town. Dorothy serves him biscuits and gravy and questions him about Vonnie Hayes. He says he is eating his breakfast and reads the file on Jules Belden while he eats. Jules was in the Euskadi Bar in downtown Durant. When the men's room was occupied, he went outside in the alley to relieve himself. Turk happened to pulled up. Walt puts the folder down and starts thinking about the other boys involved with the Little Bird rape case. He thinks of how he will have to give Bryan Keller and George and Jacob Esper a call to see if they had any contact with Cody Pritchard just in case there is a connection to the rape case.

Walt takes back biscuits and gravy for Jules Belden. Walt becomes angry when he sees Jules. He has been beaten and not allowed to clean up. Jules used to be a cowboy and an excellent carpenter. When Walt was a kid, Jules would give him a quarter and candy every time he saw him. He has a big heart. Walt asks him who beat him. Jules does not want to say. He does not want to cause any trouble. Jules asks Walt not to hurt Turk. He had peed on the young man and all over his car.

Ruby tells Walt that Omar will be at the airport at four o'clock picking up hunters. Walt asks her to give Jules the first-aid kit so that he can clean himself up and he left the door open for him. He asks her to call the Espers and the Kellers so that he can talk to them. He goes to inspect cars to see if any discarded cars along the canyon are stolen and on the list he has. When he returns to his office, Ruby tells him that Jules wandered



off and the Kellers were coming in, but she could not get a hold of the Espers. Walt goes to the courthouse to see Vern Selby. He was the judge in the Little Bird case and he thinks that Pritchard's death may exacerbate some of the hard feelings that resulted from the Little Bird case. There were hard feelings on and off the reservation and the judge is worried that the case will cause them difficulties. He asks if Walt has talked to the girl's family. Walt tells him that the girl's father is a diabetic who had both legs amputated so that puts him far down on the suspect list.

Walt goes to the airport to see Omar. Omar Rhoades is an outfitter along the Bighorns. He owns a ranch about half the size of Rhode Island that he inherited from a rich uncle. He knows everything there is to know about hunting and firearms. His personal collection is known worldwide and he woos a number of international hunters. He has his own airport on his ranch, but the larger aircraft have to use the official airport. Walt got to know Omar through the series of domestic disturbances between Omar and his wife Myra. Omar and Myra had over their eight year marriage attempted to kill each other many times. They are now living apart. Walt shows Omar the bullet from the crime scene. Omar tells Walt that he would rather show him than tell him what he believes it is. He agrees to go to Omar's ranch the next morning.

The Kellers are at his office when he arrives back. Mrs. Keller stays in the truck because she does not believe that her son had anything to do with the rape. Jim Keller and Bryan Keller are waiting for him inside. He asks Bryan if he had any contact with Cody Pritchard. His father says no and then turns on his son to question him. Walt has Mr. Keller go to the truck to check on his wife so that he can talk to Bryan alone. Bryan tells him that he has had nothing to do with Pritchard since the trial and would like to have killed him. Bryan did not participate in the rape. He was convicted as an accessory, with a suspended sentence. Bryan does not like being looked down upon by the townspeople.

In Chapter 5, Walt goes to Omar's ranch. He radios Ruby to send Ferg to go to the Espers since they had not received a response from them. When he gets to Omar's, he has set up a pumpkin in a lawn chair and placed a thick piece of rubber behind it. Lying on the ground beside him is a Sioux rifle scabbard beaded with eagle feathers. They walk away from the pumpkin and Omar takes the rifle out of its protective covering. It is an 1874 .45-75, a Sharps Rifle. They go to 440 yards and set the Sharps between three small sand bags. Walt asks if he thinks this is what was used. Omar says reasonable sure and offers to help look for evidence in their now broaden search grid. Omar lets Walt take the shot.

Back at the office, Vic has information from DCI. The feather found on the scene was not eagle, but turkey. It is a turkey feather disguised as an eagle. They sell the feathers everywhere. They are used for crafts. Walt sees the feather as a calling card. Vic confiscated samples from the pawn shop and FedExed them to Cheyenne. The majority of Native Americans just dip them in Clorox themselves. The feathers are a sign that it may be a Native American. Walt shows Vic the cartridge from he and Omar's shooting. It is a match and they must try tracking down all the Sharps buffalo rifles in the area.



Walt thinks about the list of names that Omar gave him of the men who could have made such a shot from 440 yards. Walt, Omar and Henry Standing Bear are on the list.

Walt goes to the office of the newspaper to give an interview. After the interview, he sees Vonnie's red Jeep parked in front of the bookstore. He sits on the fender and waits for her. Vonnie tells him that it is probably a bad time for them to be starting a relationship. He tells her it was a giant step for him to start a relationship and he is not going to give it up. Vonnie kisses him and tells him to call her very soon. Dorothy teases him when he goes in the café to pick up three chicken dinners. She tells him that overt demonstrations of lust should be reserved for a more private setting.

Walt gives one of the dinners to Ruby, takes the second to Vic and keeps that last for himself. He sits down in Vic's office to eat his lunch. Vic is working on making a list of who has Sharps replica rifles. Walt tells her about Omar's list of people who could make the shot. She is worried by the Indian suspects because they will require federal search warrants. Walt goes to the Sportshop to ask about the Sharps rifle and who bought them. Dave, the owner, tells him the reproductions are not as accurate as the original models. Walt asks for a list of people who have bought ammo for the Sharps rifles. The first name on the list of those who bought a Sharps rifle replica is Turk Connally.

In Chapter 6, Lucian Connally left Wyoming and went to the Army Corps flight school in California. Once he finished, he joined the American Volunteer Group, mercenaries in the fledgling Chinese Nationalist Air Force. He received a lot of money for being involved with the group. When he left China in 1941, he had quite a nest egg. A year later he was on the aircraft carrier Hornet. He bombed Tokyo in a B-25 and then crashed into the Yellow Sea. He was captured by the Japanese and sentenced to life imprisonment. He survived forty months of torture and starvation. After the war, Lucian came back to Wyoming and Absaroka County. He became the sheriff. He had his right leg almost blown off by Basque bootleggers in the mid-fifties. He tied up his leg and drove himself thirty-two miles back to Durant. The doctors took his leg.

Walt goes to see Lucian at the Durant Home of Assisted Living. He is losing another game of chess to him. Walt has visited every Tuesday for the last eight years. Lucian is upset that Walt forgot to bring beer. He tells Lucian he needs to talk to him about his great-nephew. He beat up Jules Belden when he was in custody. Lucian has Walt get in his cabinet and get the bottle of bourbon he has hidden. Lucian says if he had two good legs he would take care of Turk. He asks if Walt is going to handle it himself. He supposes so. Walt talks to Lucian about the Pritchard shooting. Lucian adds five more names to his list of who could make the shot. He tells Walt that he should have Henry help him figure out about the feather. Walt asks if Henry should be a suspect. Lucian asks if he does and Walt says no. Lucian says that Henry is his best friend and he should know. Walt asks him if he has thought about the dispatcher's job. It would be two days a week. He says he will think about it.

When he goes into the office, he finds a note from Ruby saying the Ferg had gone to the Espers but no one was home. He would stop by again tomorrow. Ferg left four dressed brown trout in the refrigerator for him. Vic leaves him a note that she and Omar



found nothing, but maybe some blown down grass. He calls Vonnie. She invites him over for dinner the next night. He asks what he can bring and she tells him wine. He knows Henry will know what kind of wine he will need. Walt goes to Henry's bar and finds it closed. He often closed if not one was around. Walt goes home and finds Henry's car in his driveway. The porch runs the entire length of the house and is covered by a roof. Henry tells them the contractors will be back the next day to finish the railings and put in steps.

Henry offers to cook the fish. Walt tells him that he has a date tomorrow night and he needs his help getting the wine. Henry says that he will help him. Walt tells him about Omar's list of shooters and Henry is most interested in Artie Small Song. Henry tells him that Artie was in the bar the day Cody Pritchard was shot. He left right after Pritchard did. Walt asks if there are any Sharps on the reservation. He tells him that Lonnie Little Bird has one. He says his great uncle gave it to him many years ago and he got it from his father who got it from a white man. Henry says that he has to talk to Melissa Little Bird's family and he will go with him.

Walt shows him the feather. Henry says that it is a turkey feather. He asks where it came from. Walt tells him from the body of Cody Pritchard. He says that he will check the Reservation for where it could have come from. Henry says that it does not make sense because the owl feather is the sign of death. The eagle feather is a sign of life. It symbolizes life, boldness, freedom and the unity of all.

Walt thinks of the last time he saw Melissa Little Bird. He saw her at the Little Big Horn reenactment and she was wearing the Cheyenne jingle-bob dance headgear with a band of beaded sunbursts and feathers. It begins to snow as he sits on the porch after Henry has left. He thinks about how scientists discovered that snowflakes make a sound when they land on water it is like the wail of a coyote. It is a cry so small and so high it is undetectable by the human ear.

Analysis

Henry starts Walt on his improved life. Walt is grateful to his friend for his help. He knows his life needs improvement and he wants to start a relationship with Vonnie.

Walt is upset about Jules being hurt not only because he is a sweet old man, but because he was in police custody. What Turk did shows that he has no compassion and is quick to anger. These are not good qualities for a man wanting to be sheriff.

The officials of the town are worried that the citizens are taking the law into their own hands because of what they see as a mishandling of the Little Bird case. The case was very controversial and the verdict not well received. Walt assures the judge that Melissa's father could have had no part in Cody's death because both of his legs are amputated. It would make it difficult for him to maneuver the crime scene without leaving evidence.



Walt looks to the other boys involved in the case. Bryan Keller seems to be the one who was most affected by the trial. He was convicted as an accessory because he did not participate in the rape. Bryan does not associate with his former friends and feels that he is looked down on by the townspeople because of his involvement in the rape. He feels he and his family have suffered because of what he did and he does not think it is fair to them to be labeled for his mistake.

