

# AZ

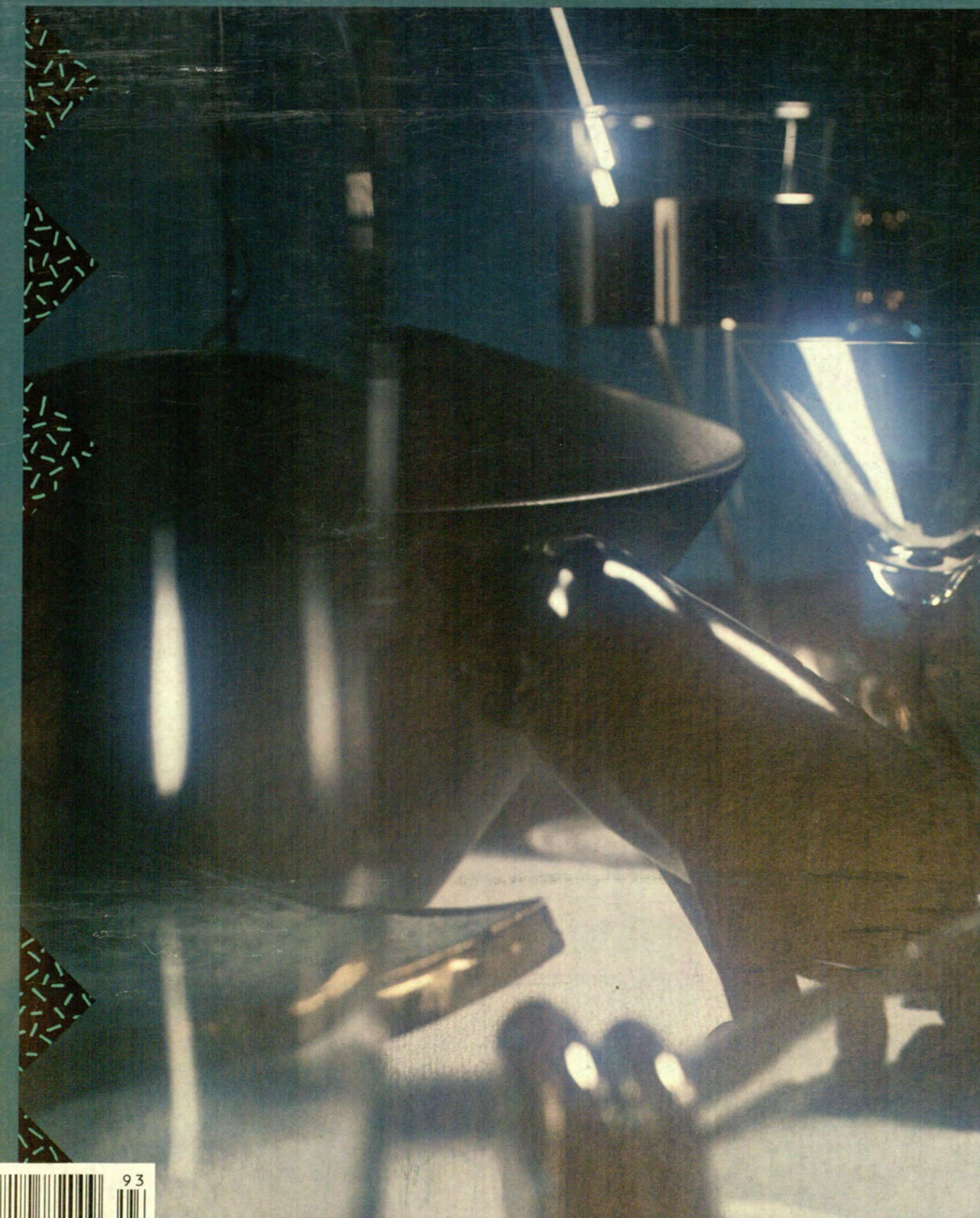
SOPHISTICATED LIVING IN THE VALLEY

PREMIERE ISSUE

FICTION BY  
TONY HILLERMAN

HOLIDAYS IN NAPA

TREASURES  
OF TALIESIN



FALL/WINTER 1989 • FOUR DOLLARS



# AZ

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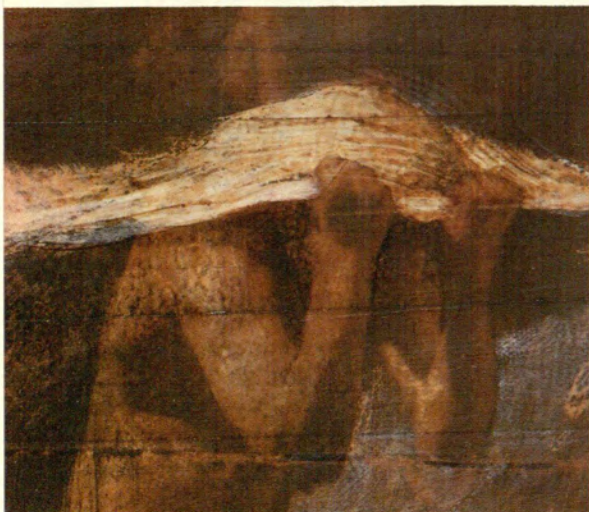
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ARIZONA TREND AZ  
