

CHIEF
McMURPHY

McMURPHY. *(Whispering.)* Chief, you all right? *(No acknowledgment.)* Saw you get up and figgered maybe you come out here to scrape off some a that thousand-year gum. *(Offering a stick of gum; apologetically.)* They took away my canteen privileges so this is all I got.

CHIEF. *(Taking it - then she speaks in a hoarse voice.)* Thank you.

McMURPHY. That's okay. *(Starts off, comes to a startled halt.)* Hey!! *(Coming back.)* Try it again - you're a little rusty.

CHIEF. *(Clears her throat, more clearly.)* Thank you.

(McMURPHY starts to laugh, trying to keep the sound down. CHIEF heads toward the dormitory, her feelings hurt.)

McMURPHY. *(Stopping her.)* 'Scuse me, Chief. What I was laughin' at, I just caught wise to what you been doin' all these years. Bidin' your time till you could tell 'em off?

CHIEF. No...no, I'd be afraid.

McMURPHY. How's that?

CHIEF. I'm not brave enough.

McMURPHY. Hoo girl, you are crazy, aren't you. I been on a few reservations in my life, but you are the bravest, cleverest damn Injun woman I have ever seen!

CHIEF. My Grandmother was braver.

McMURPHY. Yeah?

CHIEF. She was a full chief and her name was Tee Ah Millatoona. That means The Pine That Stands Tallest on the Mountain. But my Grandfather got twice as strong.

McMURPHY. You must have had a real hero of a Grandpa!

CHIEF. Oh, he wasn't strong that way. He wasn't Indian, neither. He was a town man. His name was Bromden.

McMURPHY. Yeah, I think I see what you're getting at...when a town man marries an Indian that's marryin' beneath him, ain't it? And your Grandma took his name?

CHIEF. He said he wouldn't be married to no woman with a name like Tee Ah Millatoona. But it wasn't only him that made her surrender. Everybody worked on her. The way they're workin' on you.

McMURPHY. They who?

CHIEF. The Combine. It wanted us to go live some place else. It wanted to take away our waterfall. In town they beat up Grandmother and cut off her hair. Oh, the Combine's big...big. She fought it a long time till my Grandfather made her too discouraged to fight any more. Then she signed the papers.

McMURPHY. What papers, Chief?

CHIEF. The ones that gave everything to the government. The village. The falls...

McMURPHY. I remember...but I heard the tribe got paid some huge amount.

CHIEF. That's what the government guy said, here's a whole big pot of money. And Grandmother said, what can you pay for the way a person lives? What can you pay for their right to be an Indian? She didn't understand. Neither did the tribe. They stood in front of our door, holdin' those checks, askin' what should we do now? And Grandmother couldn't tell them 'cause she was too ashamed...and too drunk.

McMURPHY. What happened to her?

CHIEF. She kept drinkin' till she died. They found her in an alley and threw dirt in her eyes. (*Fiercely.*) The Combine whipped her. It beats *everybody*.

McMURPHY. Now, wait a minute -

CHIEF. Yes, yes it does! Oh, they don't bust you outright. They work on you, ways you can't even see. They get hold of you and they *install* things!

McMURPHY. Take 'er easy, buddy.

CHIEF. And if you fight they lock you up some place and make you stop, and...

McMURPHY. (*Closing the CHIEF'S mouth with her hand.*) Whoops, cool it. (*Embraces her, gently, soothingly.*)

CHIEF. (*in a moment, ashamed.*) I been talkin' crazy.

McMURPHY. Well...yeah.

CHIEF. It don't make sense.

McMURPHY. Well, as to *that* -

CHIEF. Sh-h-h! *(Raises her head, moves toward the windows, listening.)* Hear 'em? *(McMURPHY listens. From the sky the wild, gobbling cry again.)*

McMURPHY. Canada honkers flyin' south. Gonna be an early winter, chief. Look, there they go. Right across the moon!

CHIEF. *(Gazing skyward, chanting softly.)* Wire, brier, limber lock...

McMURPHY. Huh?

CHIEF. It's a old children's rhyme. My Grandmother taught it to me.

McMURPHY. Oh, lord, yes, I remember! You play it with your fingers. Hold out your hand, Chief. *(Ticking off fingers, chanting.)*

Wire, brier, limber lock —

CHIEF. Three geese in a flock.

McMURPHY. One flew east -

CHIEF. One flew west -

McMURPHY. An' one flew over the cuckoo's nest!

CHIEF. O-U-T spells out —

McMURPHY. Goose swoops down and plucks *you* out! *(They embrace, laugh happily, then the CHIEF sobers.)*

CHIEF. McMurphy? You gonna crawfish? *(McMURPHY doesn't answer.)* I mean, you gonna back down?

McMURPHY. *(Turning away.)* Aw, what's the difference?

CHIEF. Are you? McMurphy. *(McMURPHY pauses.)* Make me brave again.

McMURPHY. Why, hell, Chief, looks to me like you gettin' bolder by the minute.!

CHIEF. *(shaking her head)* How can I be brave if you ain't? How can anybody? *(She exits into the dorm. McMURPHY is motionless a moment, then follows.)*