Omar's test of the Sharps Rifle gives Walt a vivid look at that the weapon can do and the expertise required by the killer. Walt does not like that Henry's name is on the list. He knows his friend killed during the war, but he does not think that he would kill a young boy in cold blood. He also does not like the eagle feather left on the body. He is unsure if it means that the killer is Native American or just trying to make them think so.

Lucian is Walt's mentor and he needs someone to discuss the case with and the suspicions of his friend. Lucian feels that if Henry is his friend he should know what he is capable of and rely on that. Henry is a good friend to Walt and he knows he could not murder anyone, but the evidence nags at him.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Vern Selby worried about the death of Cody Pritchard? How does he think it will affect the town?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Walt get so upset when he sees Jules Belden? How do Turk's actions reflect upon Walt and the sheriff's department?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Walt discuss the case with Lucian Connolly? Does his views help Walt?

Vocabulary

prevalent, epistolary, ignominious, umbrage, modicum, mired, non-ecumenical, patriarchal, proverbial, patrician, exacerbate, avionic, enigma, affinity, ambidextrous, trite, ludicrous, cumulative, ornithologist, spline, predilection, supposition, facetious, philosophic, overt, unimpeded, sagely, incendiaries, colossal, iota, aesthetic, perpetuity, discrepancy, addendum, debonair, appellations



Chapters 7 - 9

Summary

In Chapter 7, Henry makes Walt ride to the Reservation in his old truck that always breaks down. He tells the sheriff that they are undercover and the truck fits on the Reservation. They want to avoid the outpost for Indian Affairs. The sheriff does not have any jurisdiction on the Reservation and must keep a low profile. The two get coffee at the White Buffalo Sinclair station. The owner, Brandon White Buffalo, owns the station. He hugs Henry. Walt asks if he may be hurting Henry. Brandon says he is very tough. He sits with them while they eat their breakfast. Henry asks him about Lonnie Little Bird. Brandon says that his wife's drinking took a lot from the family and perhaps it is best that she died. He asks Walt if he also did not lose a wife. Walt says yes. Brandon says that when you lose someone you are left with who you are after you were with them, but Walt will be all right. He is a good man. Brandon tells Henry that he is bad about his family. Henry assures him that he will visit Lonnie. They learn that Melissa is not living with her father, but has been taken by one of her aunt's who lives closer to town. Henry asks Brandon about Artie Small Song.

Walt thinks back to the Little Bird case. After the testimony, Vern Selby instructed the jury that there were two main questions. Was force or coercion used against Melissa Little Bird and was the Cheyenne girl mentally defective? Also did the defendants know she was mentally defective? Henry can tell he is thinking about the Little Bird Case. He threatens to start calling his look the Little Bird Look.

The two go to Artie Small Song's mother's house. Walt stays in the truck as Henry goes to talk to the woman. He comes back with the news that Artie has a new girlfriend. He believes the guns will be with Artie so they head to the girlfriend's house. She is a dental hygiene student and only spends her weekends on the reservation so they do not believe she will be home, but they are unsure of if Artie might show up. Henry knocks on the door jarring it open and believes this constitutes an invitation. Walt follows behind him worried about the federal and local laws they are breaking. They find a gun arsenal in Artie's closet. He has AK-47s, MAC-10s and M-16s. They leave the house the way they found it. Henry is angry that the young man is wasting his potential on militia-ism.

Walt remembers that his deputies wore guns to the Little Bird trial. He excused himself and went to the bathroom and found Lonnie Little Bird there trying to get his wheelchair into a stall. The county did not have handicap stalls yet and he could not fit. Walt has to lift him and hold him while he unbuttons his trousers and sets him on the toilet. His grin never leaves his face. Lonnie is fifty-three years old, but feels that he is very old. He feels like he has been there a very long time. Walt feels the same. He asks the sheriff if what the boys did to his daughter is very bad and Walt says that it is very bad. Lonnie admits that he gets confused sometimes and just wanted to ask the sheriff.



Henry and Walt go to see Lonnie Little Bird. Walt believes that the dish on Lonnie's house was paid for by Henry. Lonnie gives them blow by blow of what is happening on the daytime show he is watching and Walt tries to seem interested. Lonnie used to play pro ball. He has baseball paraphernalia scattered around and the only thing that outnumbers the baseball pictures are pictures of Melissa. Walt admires the pictures and thinks about defects, rape, the trial and the Little Big Horn reenactment and how Lonnie must think of these things all the time too. Lonnie is on a campaign to get his daughter back from her aunts. He cannot drink, smoke or use the Lord's name in vain. Lonnie tells them that Artie sold his Sharps rifle to the Buffalo Bill Museum in Cody because he needed the money. He wants to know if Walt thinks Artie killed the boy. Walt must check everything and everyone out. Lonnie gives Walt the Sharps rifle that his family owns.

In Chapter 8, Walt thinks about June 25, 1876 when Colonel George Armstrong Custer and five companies of the Seventh Cavalry rode into the valley of Little Big Horn. The companies have 405 Springfield carbines caliber .45 and single action 396 Colt revolvers caliber .45, but they did not have any Sharps. They did not stand a chance trapped on the hillside with no reinforcements coming. When Little Wolf led a band of thirty-three Northern Cheyenne warriors into surrender two and a half years later they handed in twenty assorted rifles most of which were Sharps. There were nine. Walt holds the tenth in his hands. Henry's great-great-grandfather did not surrender his rifle because he did not trust the white man. He hid the gun on the range wrapped in two inches of bear grease. Six months after their surrender they were let go and he went back and retrieved the rifle. Henry tells him that the rifle is haunted.

Henry and Walt stop at the bar to pick up the wine that Walt needs to take to dinner with Vonnie. He stays in the truck with the rifle as Henry goes inside. Dena Many Camps comes out of the bar to talk to Walt. She is spooked by the rifle saying that it is a weapon from the Camp of the Dead. It is a ghost weapon sent from the dead to retrieve someone. Walt assures her that it is just a rifle that he is going to have tested to see if it is the weapon that killed Cody Pritchard. She insists that it is bad medicine and she should give it back to Lonnie Little Bird. She unbraids her hair to show respect and for protection. The spirits can take away the soul of someone still living for the enjoyment of their society. The rifle feels cold in Walt's hands. She is not happy with Henry for letting Lonnie give the rifle to Walt. Walt does not like the idea of carrying around the Cheyenne death rifle.

The rifle is possibly worth millions. Walt is not sure what to do with it. He cannot just leave it lying around where someone can take it so he will have to take it to Vonnie's with him. He takes a quick shower and listens to the message on his answering machine. It is Vic's rundown of what has happened that day. Ferg checked on the Esper place and found that the Espers are in Colorado visiting his sister. No one knows the number or where in Colorado. She informs him that she and her husband, Glen are fighting so she is sleeping at the office. He thinks about how much the two fight and how separate their lives are.

Vonnie comments that Walt look tired. She is not comfortable with him bringing the rifle into her home. She eventually relents and allows him to set it by the door. They have an



enjoyable dinner. Walt tells her that he remembers coming to the house with his father as a kid. He shod her father's horses and Walt tagged along. It was summer and Vonnie was there. She was usually off in Maine. Walt wonders what the richest man in three counties had to be depressed about. Vonnie thinks he did not care for himself and she sees that her relationship with him has had an effect on every single choice in her life. One of the cowboys found her father in the tack shed. He asks if it is because of her father that she does not allow guns in the house. She thinks they are inherently bad and does not want to allow necessary evils in her home. Walt swallows his fear and is officially introduced to her dog who turns out to be a big baby.

Walt tells her that he became involved in law enforcement during the Vietnam War. He was in the marine military police. He devoted himself to the police side of the job. A prostitute was killed off base and he made it his personal mission to solve it. He cares about people and wants to bring closure to people. He wonders why Cody was killed after two years and not right after the trial. He wonders if the ancestors of old Little Bird or Standing Bear will help him find the killer of the boy that raped their great-great-great granddaughter. He believes they would. He looks up to find Vonnie handing the phone to him. They have found one of the Espers.

In Chapter 9, Vic leads Walt to Jacob Esper's body. The snow is hampering their crime scene. Jacob is sitting by the rear wheel of his truck. He has been dead for six to twenty-four hours. The men who called it in are sitting in their Hummer with the heater going waiting to be questioned. The boot prints on the scene- size nine Vasques- matches the victim and one of the men who called it in. It is a popular boot and size. Preliminary triangulation indicates an area across the lake where makeshift cabins are setup along the lake. Vic would have taken the shot at the top of the ridge along the tree line.

The men heard someone shouting on the other side when they pulled in at nine. The men are borrowing a cabin and drove up from Casper. Ferg is checking on their plans. The police will have to secure the crime scene by tying a tarp over it. Walt has taken a personal stake in the case he does not want to call in the Division of Criminal Investigation. Walt looks over the crime scene. Jacob started the truck to warm it up and was shot as he exited the vehicle. The truck then ran out of gas as his body lay there. His truck contains fishing equipment and a cooler. Walt notices that there is spray against the edge of the bed. There could be lead in the hillside adjacent to the lot, in the truck or in Jacob. He finds a feather under his jacket.

A voice ask what is going on. Walt swirls around to find a man of medium height. He has the face of an old prizefighter. The man is an obvious alcoholic. He is Al Monroe and has one of the cabins by the lake. He has been there the last three days. Walt asks him to make his people a big pot of coffee. He agrees and points out which cabin is his. Walt questions the execs from Casper. They arrived just after dark and had seen the truck when they drove by and circled around to ask for directions. They saw the boy was dead and drove back down the road to get cell reception to call 911. Dave McClure backs up the men's story that they were borrowing his cabin. Walt allows them to go to



their cabin. Walt has Ferg go on a supply run and bring Bryan Keller and George Esper in under protective custody.

Walt goes to Al's cabin to take his statement. He has the man take a breathalyzer test. He is rapidly approaching alcoholic coma. He asks if he heard any loud noises early this morning. He heard a howitzer go off just before dawn. He went to the door and yelled for them to knock it off. He saw somebody walking back through the tree line with their back to him. The person seemed pretty big with long dark hair to their shoulders. They were wearing insulated overalls and carrying a long gun. He did not notice the truck. He laid back down and went to sleep.