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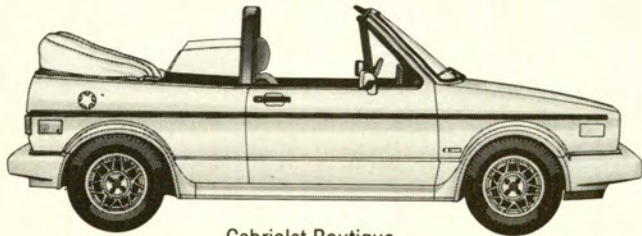
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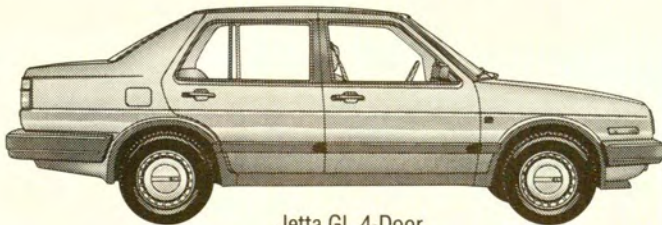
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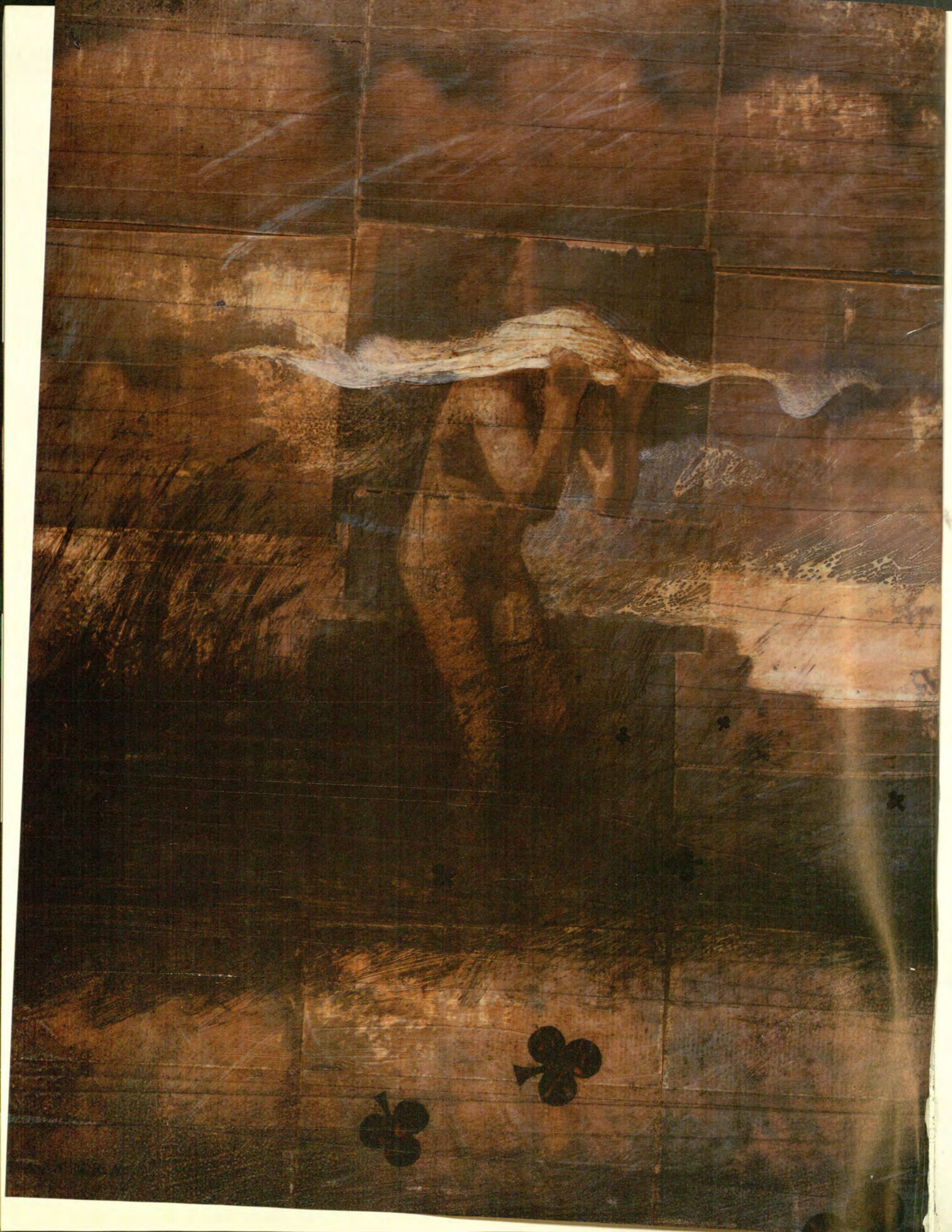
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# THE WITCH, YAZZIE, AND THE NINE OF CLUBS

