

Simo's body lay near the far wall as it had most evenings when the family slept. His eyes were closed, and someone had covered him with a blanket.

Plaswa was holding Ogistin's mother, O'nis, and whispering to her the same story of Simo's brave death. Ogistin's sisters, Talaz and Agat, wept softly while Mali, the eldest, stood silently above Simo's body. Azô had gone again, no doubt to tell Grandmother and begin preparations for the burial.

Ogistin stood behind Mali and looked down at Simo's quiet face. For a second, he wanted to tell everyone to stop teasing, wanted to pull Simo up by the arm and wrestle with him for frightening him with this ridiculous story. But then Mali knelt and pulled away the blanket that covered their older brother's body.

Most of Simo's left shoulder had been blown away, revealing muscle and bone. Mali gasped and turned away. She dropped the blanket, leaving the wound uncovered.

Ogistin didn't move. Simo had been a tall, strong, handsome man. Ogistin felt his eyes blur and for a moment, his sleeping brother was perfect once again. But when the tears fell, the awful picture became clear.

Ogistin knelt and gently resettled the blanket, leaving two dark tear stains on the cloth. He shook his head. He wouldn't let anyone see him cry.



water was calmer here, and clear. He could see the trap underwater, with an oak branch caught between its metal teeth. He stood a moment, staring at it, frustrated. There was nothing to do but get that one too. He let out a breath and waded into the icy water, pulling the trap out of the water and bringing it back to shore. He began to remove the stick but stopped.

Something had changed. The Baker River, swollen by the spring thaw, thundered as loudly as before. But the woods were too quiet. The hair on the back of John's neck prickled. He turned around quickly and was blinded by the sun. He shaded his eyes to help him focus.

John blinked and tried to look beyond the sandy bank into the forest. When his vision cleared, he realized that he was not looking at trees at all. He was looking at men.