Walt climbs the hill to the tree line. It was a four hundred yard shot, which is quite a shot. Al is short so Walt wonders how big is big to him. He finds where the shooter lay to take the shot. He searches the area for footprints, but finds none. Walt thinks about how Al's description fits Henry. He does not want to think that it can be Henry. He thinks of all the people he knows with long hair including Henry, Artie, Omar, Vic and Turk. He thinks of each person's motives and cannot see any of them as the killer. He has a nagging feeling that he is missing something.

Walt gets in Vic's car to warm up. She questions him about his relationship with Vonnie and confides that she and Glen have not had sex in three months. It makes her feel unattractive. She wants to know why he has never made a play at her. He said they have a sheriff-deputy relationship and she is married. In six weeks she will not be. Glen is leaving for a job in Alaska and she is not going. He tells her that she is his heir-apparent.

Ferg returns and informs Walt that he put out an APB on all vehicles belonging to the Espers with the Longmont police saying it had to do with a homicide case. There was nothing at their house. He brought Bryan in. His mother was the only other person at the house. Jim Keller was off hunting. Walt goes and sits next to the body while Ferg and Vic use the metal detector to look for any shrapnel. There is something not right, but he cannot figure out right. It makes him irritable and he takes it out on the deputies. He thinks how Jim Keller could have a grudge against the boys for ruining his son's life. Vic summons him to come look at what they have found. His eyes happen to glance at the mess of Jacob's truck. There are two fishing vests. The niggling feeling he feels stops.

Analysis

Henry helps Walt with his investigation by being his guide on the Reservation. Walt is not allowed to investigate on the Reservation because it is protected by the Federal Government and he has no jurisdiction. They are both worried by the arsenal that they find in Artie Small Song's house. With such weapons, he could arm a small army so why would he use an antique gun to murder Cody.

Walt likes Lonnie Little Bird. He is surprised when he gives him the rifle used during the Battle of Little Big Horn. He has to have the weapon tested just in case, but he does not



see Lonnie as a suspect in the killing. He is worried about carrying the antique gun around and is not happy to hear that it is haunted. It does give the gun a sense of awe knowing that the spirits of the warriors are still with it.

Finding Jacob Espers' body is definite proof that Cody's death was not an accident. Walt goes into protective mode for the two remaining boys involved in the Little Bird rape. He does not want the murderer to complete his mission and kill all four of the boys. Walt feels lost and that this case is quickly getting away from him. He cannot afford to mess it up because it could affect Vic's chances of becoming his successor.

Discussion Question 1

Why do Henry and Walt have to go incognito to the Reservation? Why is Walt not legally allowed to be there?

Discussion Question 2

What kind of rifle does Lonnie Little Bird give Walt? What is the history behind it? How is that important?

Discussion Question 3

How does finding Jacob Espers' body affect the case? Why is Walt worried that he will not be able to solve it?

Vocabulary

continuance, incognito, copious, gauntlet, beatific, chastisement, discerned, emanating, paraphernalia, auxiliary, decrepit, aggregate, insouciance, intricate, transcended, discern, regalia, furtively, contingency, predominant, adage, contention, implements, inherently, disconcerted, habitually, retrospect, repugnant, impromptu, impeding, quizzical, diminutive, corroborated, traipsed, burgeoning, singularity, indiscriminate, ardent, negligible, hypotenuse, curtailed, perennial, dereliction



Chapters 10 - 13

Summary

In Chapter 10, Walt talks to T.J. about the murders. If he does not solve them, she does not see him keeping his job. They do not know if George Esper was with Jacob. There are two sets of fishing gear in Jacob's truck. The food in the cooler is not enough for two, however. The passenger door was also locked, which means that most likely no one was riding on the passenger side. Walt thinks that Jacob and George were supposed to meet somewhere. Jacob spent the night there and was going that morning to meet George. George could be with his parents, but they will not know until they find them. Walt tells T.J. that he has a rifle in his truck that needs to be tested. He will leave it with Vic. Walt goes to his truck and gets the Cheyenne Death Rifle and hands it to Vic. She says she has a bad feeling from it and he agrees that that is the general consensus.

It was a Wednesday when the jury came after their eight day deliberation. The defendants were smirking except Bryan Keller who looked sad. Cody Pritchard was found guilty of two counts of first-degree aggravated sexual assault; one count was for assaulting a mentally defective woman, and the other was for using force or coercion in that assault. He was also found guilty of conspiracy in the second degree. Jacob Esper had the same verdict. George Esper was found guilty of one count of aggravated sexual assault in the second degree and was guilty of second-degree conspiracy. Bryan Keller was acquitted of the more serious charges but was found guilty of second-degree conspiracy. Cody and Jacob laugh after the verdict is read. Sentencing was sentenced for three weeks.

Walt is in a rage when he reaches his office. Turk comes out of the office and Walt hits him propelling his face into the back of his car. He lays by the rear tire a small pool of blood spreading from the side of his face. Walt rolls him over pulling his face close to his and begins to tell him about harming a prisoner in his jail, but notices that he is out. He feels sick. He goes into his office and through to the jail's holding cells. He sat down on one of the bunks and regulated his breathing. When he brings his head up, he sees Bryan Keller sitting on the other bunk. He sits with his legs pulled up and his arms wrapped around them. Walt can hear the commotion as Turk is brought into the office.

Henry peers in at Walt. He asks about Turk and Henry tells him that Ruby has taken him to the hospital. He asks him if he would like breakfast and teases him about using violence as an answer to violence. Walt ignores him as he thinks about George up on the mountain with a blizzard coming. Henry finally gets his attention by telling him that Artie Small Song has been in the Yellowstone County Jail since Saturday. Henry asks him if something has happened and is told that Jacob Esper is dead. Henry has information about the feather. Wanda Real Wolf used to head up the Cheyenne Artist's Co-Op and it is one of her feathers. He shows her the feather from the recent murder. Henry concludes that it could be Wanda's as well. She does not sell them separately



only on objects she and her family make. She sells them at high-end tourist shops all over the country. The holes in the stem probably means it came from a dream catcher.

Walt asks Henry why he was late going running yesterday. He tells him that he was shooting white boys. He asks again and he tells him that he is sleeping with Dena Many Camps. She is half his age and Walt thinks he should be ashamed. Walt tells him about Al's description of the shooter. Henry asks if the flies were hand-tied or store bought. If they were bought, they might have mentioned where they were going.

Back at the office, Ruby tells Walt that Turk's nose is shattered and he will have to go to Billings to have it properly set. Walt asks Henry if he will stay at the Espers' place and wait for them to return. As he leaves, Ruby appears in the doorway. She reams Walt for his attack of Turk. He apologizes to her and she tells him that she is ashamed of him. She also tells him that he needs to talk to Bryan because she does not think he knows why he is there. Walt goes to check on Bryan. He tells him that he plans on keeping him there until he finds who is killing his friends. He asks if he has ever gone fishing with George. Lost Twin is his favorite place to fish. Walt assures the boy that he is not there because he did something wrong that he is there to keep him safe. Walt rushes out of the cell and down the hall, but slows as he sees Turk. He looks horrible with cotton tubes sticking out of his nostrils and bandages plastered across the bridge of his nose. Both of his eyes are black. Walt wants to know why he is not at the hospital and Turk says he is there to work. He has him go relief Henry at the Esper's place and have him come back to the office.

They cannot make it to Lost Twin before dark and there is snow coming. Walt is going to get some help from Omar. He goes through the guns to see what to take with him on the mountain. He tells Ruby to have Henry go to Dave's when he comes in and get real winter gear and Winchesters. When Omar comes on the line he asks if he still has his helicopter.

In Chapter 11, Walt and Henry are in Omar's helicopter going to Big Horn Mountain to look for George Esper. The ride is making Walt sick. Henry tells him stories about being in a helicopter during Vietnam. They have about two hours before the blizzard hits. It bothers Henry that Walt thinks he could be capable of murder. Walt admits he is capable, but if he thought he would he would not be there with him now. They go through the means, motive and opportunity of the people they suspect. Henry thinks that it is somebody that they have not thought of, someone with very strong reasons, something that they do not understand.

Ruby calls on the radio and tells Walt that no one signed in at the trailhead to go to Lost Twin, but there is a black Mazda Navajo with the plates Tuff-1 at the Tensleep parking lot. Also there was a complaint of a green pickup almost running a man over on the road leading away from the murder of Jacob Esper. Walt tells Henry about the car and the lack of sign-in sheet, but not about the green truck very much like his. They sweep over the Mountain to try to find George's camp. They set the helicopter down and Henry and Walt go to check for George's camp on foot. They find tracks, size nine Vasque hiking boots. They wonder if George was at Jacob's crime scene. They find his tent with



supplies. There are more tracks there. The fire suggests he was there this morning. His fishing gear is not there so they agree to check the lakes. Henry gives the rifle to Walt because he is a better shot than him in case somebody is out there. They each take a lake and Walt resists the temptation to check the rifle to see if it is loaded. Walt thinks about the case and if George could be the murderer. He also thinks about Jim Keller.

Omar is still checking the helicopter when they come back. Henry found boot prints, but nothing fresh. They decide to go looking for him even though the blizzard is coming. Walt wants to find the kid. Henry understands and makes up some packs for them so they can move quickly. Walt tells Omar that he needs to get out of there. Omar gives him a handheld radio set to the frequency of the police department and should work if he has reception. Omar says to make sure Henry stays ahead of him. Walt tells him to get in touch with Ferg and Vic and tell them to meet them at West Tensleep parking lot. Omar says to tell the Indian that if he comes out alone he will see him dead.

Walt feels good about the mission because he sees it as a challenge and has accepted it. He thinks George cannot be too far. Henry thinks that George is not very smart. He says that he is the least memorable of the four boys. He cannot even bring up an image of what he looks like. For Henry, the young men no longer exist for what they did to his niece that is how he has dealt with the situation.