**A**LL SUMMER THE WITCH HAD BEEN AT WORK on the Rainbow Plateau. It began—although Corporal Jimmy Chee would learn of it only now, at the very last—with the mutilation of the corpse. The rest of it fell pretty much into the pattern of witchcraft gossip one expected in this lonely corner of the Navajo Reservation. Adeline Etcitty's mare had foaled a two-headed colt. Rudolph Bisti's boys lost their best ram while driving their flocks into the high country, and when they found the body werewolf tracks were all around it. The old woman they call Kicks-Her-Horse had actually seen the skin-walker. A man walking down Burnt Water Wash in the twilight had disappeared into a grove of cottonwoods and when the old woman got there, he turned himself into an owl and flew away. The daughter of Rosemary Nakai had seen the witch, too. She shot her .22 rifle at a big dog bothering her horses and the dog turned into a man wearing a wolfskin and she'd run away with-

---

A SHORT STORY BY TONY HILLERMAN  
ILLUSTRATION BY GREG SPALENKA





Arizona readers have long been acquainted with Tony Hillerman, author of riveting mysteries that revolve around his beloved Navajo country. His latest novel, "Talking God," has been a fixture on national best-seller lists for six months. In 1981, before the author's arrival as a literary superstar, Hillerman wrote this short story for the International Crime Writers competition in Sweden (it won him a week's vacation for two in Scandinavia). This is the first time it has been published in the United States.

out seeing what he did.

Corporal Chee heard of the witch now and then and remembered it as he remembered almost everything. But Chee heard less than most because Chee had been assigned to the Tuba City sub-agency and given the Short Mountain territory only six months ago. He came from the Chuska Mountains on the Arizona-New Mexico border 300 miles away. His born-to clan was the Slow Talking People, and his paternal clan was the Mud Dineh. Here among the barren canyons along the Utah border the clans were the Standing Rock People, the Many Goats, the Tangle Dineh, the Red Forehead Dineh,

the Bitter Waters and the Monster People. Here Chee was still a stranger. To a stranger, Navajos talk cautiously of witches.

Which is perhaps why Jim Chee had learned only now, at this very moment, of the mutilation. Or perhaps it was because he had a preoccupation of his own—the odd, frustrating question of where Taylor Yazzie had gone, and what Yazzie had done with the loot from the Burnt Water Trading Post. Whatever the reason he was late in learning, it was the Cowboy who finally told him.

"Everybody knew there was a skinwalker working way last spring," the Cowboy said. "As soon as they found out the witch killed that guy."

Chee had been leaning against the Cowboy's pickup truck. He was looking past the Emerson Nez hogan, through the thin blue haze of piñon smoke which came from its smokehole, watching a half-dozen Nez kinfolks stacking wood for the Girl Dance fire. He was asking himself for the thousandth time what Taylor Yazzie could have done with \$40,000 worth of pawn—rings, belt buckles, bracelets, bulky silver concho belts which must weigh, altogether, 500 pounds. And what had Taylor Yazzie done with himself—another 180 pounds or so, with the bland round face more common among eastern Navajos than on the Rainbow Plateau, with his thin mustache, with his wire-rimmed sunglasses. Chee had seen Taylor Yazzie only once, the day before he had done the burglary, but since then he had learned him well. Yazzie's world was small, and Yazzie had vanished from it, and since he could hardly speak English there was hardly any place he could go. And just as thoroughly, the silver pawn had vanished from the lives of a hundred families who had turned it over to Ed Yost's trading post to secure their credit until they sold their wool. Through all these thoughts it took a moment for the Cowboy's message to penetrate. When it did,

Corporal Chee became very attentive.

"Killed what guy?" Chee asked. Taylor Yazzie, you're dead, he thought. No more mystery.

The Cowboy was sprawled across the front seat of his truck, fishing a transistor radio out of the glovebox. "You remember," he said. "Back last April. That guy you collected on Piute Mesa."

"Oh," Chee said. He remembered. It had been a miserable day's work and the smell of death had lingered in his carryall for weeks. But that had been in May, not April, and it hadn't looked like a homicide. Just too much booze, too much high-altitude cold. An old story on the reservation. And John Doe wasn't Taylor Yazzie. The coroner had put the death two months before the body was recovered. Taylor Yazzie was alive, and well, and walking out of Ed Yost's trading post a lot later than that. Chee had been there and seen him. "You see that son of a bitch," Ed Yost had said. "I just fired his ass. Never comes to work, and I think he's been stealing from me." No, Yost didn't want to file a complaint. Nothing he could prove. But the next morning it had been different. Someone with a key had come in the night, and opened the saferoom where the pawn was kept, and took it. Only Yost and Yazzie had access to the keys, and Yazzie had vanished.

"Why you say a witch killed that guy?" Chee asked.

The Cowboy backed out of the pickup cab. The radio didn't work. He shook it, glancing at Chee. His expression was cautious. The bumper stickers plastering the Ford declared him a member of the Native American Rodeo Cowboys' Assn., and proclaimed that Cowboys Make Better Lovers, and that Cowgirls Have More Fun, and recorded the Cowboy's outdated permit to park on the Arizona State University campus. But Cowboy was still a Many Goats Dineh, and Chee had been his friend for just a few months. Uneasiness warred with modern macho.

"They said all the skin was cut off his hands," the Cowboy said. But he said it in a low voice.

"Ah," Chee said. He needed no more explanation. The ingredients of *anti'*, the "corpse-powder" which skinwalkers make to spread sickness, was known to every Navajo. They use the skin of their victim which bears the unique imprint of the individual human identity—the skin of palm, and finger-pads, and the balls of the feet. Dried and pulverized with proper ritual, it became the dreaded reverse-negative of the pollen used for curing and blessing. Chee remembered the corpse as he had seen it. Predators and scavenger birds had left a ragged sack of bones and bits of desiccated flesh. No identification and nothing to show it was anything but routine. And that's how it had gone into the books. "Unidentified male. About 40. Probable death by exposure."

"If somebody saw his palms had been skinned, then somebody saw him a hell of a long time before anybody called us about him," Chee said.





Nothing unusual in that, either.

"Somebody found him fresh," the Cowboy said. "That's what I heard. One of the Pinto outfit." Cowboy removed the battery from the radio. By trade, Cowboy was the assistant county agricultural agent. He inspected the battery, which looked exactly like all other batteries, with great care. The Cowboy did not want to talk about witch business.

"Any of the Pinto outfit here?" Chee asked.

"Sure," Cowboy said. He made a sweeping gesture, including the scores of pickups, wagons, old sedans occupying the sagebrush flats around the Nez hogans, the dozens of cooking fires smoking in the autumn twilight, the people everywhere. "All the kinfolks come to this. Everybody comes to this."

This was an Enemy Way. This particular Enemy Way had been prescribed, as Chee understood it, to cure Emerson Nez of whatever ailed him so he could walk again with beauty all around him as Changing Woman had taught when she formed the first Navajos. Family duty would require all kinsmen, and clansmen, of Nez to be here, as Cowboy had said, to share in the curing and the blessing. Everybody would be here, especially tonight. Tonight was the sixth night of the ceremonial when the ritual called for the Girl Dance to be held. Its original purpose was metaphysical—part of the prescribed re-enactment of the deeds of the Holy People. But it was also social. Cowboy called it the Navajo substitute for the singles bar, and came to see if he could connect with a new girlfriend. Anthropologists came to study primitive behavior. Whites and Utes and even haughty Hopis came out of curiosity. Bootleggers came to sell illegal whiskey. Jim Chee came, in theory, to catch bootleggers. In fact, the elusive, invisible, missing Yazzie drew him. Yazzie and the loot. Sometime, somewhere, some of it would have to surface. And when it did, someone would know it. But now to hell with Yazzie and pawn jewelry. He might have an old homicide on his hands. With an unidentified victim and the whole thing six months cold, it promised to be as frustrating as the burglary. But he would find some Pinto family members and begin the process.