In Chapter 12, Walt hears a gunshot. He and Henry have been walking for a while. The blizzard had hit and he cannot see twenty feet in front of him. The Forest Service Path is just visible, but in an hour it also will be impossible to see. Walt takes solace that part of the trail that leads to the parking lot is tree covered and downhill and they are almost there. He watches Henry's image fade in and out as the snow blows. Every time he disappears, Walt quickens his step to keep the comfortable dark shape in view. He knows that the shot he hears is not from the Remington that Henry is carrying. It was close. Walt starts running and sees two figures. One is seated on the path with his feet before him slouched forward and the other is standing over him. Walt slips the rifle off his shoulder and grips it in both hands.

Walt can tell it is Henry on the ground. The men do not hear him coming so he uses his rifle as a battering ram and he and the other man tumble down the bank leading to the creek. The rifle hits the man in the head as they hit the ground and it snaps back and hits the man in the jaw. As they come to a rest along the riverbank, Walt feels something sharp in his lower left side. Something is digging into his ribs and there is a muffled sound and the smell of spent gunpowder. Walt moves his hand to where the revolver was wedged between them. The hand that holds it is limp. He takes the revolver and tries to figure out if either of them has been shot. Henry yells to him asking if he has been hit. Walt does not know. He looks at the man and finds that it is George Esper. He checks him over and finds a bullet hole in his thigh. George will be unable to walk. Walt doctors him the best he can to try to stop the bleeding and goes to check on Henry.

Snow is building up around Henry as he sits with his arms around his middle and his head dipped low as if he is trying to sleep. Walt asks to see and Henry drops his hands. His abdomen is a bloody mess just above the navel and slightly to the right. Blood



saturated the lower part of his shirt and thermal underwear and was now leaking into his lap. There is no way of knowing where the bullet is or how much damage it has done. Walt puts his belt around Henry and cinches the notches. Walt pulls out his radio and attempts to call for help. No one answers. Walt asks Henry what happened. George was standing in the trail when he looked up and just fired. He did not say anything. Henry tells Walt that he needs to get George out of there and Walt refuses to leave him. Henry says that George is smaller and Walt can make it out with him and Henry will wait for him. Walt does not believe that Henry will survive that long. Henry asks him to get him a small bag from the front pocket of his coat. It is a small green velvet satchel with a ledger horse and warrior stitched across the front. He hands the medicine bag to Henry.

Walt takes off his jacket and places it over Henry. He tells him that he will be sweating carrying George out and will not need it. Walt goes to George and tries to wake him, but there is no response. He picks him up and begins carrying him off the mountain. Walt uses his frustration and anger to fuel him. He hears Henry begin to sing. It is a low voice that cuts through the noise of the wind and carries it across the valley. Walt does not know what kind of song it is or the words. Furthermore, he does not want to know. The voice helps him carry the load of George Esper. He feels that the Old Cheyenne are with him giving him the strength to continue down the trail. He matches his steps to the beat of the drums he hears. He sees someone on the trail before him, walking backwards with each step he took. He sees the resemblance to Henry so knows he is his family. Walt follows the warrior down the path. Walt makes it to the parking lot and runs into George's snow covered SUV. He puts George in the back and covers him with a travel blanket. He starts the car to keep the boy from freezing and sees that there should be enough gas to last until he gets Henry and gets everyone to town. He wonders where his back up is. George comes around. Walt tells him who he is and that he has to go get another man and then they can go get medical assistance. George says that the Indian tried to kill him. Walt tells him that Henry Standing Bear came with him to try to keep George safe. He tells George to stay there and try to stay awake.

Walt tries to hail someone on the radio again without success. He takes the seat cover from George's truck and wraps himself up in it. He wraps a large shop rag around his face. He chuckles to himself that Henry will laugh when seeing him looking like a Bedouin. He cannot see the sign that marks the lot. It is eight feet high and six feet wide and that disheartens him. He ends up running head long into the sign. He begins to become disoriented as the snow pours around him.

Henry did not attend the sentencing hearing. Walt felt he was distancing himself from him during the case. Vern said that he received seventy-five letters about the sentencing and they were split fifty-fifty on whether the boys should have been given leniency. Each of the boys is allowed to give a statement. Bryan Keller gives a heartfelt apology to Melissa and her family and the community for his poor judgment. George starts a statement, but tapers off. Jacob says that he cannot express the sorrow that he feels. Cody smirks and does not give a statement.

Walt trips on the trail, but catches himself. The snow is getting deeper. He is having trouble making his way through the snow. The smell of gasoline and motor oil from the



rag are beginning to affect him. His fingers are left unprotected and are being to hurt. Walt keeps slipping on the frozen, uneven ground. One time he hits the ground face first. He lay there not wanting to get up. The voices come to him and he can hear the sound of bells. There are shadows around him. Walt feels himself helped up by the shadows around him. Walking is difficult, but he keeps rhythm with the bells. The voices encourage him as he walks. Ahead he sees the shadows looking down and smiling at something on the ground. There is something in the middle of the group not moving. It is large and looks heavy, but they seem to prize it. Walt brushes the snow off of it. The thing is singing. They motion for Walt to take the thing on the trail as a gift. Walt pulls it up and loads it on his back. Walt has a difficult time carrying the gift, but they are clearing a path for him in the snow. He does not feel the cold anymore. He has the sense that he must get where he is going before the song on his back stops. It is becoming weak. The song stops and he shakes it to make it keep singing, but it does not. He thinks about dropping it since it does not work anymore, but they might be watching him from the trees.

There are flashes of light and an ugly squawking sound. Walt tries to remember where he is going. Shadows come at him and try and take the gift. Walt tries to speak, but cannot. He roars and gets ready for a fight. He refuses to give up the gift. Walt feels ready to crash when the little one talks to him in a familiar voice. Later he rolls his head over to find Henry looking at him through barely open eyes in the EMT van.

In Chapter 13, Walt is in his office after leaving the hospital without permission. Ruby has the hospital on the phone asking where he is. He had woken up early and could not get back to sleep so he had laid there thinking about Henry. He rang the bell for the night nurse, but got no answer so after half an hour he went looking for Henry himself. He took out his IV and used the tape to cover the holes to stop the bleeding. He found his clothes and got dressed. He asks the janitor if he knows where Henry Standing Bear is. He motions to the room across from Walt's. Walt's hands are swollen and starting to blister. He does not know where his hat is. His ear is bandaged and tender.

He checks on Henry. Henry wakes while he is there. He thanks Walt for what he did. Walt goes back out into the hallway and is surprised to see a nurse at the nurses' station. She is looking at him so he marches toward her. He says he was checking on Henry Standing Bear and he was complaining about pain so could someone get him some more medication. The nurse says that she will and should he not be in Room 61. The girl is Janine, Ruby's granddaughter.

Janine had called her grandmother and told her everything. Lucian enters his office and sits in the chair opposite Walt's. He tells Walt that they will probably take his ear. Walt asks if they know where George is and is told that there is an APB out on him. George must have left right after Walt left him in the truck. George will need to be doctored for his gunshot wound. Walt asks Lucian if he would like to take a ride. They go to the hospital first to have Walt's hand and ear looked at. He asks if any gunshots wounds came in during the night and is told no. They decide to check taxidermists for the wounded boy since Wyoming as a large number of them. When they pull up to Pat



Hampton's the black Mazda Navajo is parked around the side of one of the buildings with the side caved in.

Walt gives Lucian a gun and has him go around the back of the building. Walt pounds on the front door yelling Sheriff's Department. He can hear shuffling noise from the center of the building. He busts down the door. Someone is running down the hallway. Walt slams him back into the room and George is knocked unconscious. There are bandages at the middle of his right thigh and another set around his head to keep his jaw secure. He handcuffs George to the table. Walt hears the sound of a 12 Gauge shotgun. A young man with a pale face comes bursting through the doorway with a rifle. When he sees Walt, he freezes. He has him lay the rifle down. It is a pellet gun. It is the only thing he had and he did not want to hurt anyone. They boy is about George's age. Lucian comes in. The boy is Petie Hampton. He is home from school in Colorado to hunt for the weekend. His uncle Pat went to Casper. George knew he was home because he was supposed to go hunting with him.

George told him that he had a hunting accident and he did not want to go to the hospital because it would cost a lot. When he saw his jaw, he thought something must be up. He got there an hour ago. George told him his parents are in Deadwood. Walt takes George to his truck and gets the keys for the Mazda from George's pocket and throws them to Lucian. Walt radios Ruby that the Espers are in Deadwood, South Dakota and could she make inquires.

Vic and Ferg are at the hospital when Walt makes it there with George. Ferg gives him his hat and it is worse for wear. Vic questions why he is not in the hospital. He looked like he was going to die last night. Walt tells her that he does not think that George knows anything. She tells him that the Cheyenne Rifle of the Dead is not a match for the murder weapon, but it has been fired recently. DCI did not take the rifle because everybody is nervous about handling it because it is worth millions. She locked it in his truck. Vic tells him that Vonnie was there. She asks him what he sees in her. She thinks it is not fair that somebody is beautiful, intelligent, rich and tall. He asks if she has been in to see Henry. She was, but Dena Many Camps showed up and she felt like a third wheel. Walt hugs her and thanks her for coming after him and she claims he is her only friend. He feels someone watching them and sees Vonnie. She just nods and disappears down the hallway carrying a shopping bag and a bouquet of flowers. He makes sure the Vic is okay and goes in search of Vonnie.

Walt finds Vonnie leaning against the wall outside room 62. She had bought a police scanner thinking it would be nice to hear his voice. She asks if he knew that they could hear him. He could not hear them, but they heard every word he said and he did not hear their answers. She heard it all and could not do anything. She will not let him do this to her. She storms past him and points to the shopping bag on the floor telling him she brought him some clothes. He sits down in the hallway outside of Henry's room and listens to the giggling within. Janine brings him a tray of food. He asks her about a shower and is told there is one in the staff locker room. As the local hero, there should not be a problem with him using it.



Analysis

Walt attempts to discover if anyone was with Jacob or if he was on his own. He is worried his brother was with him and wonders where he could be. Walt is upset that another boy is dead and that he is no closer to finding the killer. He takes out his frustration on Turk. Henry is there to help his friend calm down and get something to eat. Ruby is upset with her boss for allowing his anger to get the best of him. She does not like this side of him and lets him know it. Turk holds no hard feelings and respects Walt more for it.