Cowboy's radio squawked into sudden life and produced the voice of Willie Nelson, singing of abandonment and sorrow. Cowboy turned up the volume.

"Specially everyone would come to this one," Cowboy said toward Chee's departing back. "Nez wasn't the only one bothered by that witch. One way or another it bothered just about everybody on the plateau."

Chee stopped and walked back to the pickup. "You mean Nez was witched?"

"That's what they say," Cowboy said. "Got sick. They took him to the clinic in Tuba City and when that didn't do any good they got themselves a Listener to find out what was wrong with

the old man, and he found out Nez had the corpse sickness. He said the witch got on the roof" (Cowboy paused to point with his lips—a peculiarly Navajo gesture—toward the Nez hogan) "and dropped *anti*' down the smokehole."

"Same witch? Same one that did the killing?"

"That's what the Listener said," Cowboy agreed.

Cowboy was full of information tonight, Chee thought. But was it useful? The fire for the Girl Dance had been started now. It cast a red, wavering light which reflected off windshields, faces and the moving forms of people. The pot drums began a halting pattern of sounds which reflected, like the firelight, off the cliffs of the great mesa which sheltered the Nez place. This was the ritual part of the evening. A shaman named Dillon Keeyani was the signer in charge of curing Nez. Chee could see him, a tall, gaunt man standing beyond the fire, chanting the repetitive poetry of this part of the cure. Nez stood beside him, naked to the waist, his face blackened to make him invisible from the ghosts which haunt the night. Why would the Listener have prescribed an Enemy Way? It puzzled Chee. Usually a witch victim was cured with a Prostitution Way, or the proper chants from the Mountain Way were used. The Enemy Way was ordered for witch cases at times, but it was a broad-spectrum antibiotic—used for that multitude of ills caused by exposure to alien ways and alien cultures. Chee's family had held an Enemy Way for him when he had returned from the University of New Mexico, and in those years when Navajos were coming home from the Vietnam War it was common every winter. But why use it to cure Emerson Nez of the corpse sickness? There was only one answer. Because the witch was an alien—a Ute, a white, a Hopi perhaps. Chee thought about how the Listener would have worked. Long conversations with Nez and those who knew him, hunting for causes of the malaise, for broken taboos, for causes of depression. And then the Listener would have found a quiet place, and listened to what the silence taught him. How would the Listener have known the witch was alien? There was only one way. Chee was suddenly excited. Someone must have seen the witch. Actually seen the man—not in the doubtful moonlight, or a misty evening when a moving shape could be dog or man—but under circumstances that told the witness that the man was not a Navajo.

**T**he Sway Dance had started now. A double line of figures circled the burning pyre, old men and young—even boys too young to have been initiated into the secrets of the Holy People. Among Chee's clans in the Chuskas ritualism was more orthodox and these youngsters would not be allowed to dance until a Yeibichai was held for them, and their eyes had seen through the masks of Black God and Talking God. The fire flared higher as a burning log collapsed with

*continued on page 94*

*Jim Chee  
learned of  
the witch  
only now,  
at the  
Enemy Way.*





## THE WITCH, YAZZIE, AND THE NINE OF CLUBS

*Continued from page 51*

an explosion of sparks. Chee wove through the spectators, asking for Pintos. He found an elderly woman joking with two younger ones. Yes, she was Anna Pinto. Yes, her son had found the body last spring. His name was Walker Pinto. He'd be somewhere playing stick dice. He was wearing a sweatband. Red.

Chee found the game behind Ed Yost's pickup truck. A lantern on the tailgate provided the light, a saddle blanket spread on the ground was the playing surface. Ed Yost was playing with an elderly round-faced Hopi and four Navajos. Chee recognized Pinto among the watchers by the red sweatband and his mother's description. "Skinny," she'd said. "Bony-faced. Sort of ugly-looking." Although his mother hadn't said it, Walker Pinto was also drunk.

"That's right, man," Pinto said. "I found him. Up there getting the old woman's horses together, and I found him." Wine had slurred Pinto's speech and drowned whatever inhibitions he might have felt about talking of witch business to a man he didn't know. He put his hand on the pickup fender to steady himself and began—Navajo fashion—at the very beginning. He'd married a woman in the Poles Together clan and gone over to Rough Rock to live with her, but she was no good, so this winter he'd come back to his mother's outfit, and his mother had wanted him to go up on Piute Mesa to see about her horses. Pinto described the journey up the mesa with his son, his agile hands acting out the journey. Chee watched the stick dice game. Yost was good at it. He slammed the four painted wooden pieces down on the base stone in the center of the blanket. They bounced two feet into the air and fell in a neat pattern. He tallied the exposed colors, moved the matchsticks being used as score markers, collected the sticks and passed them to the Hopi in maybe three seconds. Yost had been a magician once, Chee remembered. With a carnival, and his customers had called him Three-Hands. "Bets," Yost said. The Hopi looked at the sticks in his hand, smiling slightly. He threw a crumpled dollar onto the blanket. A middle-aged Navajo wearing wire-rimmed glasses put a folded bill beside it. Two more bills hit the blanket. The lantern light reflected off Wire Rims' lenses and off Yost's bald head.

"About then I heard the truck, way back over the ridge," Pinto was saying. His hands created the ridge and the

valley beyond it. "Then the truck it hit something, you see. Bang." Pinto's right hand slammed into his left. "You see, that truck it hit against a rock there. It was turning around in the wash, and the wash is narrow there and it banged up against this rock." Pinto's hands recreated the accident. "I started over there, you see. I walked on over there then to see who it was."

The stick dice players were listening now; the Hopi's face was patient, waiting for the game to resume. The butane lantern made a white light that made Yost's moist eyes sparkle as he looked up at Pinto. There was a pile of bills beside Yost's hand. He took a dollar from it and put it on the blanket without taking his eyes from Pinto.

"But, you see, by the time I got up to the top of the rise, that truck it was driving away. So I went on down there,



*"Tell you what  
I'll do," Yost said  
to Wire Rims,  
"I'll show you  
how I can control  
your mind."*

you see, to find out what had been going on." Pinto's hands re-enacted the journey.

"What kind of truck was it?" Chee asked.

"Already gone," Pinto said. "Bunch of dust hanging in the air, but I didn't see the truck. But when I got down there to the wash, you see, I looked around." Pinto's hands flew here and there, looking around. "There he was, you see, right there shoved under that rabbit brush." The agile hands disposed of the body. The stick dice game remained in recess. The Hopi still held the sticks, but he watched Pinto. So did the fat man who sat cross-legged beside him. The lantern light made a point of white in the center of Yost's black pupils. The faces of the Navajo players were rapt, but the Hopi's expression was polite disinterest. The Two-Heart witches of his culture did their evil with more sophistication.

Pinto described what he had seen under the rabbit brush, his voice wavering with the wine but telling a story

often repeated. His agile hands were surer. They showed how the flayed hands of the corpse had lain, where the victim's hat had rolled, how Pinto had searched for traces of the witch, how he had studied the tracks. Behind the stick dice players the chanting chorus of the Sway Dancers rose and fell. The faint night breeze moved the perfume of burning pinon and the aroma of cedar to Chee's nostrils. The lantern light shone through the rear window of Yost's truck, reflecting from the barrels of the rifles in the gun rack across it. A long-barreled 30.06 and a short saddle carbine, Chee noticed.

"You see, that skinwalker was in a big hurry when he got finished with that body," Pinto was saying. "He backed right over a big chamisa bush and banged that truck all around on the brush and rocks getting it out of there." The hands flew, demonstrating panic.

"But you didn't actually see the truck?" Chee asked.

"Gone," Pinto said. His hands demonstrated the state of goneness.

"Or the witch, either?"

Pinto shook his head. His hands apologized.

On the flat beside the Nez hogan the chanting of the Sway Dance ended with a chorus of shouting. Now the Girl Dance began. Different songs. Different drumbeat. Laughter now, and shouting. The game broke up. Wire Rims folded his blanket. Yost counted his winnings.

"Tell you what I'll do," Yost said to Wire Rims. "I'll show you how I can control your mind." Wire Rims grinned.

"Yes, I will," Yost said. "I'll plant a thought in your mind and get you to say it."

Wire Rims' grin broadened. "Like what?"