Walt is very worried about George Espers and risks his and Henry's lives to check for him on the Big Horn Mountain with a blizzard coming. He does not want to lose another one of the boys so he does whatever he must to protect him. This leads the men into grave danger and stranded on the mountain in a blizzard. George is scared and jumpy. He shoots Henry thinking that he is there to kill him. Walt suffers delusions due to the cold and believes that he is helped by Henry's ancestors to find their way off the mountain. He mentions this to no one believing they will think he is crazy.

Walt saves Henry's life and is seen as a hero. George, however, still fearing for his life has disappeared. With his friend incapacitated, Walt takes Lucian with him to find the boy. When they find him, Walt is convinced that the boy knows nothing. He is just scared.

Walt is relieved to find out that Lonnie's gun is not the murder weapon. Everyone is nervous around it because it is so old and priceless. It is returned to Walt for safe keeping.

Vonnie is upset that Walt risked his life without even thinking about it. She was able to hear him calling for help on her police scanner and could do nothing. She does not like that what he does on his job can hurt her in such a way.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Walt take his frustrations out on Turk? Why is Turk not upset with him?

Discussion Question 2

Why does George shoot Henry? Why does he leave Walt and Henry stranded on the mountain?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Vonnie so upset with Walt? Does she see Vic as a threat?



Vocabulary

incurred, consummation, contemplative, gratuitously, guile, deliberation, nominal, irascible, reprieve, turpitude, contrition, tenure, accentuated, maelstrom, traverse, pristine, reverent, recrimination, solace, egress, inert, askew, commensurate, discernible, semblance, impediment, epoch, equilibrium, aperture, opulent, languid, lugubrious, sloughed, emanated, monotonous, recognizance, supersede, inordinate, entourage, resilient



Chapters 14 - Epilogue

Summary

In Chapter 14, George Esper is once again missing. Ferg is upset that he left the boy to go get a nurse for him. He tried to ring for a nurse, but no one answered. Walt tells him to search the hospital. Walt changes into the clothes Vonnie brought him. He decides to leave his dirty clothes in Henry's room. He finds George seated beside Henry's bed. He tells him to go back to his room and stay there. Henry says the boy is confused. He thinks something could be mentally wrong with him. George wants to live on the reservation because he thinks he would be safer there. Walt asks Henry if George mentioned what room he was in. Walt follows a hunch and looks into the room across from Henry's that he had previously occupied.

George says that he knows Jacob is dead that he saw him on the mountain. He wants Walt to stop them and points out the window. All Walt sees is his truck. He tells the boy to get some sleep. Walt finds Ferg and tells him to keep a close eye on George because he is acting strange. Walt goes to his truck and along with the rifle he finds a black-and-white box of ammunition. He guesses that Vic must have left it there. He looks around for the Indians that he saw on the mountain. Sliding into the truck he places the box of cartridge on the seat next to him and notices the date of 1876 on it.

Walt goes back to the office. He passes Vic's door and sees her on the phone. He is worried that now that she is getting a divorce she will leave Wyoming for a job back east. Walt takes a call from Reggie Esper. They are still in Deadwood. He does not want to cut his trip short, but Walt tells him that it is important and to come straight to the sheriff's office when he arrives. Ruby tells him that Lonnie Little Bird was there looking for him. He asks her if she knows where Lucian and Turk are. They are having lunch at the Busy Bee.

Convicted of two counts of sexual assault, Cody and Jacob could be sentenced to as much as forty years. Everyone waited for two weeks for the sentencing. Vern Selby merged the two counts into one and sentenced Cody and Jacob to a maximum of fifteen years in prison. George had gotten the minimum of ten. The judge then pronounced that the offenders would be incarcerated in a young adult institution in Casper and would therefore receive indeterminate terms. Vern must have decided that since they were first time offenders, the rape should not cost them the rest of their lives even though it has cost Melissa dearly. Cody Pritchard had turned to his friends and playfully tossed his hat in the air and smiled. Cody, Jacob, and George could see less than two years of soft prison time if they had good behavior. Bryan Keller would receive two years probation and one hundred hours of community service.

At the Busy Bee, Walt glances through the window and sees Turk slouched on a stool and Lucian is leaning in glaring at him. Walt passes the café and goes to the Sportshop. He asks David what the number one selling hiking boot is and is told Vasque. Nine or



ten is the most popular size. He asks if he can track who bought size nine Vasques in the last year. When he goes back to the Busy Bee, Lucian and Turk are gone. He sits down near the cash register and orders anything but the usual. He apologizes for being sharp with Dorothy the day before. He talks to Dorothy about the case. He also tells her that he used to be better at relationships. She confides in him that Vonnie has had a rough life and that when her father killed himself there was something going on out there. She wants him to talk to Vonnie.

Back at the office, Turk is sitting in one of the reception chairs. He asks to speak to Walt. He tells him that he has submitted his application with Highway Patrol. Walt promises not to give him a bad recommendation and he would make some calls to a colonel in Cheyenne who owed him a few favors. He thought about asking him about the .45-70, but it was not him and was not going to be. Vic joins Walt in his office. The bullet from the second murder matches the first so it is the same shooter. They ran Roger Russell's gun while he was out on the mountain and it did not match. The Cheyenne Rifle of the Dead is not a match, but it has been fired numerous times just over a week ago. Walt says he better get the rifle out of his truck before it turns up missing. He thanks Vic for the shells. She does not know anything about the shells.

In Chapter 15, Walt finds the cartridge box on the passenger seat. Vic says it was not there when she put the rifle on the seat and locked the truck. No one drove his truck, but he left the keys on the rack in the office. He takes the container and rifle to his office. The box is small with dented corners. The black printing is faded and scuffed. There was a floral pattern and a series of lines on each side that encapsulated the words "This Box Contains 20 Metallic Cartridges, Manufactured by Sharps' Rifle Mf'g Co. Hartford, CT." There is a hole the size of a .45 caliber left of corner with 400 yards scribbled in pencil beside it. The writing looks like the writing from the old sheriff's logbook. It seems familiar to Walt. He opens the box and takes out a cartridge. It is not tarnished as a hundred year old cartridge should be. Two of the cartridges are spent. They compare the cartridges to the shell Omar gave Vic. They are different. Henry comes in the room and tells them the cartridges are the originals. He asks where Walt got them and he tells him on the seat of his locked truck this morning. Henry says he is the one who polished and reloaded them for Lonnie. Lonnie had said he wanted to shoot the rifle and Henry was worried he would damage the rifle so he hand loaded the original cartridges.

Henry and Walt go to the reservation to talk to Lonnie. Walt asks Henry why Lonnie would leave the cartridges. Henry says he does not know unless it was good fortune for Walt. Lonnie is fond of him and asked Henry if it would be all right to give the rifle to Walt. He wants it to shield him from something very powerful and very bad. Lonnie thinks he is a good man and that there are those who would assist him if they could. They would help him live. Walt thinks about caring about someone more than life itself. He is sure that Martha did not love him that much that she had settled for him and made the best of the situation. She stayed for Cady and he stayed because he loved Cady that much.

There is a maroon minivan in Lonnie's driveway when they arrive. There is someone sitting on the passenger side and Walt can see even from a distance that it was Melissa.



Melissa hugs Henry. Walt has avoided this moment of personal contact. She comes to him and hugs him. Henry takes the rifle and goes toward the house as Walt and Melissa talked. She tells him Lonnie is arguing with her aunt Arbutus. Arbutus comes slapping out the door with Henry wheeling Lonnie out the door with the rifle in his lap. Arbutus does not want to let Lonnie have his daughter for the holiday. Walt asks why Melissa cannot spend Thanksgiving with her father. She is upset because she found a beer in is refrigerator. He says he keeps it in there as temptation. It has been there a year and a half. Walt asks if it would be all right if Lonnie came to her house for Thanksgiving and then Melissa came over and spent the night with him on Friday. Melissa asks if the sheriff can come over for Thanksgiving dinner. Arbutus says that Walt is always welcome at their table.

Walt asks Lonnie if he left him a little present. He said that he did. He took the keys by the door of the office. He left the ammo because the Old Ones told him Walt would need them. They started talking to him after he lost his legs. He thinks it is because his legs are with them so they tell him half things. Lonnie says that he shot the gun because he was angry. Walt gets a call on the radio. George Esper stole Ferg's truck and Vic is in pursuit of him. Walt believes he knows where he is going and tells Vic to head his way. He asks Henry if he is coming. Lonnie gives him the rifle. Walt asks about the writing on the cartridge box and is told it is Lucian's. He could hit a target as small as a cartridge box at four hundred yards.

Walt and Henry meet up with Vic. They discuss where George might be. They decide to take the Powder River Rd north and south. Walt remembers that the old Esper place is out there somewhere. They take the roads going eighty and nearly wreck as they round a turn. George did not have as much luck as his car went through the fence and George was driving along the river. Walt goes for the gate that is George's only way of escape. George turns back toward the river. Walt has to bust through the fence to follow him. George gets his truck stuck in the mud and climbs out the window and began running away. Walt yells after him asking him what he is doing. George slips and falls into the river. Henry sees someone across the river and they are armed. A small burst of smoke erupts from the figure and George is thrown backward into the water. Walt goes to him and tells him to keep down. Henry tells them he is reloading. He throws the rifle to Walt. The person is seven hundred yards away. Walt pulls the trigger, the figure drops and their shot passes over their heads and into Walt's truck. Sadness comes over Walt as he realizes he believes he knows who the shooter is.

In Chapter 16, the bullet shattered George's clavicle making it unlikely that he will ever operate it properly again. His pulse is weak and rapid and his breathing shallow. They wrap him in a wool blanket and lay him on the tailgate of the truck. He is losing a lot of blood and Walt tries to compress the wound with his jacket. Walt smiles at him and tells him he is going to be okay. Henry goes to raise Vic on the radio. They speak calmly to reassure him to counter the effects of the shock. Henry talks to George about being an Indian and living on the reservation. Vic arrives on the scene. They lay George in the backseat and truss him up carefully with the seat belts. Henry hands Walt a .45-70. Henry tells him that the land used to belong to the Espers. Walt tells him that he knows who the killer is.