Yost put his hand on the Navajo's shoulder. "Let your mind go blank now," he said. "Don't think about nothing." Yost let 10 seconds tick away. He removed the hand. "Now," he said. "It's done. It's in there."

"What?" Wire Rims asked.

"I made you think of a certain card," Yost said. He turned to the spectators, to the Hopi, to Chee. "I always use the same card. Burn it into my mind and keep it there and always use that very same image. That way I can make a stronger impression with it on the other feller's mind." He tapped Wire Rims on the chest with a finger. "He closes his eyes, he sees that certain card."



"Bullshit," Wire Rims said.

"I'll bet you, then," Yost said. "But you got to play fair. You got to name the card you actually see. All right?"

Wire Rims shrugged. "Bullshit. I don't see nothing."

Yost waved his handful of currency. "Yes, you do," Yost insisted. "I got money that says you do. You see that one card I put in your mind. I got \$108 here I'll bet you against that belt you're wearing. What's that worth?" It was a belt of heavy conchos hammered out of thick silver. Despite its age and a heavy layer of tarnish it was a beautiful piece of work. Chee guessed it would bring \$100 at pawn and sell for maybe \$200. But with the skyrocketing price of silver, it might be worth twice that melted down.

"Let's say it would pawn for \$300," Yost said. "That gives me 3-1 odds on the money. But if I'm lying to you, there's just one chance in 52 that you'll lose."

"How you going to tell?" Wire Rims asked. "You tell somebody the card in advance?"

"Better than that," Yost said. "I got him here in my pocket sealed up in an envelope. I always use that same card so I keep it sealed up and ready."

"Sealed up in an envelope?" Wire Rims asked.

"That's right," Yost said. He tapped his forefinger to the chest of his khaki bush jacket.

Wire Rims unbuckled the belt and handed it to Chee. "You hold the money," he said. Yost handed Chee the currency.

"I get to refresh your memory," Yost said. He put his hand on the Navajo's shoulder. "You see a whole deck of cards face down on the table. Now, I turn this one on the end here over." Yost's right hand turned over an invisible card and slapped it emphatically on an invisible table. "You see it. You got it in your mind. Now play fair. Tell me the name of the card."

Wire Rims hesitated. "I don't see nothing," he said.

"Come on. Play fair," Yost said. "Name it."

"Nine of clubs," Wire Rims said.

"Here is an honest man," Yost said to Chee and the Hopi and the rest of them. "He named the nine of clubs." While he said it, Yost's left hand had dipped into the left pocket of the bush jacket. Now it fished out an envelope and delivered it to Chee. "Read it and

weep," Yost said.

Chee handed the envelope to Wire Rims. It was a small envelope, just a bit bigger than a poker card. Wire Rims tore it open and extracted the card. It was the nine of clubs. Wire Rims looked from card to Yost, disappointment mixed with admiration. "How you do that?"

"I'm a magician," Yost said. He took the belt and the money from Chee. "Any luck on that burglary?" he asked. "You find that son of a bitch Yazzie yet?"

"Nothing," Chee said.

And then there was a hand on his arm and a pretty face looking up at him. "I've got you," the girl said. She tugged him toward the fire. "You're my partner. Come on, policeman."

"I'd sure like to catch that son of a bitch," Yost said.

The girl danced gracefully. She told Chee she was born to the Standing Rock Dineh and her father was a Bitter Water. With no clan overlap, none of the complex incest taboos of The People prevented their dancing, or whatever else might come to mind. Chee remembered having seen her working behind the registration desk at the Holiday Inn at Shiprock. She was pretty. She was friendly. She was witty. The dance was good. The pot drums tugged at him, and the voices rose in a slightly ribald song about what the old woman and the young man did on the sheepskins away from the firelight. But things nagged at Chee's memory. He wanted to think.

"You don't talk much," the girl said.

"Sorry. Thinking," Chee said.

"But not about me." She frowned at him. "You thinking about arresting somebody?"

"I'm thinking that tomorrow morning when they finish this sing off with the Scalp Shooting ceremony, they've got to have something to use as the scalp."

The girl shrugged.

"I mean, it has to be something that belonged to the witch. How can they do that unless they know who the witch is? What could it be?"

The girl shrugged again. She was not interested in the subject nor, now, in Jim Chee. "Whyn't you go and ask?" she said. "Big Hat over there is the scalp carrier."

Chee paid his ransom—handing the girl \$2 and then adding two more when the first payment drew a scornful frown.