Walt tells Henry to get George to the hospital alive. Henry tells him not to worry about George and to be careful. As Vic and Henry leave with George, Walt walks back to the river. He watches a flock of geese flying overhead. He picks up the Sharps and looks into the distance from where the shot came. He puts the live round that Henry gave him into the Sharps. He washes George's blood off his hands and crosses the river. He finds the spot where the shooter had laid in wait. There is blood on the ground. The tracks of Vasque, size nine are all over the place. He follows the blood trail to the access road. He makes his way back to his truck.

Ruby calls him on the radio. He asks about George and learns he made it to the hospital. His parents were taken to the hospital. Walt tells her not to send anyone out that he is coming in, but he has a few things to do first. Walt asks if Lucian is there. He asks him about the death of Michael Hayes. He asks what kind of gun he used. Walt thinks about Michael Hayes. No one knew why he killed himself. Walt was a teenager when it happened, but he remembers that Vonnie mentioned he killed himself in the tack shed. At the time, it was said he used a large-caliber rifle and that his brains were scattered all over the walls. Walt thinks about how she reacted to the rifle when he came to dinner and made him leave it by the door and how the dog kept looking at it. He remembers holding her feet in his hand and thinks about the size nine Vasques. She would have been able to wind her way easily through the branches of the second crime scene and her hair hung past her shoulders.

Walt goes to Portugee Gulch, Vonnie's house. The gate to the house is open. He picks up the rifle and approaches the house. The door is unlocked. He goes through the house searching for Vonnie. He looks for blood trails, but finds none. The dog is locked up in the mudroom. Walt goes out the doors into the courtyard making his way to the tack shed. He finds Vonnie sitting in the same room where her father had died attempting to doctor her wounds. The damage is to the left side of her head. She asks if he is going to shoot her again. He puts his gun away. She tells him that she does not think that their relationship is going to work that he plays too rough. He asks her why she left the feathers. Vonnie tells him that it was a dramatic effect and a symbol of life and death. She hoped that the eagle feather would heal Melissa and make her better. She was in the store when George bought his boots and bought the same kind. She told him that he and his brother were welcome to fish at their old family place on the Powder.

Walt tries to keep her talking so he can think of a way to get her to put down the rifle she is holding under her chin. Vonnie sees her father sometimes when she is in this room. Walt tells her that he has been seeing Indians. The rifle he has is The Cheyenne Rifle of the Dead and is haunted. The Old Cheyenne stay near the rifle and once in a while they get the urge to take somebody back to the Camp of the Dead with them. Walt waits for her to start talking about her father. She gestures the Sharps at him and tells him that it is the gun that her father used to kill himself. She was thirteen when he died. He started sexually assaulting her when she was nine. She hated him. She tried to have a life with a husband and children, but could not get past what her father did to her. He did not kill himself because of Vonnie. He did it because her mother was going to tell. Vonnie moved back after many years away to take care of her mother. She came back to hate him with her. When Melissa was assaulted, she thought there would be some kind of



punishment for the boys some kind of justice for Melissa and for her, but they got light sentences if any. Vonnie could not let them off. She brings the rifle closer to her chin. She asks Walt if he understands why she did it. He tells her that a lot of people feel the same way. She tells him he is a poor liar. He says there is a difference between talking about it and doing it. He wants to hold her. She wants him to turn away from her. Vonnie says I love you and Walt turns away from her as she knew he would. The blast in the small room is deafening.

In the Epilogue, Walt sits alone in his house for the week after Vonnie's death drinking. He is enjoying the new deck that the contractors put on his house. He sits out there on a lawn chair with a cooler of beer beside him. Periodically people come by to see him and he would just step off the deck and start walking toward the hills. He loses track of time as he waits for the people to leave. People leave food for him, but he has to go out every so often to get beer. He goes to a Texaco station on the outskirts of Durant. The kid who works there either does not know him or pretends he does not.

Vonnie's dog comes go his house. He keeps his distance for a while, but eventually comes closer. The two walk off together when someone comes to visit. Vic mentions in one of her many phone calls that the dog escaped from Vonnie's mudroom. Cady would call and he would call her back when he knew she would not be there. Vic would call at five-thirty each day to give him a rundown on what was happening and to voice her anger at having to do his job.

On Thanksgiving, the Little Birds stop by and leave him a frozen box of turkey Hot Pockets, a beer and the Cheyenne Rifle of the Dead. Walt did not realize it was Thanksgiving. Walt thinks about the two women who faced sexual assault. Melissa had her family and friends to restore her, but Vonnie only had silence and recrimination. No one wanted to acknowledge it. He hopes it was the time and not the culture that dictated these reactions. Walt takes the rifle out on the deck with him and lays it across his lap. He thinks about Dena Many Camps saying that spirits linger near the rifle and they can take away the souls of those still living. He hopes they got Vonnie and took her to the Camp of the Dead. She deserved more in her life.

Walt wakes in his lawn chair to the noise of the slamming of a vehicle door. The person enters the cabin and sets things on the counter and gets in the refrigerator. He makes a number of trips and Walt can smell turkey and dressing through the open kitchen window. The dog looks at him ready to retreat, but Walt is tired. He thinks Henry will leave the food and go. Walt waits, but Henry does not leave. Henry comes out on the back deck and sits on the cooler by Walt's chair. Henry and Walt watch the geese go overhead and Henry tells him that Lonnie told him something about geese. He says that one side of their V formation is longer because there are more geese on one side than the other.



Analysis

Walt thinks about how the sentencing of the four boys was lenient and did not reflect their crime. They received two years soft prison time for the brutal rape of the innocent girl. He believes this is the reason they are being killed. Someone is punishing them for getting off so lightly.

Lonnie Little Bird is worried about Walt. He gives him the Cheyenne Death Rifle to protect him and adds the cartridges so that he can protect himself. Lonnie likes Walt and would help him if he could as would others. They see him as a friend and respect him. Walt finally faces Melissa for the first time since the trial and is able to let go of the guilt that he feels when he thinks of her. She has moved on with her life and it is time that Walt did also. He has to stop seeing her as a victim and instead see her as the young girl that she is today.

George is once again on the run. He is scared for his life and not thinking properly. Henry thinks he may not be right in the head. The loss of his brother and the various injuries he has suffered could be hampering his thinking. This muddled thinking leads him straight into the cross hairs of the killer . Only Walt can save him.

Walt does not like that the killer is Vonnie. He understands that she was abused and did not receive justice. This affected her life in every way and she did not want the same to happen to Melissa. She, however, did not take into account that Melissa was moving on with her life with the support of her family and friends. Where Vonnie was alone to deal with her abuse, Melissa had people there for her. This helped her to not feel separated and ashamed about what happened to her.

Vonnie placed the feathers as healing for Melissa, but she is the one who needed healing. Walt takes her death hard. She is the first woman he has cared about since the death of his wife. Having Vonnie's dog with him helps him deal with his grief as does the love of his friends who will not let him be alone for long.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Lonnie Little Bird give Walt the Cheyenne Death Rifle to keep? How will it protect him?

Discussion Question 2

Why does George keep running away? Do you think his injuries are to blame? Why or Why not?



Discussion Question 3

Why does Vonnie place the eagle feathers on the boys' bodies? What does it signify?

Vocabulary

trepidation, antiquated, communicable, latitude, indeterminate, regimented, apparition, encapsulated, indicative, formidable, galvanized, attributed, sundry, quell, macadam, undulating, articulate, opaque, sans, deemed, miniscule



Characters

Sheriff Walter Longmire

Sheriff Walter Longmire is the sheriff of Absaroka County. He is a widower. His wife died four years earlier. He has been in mourning ever since. They were building a house when she died. Walter did not bother to unpack, and his belongings are still in the boxes after four years. The people around him are worried about him. His daughter Cady has his friends in Durant help him lose weight, fix up his home, and meet someone.

Longmire is plagued by a case that happened two years ago. He feels responsible that he did not get justice for the young girl who was assaulted. His oldest friend, Henry Standing Bear, tries to help him get past his feelings and to fix his life. Longmire is admired by the townspeople and the women find him attractive. He wants to change his life and have a relationship. Walt Longmire is a caring man who is affected by the atrocities he sees being a sheriff. He never gets used to seeing a dead body.

Walt Longmire is always there for his friends when they need him. He risks his life to carry Henry Standing Bear off a mountain in a blizzard. He tries to save the life of the woman he loves who turns out to be the person who murdered two young men. This leaves him devastated and he turns away from his friends. Henry will not let him wallow in self-pity.

Henry Standing Bear

Henry Standing Bear is Cheyenne. He is the cousin of Melissa Little Bird and best friend of Sheriff Walt Longmire. Due to his Special Forces training in Vietnam, Henry is an excellent shot, thus his relationship to Melissa makes him a good suspect in the murders of Cody Pritchard and Jacob Esper. He owns a bar called the Red Pony.

Henry tries to help Walt get over the death of his wife and move forward with his life. He finds him contractors to finish his home and makes him exercise to help him lose weight. He also invites Vonnie Hayes to their annual football game so that Walt and Vonnie can get to know one another.

Henry helps Walt investigate the murders of Cody Pritchard and Jacob Espers. He helps Walt visit the Cheyenne Reservation and talk with his relatives about who might be behind the murders. He looks after Walt because he is his best friend and wants to help him move on with his life. He is shot helping his friend track a boy in danger. He is spiritual and carries a Cheyenne medicine bag with him, which he holds to bring him strength while he waits for Walt to get help. Henry is always there for his friend and will not let Walt mourn the death of Vonnie on his own.