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The smile lingered, abruptly disappeared, reappeared and suddenly converted itself into an exultant shout of laughter. Jim Chee had found another illusion. In this one, he had been Yost's target. He'd been totally fooled. Yazzie was John Doe. Yost had killed him, removed the fingerprints, put the body where it would be found. Then he had performed his magic. Cleverly. Taking advantage of the circumstances—a new policeman who'd never seen Yazzie. Chee recreated the day. The note to call Yost. Yost wanting to see him, suggesting 2 in the afternoon. Chee had been a few minutes late. The big, round-faced Navajo stalking out of Yost's office. Yost's charade of indignant anger. Who was this ersatz "Yazzie"? The only requirement would be a Navajo from another part of the reservation, whom Chee wouldn't be likely to see again soon. Clever!

That reminded him that he had no time for this now. He stopped at his own vehicle for his flashlight and then checked Yost's truck. Typical of trucks which live out their lives on the rocky tracks of the reservation, it was battered, scraped and dented. The entire plastic padding strip was missing from the front bumper. From the back one, a piece was missing. About 18 inches long. What was left fit Big Hat's description of the scalp. His deduction confirmed, Chee stood behind the truck, thinking.

Had Yost disposed of Yazzie to cover up the faked burglary? Or had Yazzie been killed for some unknown motive and the illusion of burglary created to explain his disappearance? Chee decided he preferred the first theory. For months before the crime the price of silver had been skyrocketing, moving from about \$5 an ounce to at least \$40. It bothered Yost to know that as soon as they sold their wool, his customers would be paying off their debts and walking away with that sudden wealth.

The Girl Dance had ended now. The drums were quiet. The fire had burned down. People were drifting past him through the darkness on their way back to their bedrolls. Tomorrow at dawn there would be the final sand-painting on the floor of the Nez hogan; Nez would drink the ritual emetic and just as the sun rose would vomit out the sickness. Then the Scalp Shooting would be held. A strip of red plastic molding would be shot and a witch would, eventually, die. Would Yost stay for the



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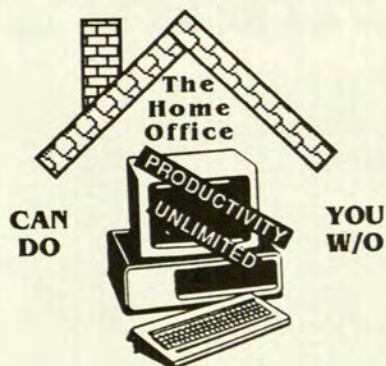
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finish? And how would he react when he saw the plastic molding?

A split second into that thought, it was followed by another. Yost had heard what Pinto had said. Yost would know this form of the Enemy Way required a ceremonial scalp. Yost wouldn't wait to find out what it was.

Chee snapped on the flashlight. Through the back window of Yost's pickup he saw that the rifle rack now held only the 30.06. The carbine was gone.

Chee ran as fast as the darkness allowed, dodging trucks, wagons, people and camping paraphernalia, toward the tent of Big Hat. Just past the brush arbor he stopped. A light was visible through the taut blue nylon. It moved.

Chee walked toward the tent, quietly now, bringing his labored breathing under control. Through the opening he could see Big Hat's bedroll and the motionless outflung arm of someone wearing a flannel shirt. Chee moved directly in front of the tent door. He had his pistol cocked now. Yost was squatting against the back wall of the tent, illuminated by a battery lantern, sorting through the contents of a blue cloth zipper bag. Big Hat sprawled face down just inside the tent, his hat beside his shoulder. Yost's carbine was across his legs....

"Yost," Chee said. "Drop the carbine and..."

Yost turned on his heels, swinging the carbine.

Jim Chee, who had never shot anyone, who thought he would never shoot another human, shot Yost through the chest.

Big Hat was dead, the side of his skull dented. Yost had neither pulse nor any sign of breath. Chee fished in the pockets of his bush jacket and retrieved the concho belt. He'd return it to Wire Rims. In the pocket with it were small sealed envelopes. Thirteen of them. Chee opened the first one. The ace of hearts. Had Wire Rims guessed the five of hearts, Yost would have handed him the fifth envelope from his pocket. Chee's bullet had gone through the left breast pocket of Yost's jacket—puncturing diamonds or spades.

Behind him Chee could hear the sounds of shouting, of running feet, people gathering at the tent flap. Cowboy was there, staring in at him. "What happened?" Cowboy said.

And Chee said, "The witch is dead."





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