Melissa Little Bird

Melissa Little Bird is a young Cheyenne girl. She was in high school when the four boys, Cody, Jacob, George, and Bryan sexually assaulted her. Melissa suffers from fetal alcohol syndrome due to her mother's consumption of alcohol during pregnancy. The young girl did not understand what the boys had done to her was wrong. She did not want to get them into trouble. Melissa gets through the ordeal of the trial with the love and support of her family. Her Aunt Arbutus takes Melissa away from her father until he is able to give up alcohol, which is able to do in time. Only then is Melissa allowed to once again have contact with him. Both her uncle, Henry Standing Bear and Sheriff Longmire have a soft spot for the young girl who eventually goes on to get a partial basketball scholarship to a community college in South Dakota.

Vonnie Hayes

Vonnie Hayes has lived in Absaroka county all of her life. She came from a family who were well off. Longmire had a crush on her when he was a teenage boy and his daughter tried to set them up after his wife died, but those times never seemed to work out for them. It is only when Henry Standing Bear decides to change Walt Longmire's life that he and Vonnie seem to finally have a chance at a relationship. She comes to his house to watch a football game and then she invites him to her house for dinner. Everyone knows that Vonnie's father shot himself, but no one knows the real reason why. There were rumors in town that he had sexually assaulted Vonnie as a child, but no one pays too much attention to it. For Vonnie the rumor is all to true and she was a victim of sexual assault by her father for years as a child. She eventually told her mother about it. When Vonnie's mother threatened to expose the truth, her father killed himself. Vonnie has never been able to live a life free of her father and what he did. She tried to have a normal life, but the memories of her childhood would always intrude.

When Melissa Little Bird is sexually assaulted by the four boys and they are given very little time for their crime, Vonnie decides to take justice into her own hands. She will make the boys pay for what they have done. Vonnie was denied revenge against her father; so, she is more than happy to get revenge for Melissa. She even uses the gun that her father used to commit suicide. When Vonnie is trying to kill George, however, she is shot and seriously wounded by Sheriff Longmire. He tracks her back to her house and finds her sitting in the old stables where her father took his own life. Longmire tries to convince Vonnie to get help for her steadily bleeding wound. Instead Vonnie uses the same gun as her father and takes her own life.

Deputy Victoria Moretti

Deputy Victoria Moretti is Sheriff Longmire's second in command. He is grooming her to replace him as sheriff when he decides to retire. She is small, feisty and comes from a family of police officers. She moved to Absaroka county with her husband who got a job there. Longmire knows that he is lucky to have someone with Vic's talent and



experience. When he finds out that her husband is moving to a job elsewhere and that a divorce seems to be impending Longmire believes that Vic will go back East where she can work with any agency she wishes. She lets him know that she is happy to stay where she is. Longmire puts her in charge of the more technical aspects of the case and she spends a lot of time with the people from the Division of Criminal Investigations, reporting back to the sheriff on what they discovered. Vic seems to be slightly jealous of Longmire's relationship with Vonnie Hayes.

Cody Pritchard

Cody Pritchard is one of the four boys convicted of sexually assaulting Melissa Little Bird. During the trial, Cody is the one that shows the least repentance. He does not offer any apology for what he is done. Instead, he shows great happiness and arrogance when he realizes he will serve very little time for the crime he has committed. Cody is the first of the boys to be shot and killed. No one seems very upset by his death. Everyone is sure that the motive is revenge for what Cody has done and how justice was not served.

Jacob Esper

Jacob Esper is one of the four boys convicted of sexually assaulting Melissa Little Bird. He is also the twin brother to another one of the boys, George Esper. At the trial Jacob makes a half sincere apology. He is the second boy to be shot by the murderer when he is getting ready to go on a fishing trip with his brother. He is found by some men coming to a nearby cabin for a few days.

George Esper

George Esper is Jacob's twin brother and one of the four boys convicted of the sexual assault of Melissa Little Bird. In the court room George's apology was mainly to his parents and not so much to Melissa. When Jacob is killed, Longmire has to go and find George. George does not know that Jacob has been murdered, but he does know that someone is out to kill him. He ends up shooting Henry Standing Bear and getting wounded when he mistakes Henry and the Sheriff for the killer. George is taken into custody and escapes every time. He believes that he will be safe if he can only make it to the Cheyenne Reservation and this is his goal. When he does finally make it George is shot in the arm by the killer only to be saved from further harm by Sheriff Longmire who wounds the murderer. George is taken to the hospital where he recovers.

Bryan Keller

Bryan Keller is one of the boys tried for the sexual assault of Melissa Little Bird. He did not participate in the assault, but he watched and did not try to stop the boys. He is the only one who shows true repentance for what has happened. He gets probation and



community service for his sentence. When the killer begins to shoot the boys one by one, Sheriff Longmire brings Bryan to the sheriff's office for his protection and that is where he stays until the murderer is caught.

Lonnie Little Bird

Lonnie Little Bird is the father of Melissa Little Bird. He is a gentle man with thick glasses. He has lost the use of his legs. His sisters do not allow him to keep his daughter until he gives up alcohol, which he does successfully. Due to the fact that he is unable to use his legs Lonnie relieves his aggressions about what was done to his daughter by shooting into a fence post with the Cheyenne Rifle of the Dead.

Ruby

Ruby is the receptionist and dispatcher for the Absaroka County Sheriff's Department. She has a great deal of respect and affection for Sheriff Longmire, and she does her best to keep him on the straight and narrow path. Ruby is very disappointed in Longmire when he gives into his anger and uses violence against Turk as an answer to the beating the deputy gave one of the prisoners. Longmire values Ruby's opinion and soon makes it up to her.

Lucian Connally

Lucian Connally is the former sheriff of Absaroka county. He is the uncle of Turk Connally and the mentor to Sheriff Walt Longmire. Lucian is a tough man who is a little rough around the edges. He gives Walt advice when he needs it and helps out at the sheriff's office when necessary. Due to the loss of one of his legs in the line of duty he is not as active as he used to be, but his mind is still agile enough to beat Walt at chess every week. When Lucian finds out that his nephew has beaten a prisoner, he takes it upon himself to have a word with him. Lucian convinces him that the highway patrol with their structure would be more of a fit for him. He is the only one who does not disapprove of Walt punching Turk in a fit of anger for hitting a drunk and defenseless man. He even kicked Turk a few times when he was unconscious.

Turk Connally

Turk Connally is the former sheriff, Lucian Connally's nephew, and a deputy to Sheriff Longmire. He aspires to become the next sheriff of Absaroka county. His beating of a drunk prisoner results in Longmire breaking Turk's nose in anger. After a talk with his Uncle Lucien, Turk decides to join the highway patrol, which Longmire believes is a much better fit for him.

Omar

Omar is a local expert on guns and tracking. He runs a successful business where he serves as a guide to wealthy hunters. He helps Sheriff Longmire figure out what type of gun the murderer used on Cody Pritchard and gives him a list of people in the community who have the shooting skills necessary to have committed the crime. He names both Longmire and Henry Standing Bear as possibilities. Omar does not seem to like or trust Henry. As a shooting expert, Omar is a logical suspect for the crime as well.



Symbols and Symbolism

Eagle Feather

An eagle feather was left at the site of each murder on the body of the victim. It was meant to be symbolic. It turned out that the feathers were not even genuine.

Size Nine Vasques

The killer wore size nine Vasques boots, which seemed to be a very popular boot and size with many people concerned with the investigation. Vonnie chose the boots since they were worn by the Esper brothers. The presence of these boot prints at the murder of Jacob Esper threw the police off the track and made them believe George might be responsible for his own brother's death.

Cheyenne Rifle of Death

The Cheyenne Rifle of Death was one of the possibilities for the murder weapon. It belonged to Lonnie Little Bird; therefore, he or Henry Standing Bear could have used it to kill Cody and Jacob. The gun is said to be haunted. Walter Longmire begins to see Native American spirits once the gun is in his possession.

Cheyenne Reservation

The Cheyenne Reservation is land given to the Cheyenne people by the federal government. When Henry Standing Bear goes there he becomes a different person from the one he is off of the Reservation. George Esper believes that if he only can make it to the Reservation and learn to live like the Cheyenne he will be safe from the killer.

The Camp of the Dead

The Camp of the Dead is where the Cheyenne go when they die. Walt is told that the ghosts want him to join them in the Camp of the Dead. He sees the ghosts of the Cheyenne when he is caught in a blizzard with a wounded Henry Standing Bear and George Esper. The ghosts give him the strength to carry both men to safety and to make it out alive himself.



Sharps Gun

A sharps gun is the type of gun used to kill both Cody Pritchard and Jacob Esper. The gun that Sheriff Longmire is looking for is antique, but several people in the county seem to own one including Omar and Lonnie Little Bird. The actual murder weapon is owned by Vonnie Hayes. It was the same gun that her father used to kill himself when he believed the sexual assault of his young daughter was about to be made public. It is also the gun Vonnie uses to kill herself.

Absaroka County

Absaroka County in Wyoming is the jurisdiction of Sheriff Walter Longmire. The killings of Cody Pritchard and Jacob Esper take Longmire to various places in the county.

Medicine Bag

A medicine bag is sacred to the Cheyenne and contains certain herbs that they can use in prayer and rituals. Henry Standing Bear asks for his medicine bag when he and Longmire are caught in the middle of the blizzard. Henry has been wounded badly by George Esper. Longmire does not believe in the mysticism that his Cheyenne friend does, but he gives him the bag. As he walks away with a wounded George Esper, Longmire can hear Henry singing. It is this singing that also helps him find Henry upon his return, although at that point Henry says he was not singing.

Stables

The old stables at Vonnie's house is where Longmire finds her after she tries to kill George Esper. She is wounded and sitting in the same spot where her father killed himself with the very gun she holds in her hand. Although the place has painful memories for her, Vonnie has kept it intact and exactly as it was during her childhood. She takes her life there with the same gun as her father.

Sheep

Sheep desecrate the body of Cody Pritchard so that the police cannot get any evidence from the body or surrounding area.



Settings

Absaroka County, Wyoming

Absaroka County, Wyoming is where Longmire is Sheriff. His office is in Durant, Wyoming. It is a small town. Everyone knows everyone else and knows every other person's business. The town is near where Little Big Horn was fought and there is a Cheyenne Reservation near the town. Big Horn Mountain is near the town. Walt and Henry are on the mountain in a blizzard and Walt has visions of the ghosts of the Native Americans who lived and died on the mountain. Absaroka County is a rural county where the people enjoy the outdoors. There are cowboys and Native Americans. Some of the inhabitants do not like the Native American culture and there are some clashes between the two cultures.

Cheyenne Reservation

The Cheyenne Reservation is where the Cheyenne Indians were relocated by the US Government. Most still live on the reservation. Henry Standing Bear takes Walt Longmire to the reservation to speak with Lonnie Little Bird. The Reservation is governed by the Federal Government. It is not technically part of the county, so Walt Longmire as sheriff cannot investigate on the reservation. It is its own territory which the Federal Government gave to the Cheyenne Nation. Indian Affairs are the ones who keep the peace on the Reservation. As federal employees, they have the money for fancy equipment that Longmire and his deputies cannot afford. The people on the reservation live in poverty and have a shorter life expectancy than their white neighbors.



Themes and Motifs

Revenge

The title, *The Cold Dish*, refers to revenge as a dish best served cold. It has been two years since the sentencing of the four boys who raped Melissa Little Bird, but there are still hurt feelings about the lenient sentences that were handed down to the boys involved.

Vonnie Hayes is seeking revenge for Melissa Little Bird and herself. The men who assaulted them did not get the punishment that they deserved so Vonnie seeks to remedy that. Vonnie's father killed himself so she was not able to avenge his assault on her, but she can see that the young man who assaulted Melissa Little Bird get what she believes they deserve. She wants to have some control over her life so attempts to help Melissa find closure by killing these young men so that she does not have to face them anymore.

Friendship

Walt and Henry have been friends for years, and they are always there for one another. Henry pushes Walt to move on with his life after mourning his wife for four years. He gets a contractor to finish the home that Walt and his wife were building when she died. Henry makes Walt get out and exercise because he is just sitting around and gaining weight. He even helps him get a date. Henry also helps his friend with his murder investigation by being his guide to the Cheyenne Reservation.

Walt shows his friendship for Henry when he risks his life to save Henry during the blizzard on the mountain. He did not want to leave his friend, but had to carry George Esper to safety before he could help Henry. Walt summons all of his strength to carry the substantial bulk of his friend down the mountain to safety. He suffered frostbite on his ear and fingers to save his friend. The two men are there for one another and take risks that show that they value each other's friendship.

Guilt

Walt feels guilty for not getting justice for Melissa Little Bird. He feels that he has failed her. Every time he sees her he feels ashamed that he could not do more for her. The Little Bird family does not blame Walt for the light sentences that were handed down to the young men. Walt only blames himself and this guilt makes him feel awkward around Melissa.

Henry, Melissa's cousin, jokes that when he sees the look of guilt on Walt's face that he will dub it his Little Bird face. He tries to tell his friend that he should not feel guilty that



there was nothing that he could do. This does not assuage the guilt that he feels for not being able to protect the innocent young girl.

Sexual Assault

Melissa Little Bird is assaulted by four young men who take advantage of her innocence. Melissa has fetal alcohol syndrome and at the trial it is questioned if she has the mental capacity to understand what the boys' intentions were when they lead her into the school's basement.

Vonnie Hayes' life was greatly affected by the sexual assault against her by her father. She was unable to confront him because he killed himself before she understood that what was happening was wrong. She has not had a stable relationship because she feels broken and used. Vonnie confronts her feelings of helplessness by going after the young men who assaulted Melissa. It gives her a feeling of control over what happened to her and she wants to help Melissa let go and be able to live her life like Vonnie was unable to do.



Styles

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is first person. This point of view is limited since the reader only knows what Sheriff Walter Longmire experiences and knows. Telling the story through the viewpoint of Sheriff Longmire allows the reader to have information regarding the murders of Cody Pritchard and Jacob Esper that they otherwise would not have. The sheriff is the primary investigator, thus all information comes to him eventually and is therefore passed onto the reader.

The story is told through exposition with a large amount of dialogue interspersed. Sheriff Longmire does a lot of interior reflection during the murder investigation and the reader is allowed access to thoughts he would prefer not to share with those around him, especially the fact that his best friend Henry Standing Bear looks suspicious at times throughout the investigation. Sheriff Longmire also provides the reader with flashbacks to the trial of Cody Pritchard, Jacob Esper, George Esper and Bryan Keller for the rape of a young Cheyenne girl, Melissa Little Bird. Without wasting time going through the entire trial Longmire's memories focus on the more important parts of the trial such as the boys being found guilty, the statements they did or did not make at the end of the trial that showed whether they were actually sorry for what they had done and the fact that they served very little time for their offense.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is modern and casual. It is the everyday language of a modern reader and thus easy to follow. The main character seems like an average simple sheriff in a small county in Wyoming, but his level of education is apparent in his literary and philosophic references. He tries to maintain a self-deprecating persona, but sometimes this does not ring true.

The language of the novel is indicative of the setting as well as the people who live in Absaroka County in Wyoming. Henry Standing Bear is the only character whose language is more formal than that of the other characters. The formality of Henry's speech comes from the fact that he does not use contractions. The difference between his speech and every other character's is rather obvious. His lack of the use of contractions is even commented upon by another character in the novel. The easy style of the novel's language makes it an easy book to read and gives it the ability to appeal to a wide range of audience.

Structure

This novel is made up of sixteen chapters with an epilogue. Each chapter is approximately twenty pages, and the epilogue is only seven pages long. The chapters



are a good mixture of exposition and dialogue so that the reader maintains an interest in the story.

The plot of the novel is a simple one. It only has one subplot. The novel follows Sheriff Walter Longmire as he investigates the murders of two young men who were sentenced for rape, but spent very little time in jail for the offense. He also has to protect two other potential victims as the killer tries their best to seek vengeance upon them as well. The book comes to a satisfying ending when Longmire wounds the killer and then follows them back to their house where they end their life before his very eyes. The subplot focuses on Sheriff Longmire's memories of the trial of the four boys. Mainly the reader learns about the jury's decision of finding the boy's guilty on various counts and their subsequent sentencing two weeks later.

The novel moves a little slowly at times in order for the author to drag out the suspense and to keep the reader guessing as to the killer's identity. The story is interrupted periodically as well when Sheriff Longmire flashes back to the trial of the four boys for the rape of a young girl. This is the only way that the reader is acquainted with the personalities of the two dead victims.



Quotes

The Bear had been a part of one of the most effective killing machines on either side of the war.

-- Walt Longmire (Chapter 1 paragraph 3)

Importance: This information gives the reader insight into what Henry Standing Bear is capable of. He can be a dangerous man when necessary and has the skills necessary to kill and he has already done so. His relationship to the rape victim, Melissa Little Bird, has already been established.

Well, I don't figure there'll be any public outcries of mourning...

-- Joe Benham (Chapter 2 paragraph 1)

Importance: It is obvious right away that very few people are saddened by the death of Cody Pritchard. He is someone who will not be missed.

This is one of the boys that was involved in that rape case two years ago.

-- T.J. Sherwin (Chapter 2 paragraph 4)

Importance: This gives an insight into Cody Pritchard's character and why no one seems too concerned about his death. He was involved in the rape of a young girl. Two years have passed and he is not in jail for his crime. This is setting up a strong motive for his death.

I knew that was one you didn't want to hear, but he could most definitely do it.

-- Omar Rhoades (Chapter 4 paragraph 16)

Importance: Omar is telling Walt that Henry could make the shot that killed Cody Pritchard. Walt does not want to hear this because Henry is his friend. He is also a relative of Melissa Little Bird.

He's your best friend, seems like it's something you'd know.

-- Lucian Connolly (Chapter 6 paragraph 14)

Importance: Lucian tries to make Walt trust in his feelings about Henry Standing Bear. He knows his friend is not a killer and he should trust that feeling.

A white attempting to make it look like an Indian.

-- Henry (Chapter 6 paragraph 9)

Importance: Henry suggests that the feathers could be the work of a white man trying to blame the crime on an Indian.

Somebody ruins your life, your child's life, and his future... These were pretty powerful motives.



-- Walt Longmire (Chapter 9 paragraph 8)

Importance: Walt is trying to figure out who had killed Cody Pritchard and Jacob Esper. Jim Keller, the father of one of the four boys put on trial for the rape of Melissa Little Bird, has a strong motive for killing the other boys. His son only watched and did not participate in the assault, but neither did he try to stop them. His son, Bryan, is now tainted by what he and his friends have done and in consequence has ruined his future and the life of his parents.

You're not being punished for your sins.

-- T.J. Sherwin (Chapter 10 paragraph 9)

Importance: T.J. wants Walt to know that the two boys deaths are not his fault. He tried to get justice for Melissa Little Bird, but he could only apprehend the boys and let the judicial system take care of the rest.

Sometimes dreams are wiser than waking.

-- Cheyenne Warrior (Chapter 12 paragraph 3)

Importance: In his dreamlike state, Walt is able to help his friend off the mountain. This dreamlike state saves he and Henry's lives.

He said that you need protection from something very powerful and very bad.

-- Henry (Chapter 15 paragraph 9)

Importance: Lonnie is worried about Walt and wants to give him the Cheyenne Rifle of the Dead to protect him. The ancestors speak to him and he knows something bad is coming; so, he wants Walt to be protected.

When Melissa had met this crisis in her life, her family and friends had restored her, but when Vonnie had faced abuse, she had met silence and recrimination, and the violation done to her child's soul had been swept under the Turkish rugs.

-- Walt Longmire (Epilogue paragraph 3)

Importance: Although they both suffered sexual assault as young girls Melissa and Vonnie's different experiences had an effect on how it would shape the rest of their lives. Melissa was able to bring her assailants to light. Although they did not get the justice they deserved, everyone knew what they had done. Her family and friends stood by her through it all and cared for her, helping Melissa to overcome the experience. Vonnie, however, had to hide her experience and endure her suffering in silence since her father was the one assaulting her. Vonnie had only hatred and thoughts of revenge to get her through life. Her experience tainted any new life she tried to create for herself.