



The Dark Wind (A Leaphorn and Chee Novel)

By Tony Hillerman

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The corpse had been “scalped,” its palms and soles removed after death. Sergeant Jim Chee of the Navajo Tribal Police knows immediately he will have his hands full with this case, a certainty that is supported by the disturbing occurrences to follow. A mysterious nighttime plane crash, a vanishing shipment of cocaine, and a bizarre attack on a windmill only intensify Chee’s fears. A dark and very ill wind is blowing through the Southwestern desert, a gale driven by Navajo sorcery and white man’s greed. And it will sweep away everything unless Chee can somehow change the weather.

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Editorial Review

Review

“A book to read with pleasure.” (Colorado Springs Sun)

“Background, characters, story—all first rate.” (Amarillo Texas News)

“Hillerman is first-rateFresh, original, and highly suspenseful.” (Los Angeles Times)

“Hillerman’s best book in an already strong series.” (New Republic)

“Tony Hillerman continues to teach and delight.” (NC Citizen Times)

About the Author

Tony Hillerman (1925–2008), an Albuquerque, New Mexico, resident since 1963, was the author of 29 books, including the popular 18-book mystery series featuring Navajo police officers Jim Chee and Joe Leaphorn, two non-series novels, two children’s books, and nonfiction works. He had received every major honor for mystery fiction; awards ranging from the Navajo Tribal Council's commendation to France's esteemed *Grand prix de litterature policiere*. Western Writers of America honored him with the Wister Award for Lifetime achievement in 2008. He served as president of the prestigious Mystery Writers of America, and was honored with that group’s Edgar Award and as one of mystery fiction’s Grand Masters. In 2001, his memoir, *Seldom Disappointed*, won both the Anthony and Agatha Awards for best nonfiction.

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Chapter One

The Flute Clan boy was the first to see it. He stopped and stared.

"Somebody lost a boot," he said.

Even from where he stood, at least fifteen yards farther down the trail, Albert Lomatewa could see that nobody had lost the boot. The boot had been placed, not dropped. It rested upright, squarely in the middle of the path, its pointed toe aimed toward them. Obviously someone had put it there. And now, just beyond a dead growth of rabbit brush which crowded the trail, Lomatewa saw the top of a second boot. Yesterday when they had come this way no boots had been here.

Albert Lomatewa was the Messenger. He was in charge. Eddie Tuvi and the Flute Clan boy would do exactly what he told them.

"Stay away from it," Lomatewa said. "Stay right here."

He lifted the heavy pack of spruce boughs from his back and placed it reverently beside the path. Then he walked to the boot. It was fairly new, made of brown leather, with a flower pattern stitched into it and a curved cowboy heel. Lomatewa glanced past the rabbit brush at the second boot. It matched. Beyond the second boot, the path curved sharply around a weathered granite boulder. Lomatewa sucked in his breath.

Jutting from behind the boulder he could see the bottom of a foot. The foot was bare and even from where Lomatewa stood he could see there was something terribly wrong with it.

Lomatewa looked back at the two his kiva had sent to guard him on this pilgrimage for spruce. They stood where he had told them to stand--Tuvi's face impassive, the boy's betraying his excited curiosity.

"Stay there," he ordered. "There is someone here and I must see about it."

The man was on his side, legs bent stiffly, left arm stretched rigidly forward, right arm flexed upward with the palm resting beside his ear. He wore blue jeans, a jean jacket, and a blue-and-white-checked shirt, its sleeves rolled to the elbows. But it was a little while before Lomatewa noticed what the man was wearing. He was staring at his feet. The soles of both of them had been cut away. The bottom of the socks had been cut and the socks pushed up around the ankles, where they formed ragged white cuffs. Then the heel pads, and the pads at the balls of the feet, and the undertips of the toes had been sliced away. Lomatewa had nine grandchildren, and one great-grandchild, and had lived long enough to see many things, but he had never seen this before. He sucked in his breath, exhaled it, and glanced up at the hands. He expected to find them flayed, too. And he did. The skin had been sliced from them just as it had been from the feet. Only then did Lomatewa look at the man's face.

He had been young. Not a Hopi. A Navajo. At least part Navajo. There was a small, blackrimmed hole above his right eye.

Lomatewa stood looking down at the man, thinking how this would have to be handled. It had to be handled so that it would not interfere with the Niman Kachina. The sun was hot on him here, even though it was still early morning, and the smell of dust was in his nostrils. Dust, always dust. Reminding him of why nothing must interfere with the ceremonial. For almost a year the blessing of rain had been withdrawn. He had thinned his corn three times, and still what little was left was stunted and withering in the endless drought. The springs were drying. There was no grass left for the horses. The Niman Kachina must be properly done. He turned and walked back to where his guardians were waiting.

"A dead Tavasuh," he said. Literally the word meant "head-pounder." It was a term of contempt which Hopis sometimes used for Navajos and Lomatewa chose it deliberately to set the tone for what he must do.

"What happened to his foot?" the Flute Clan boy asked. "The bottom was cut off his foot."

"Put down the spruce," Lomatewa said. "Sit down. We must talk about this." He wasn't worried about Tuvi. Tuvi was a valuable man in the Antelope Kiva and a member of the One Horn Society--a prayerful man. But the Flute Clan boy was still a boy. He said nothing more, though, simply sitting on the path beside his spruce bundle. The questions remained in his eyes. Let him wait, Lomatewa thought. Let him learn patience.

"Three times Sotuknang has destroyed the world," Lomatewa began. "He destroyed the First World with fire. He destroyed the Second World with ice. He destroyed the Third World with flood. Each time he destroyed the world because his people failed to do what he told them to do." Lomatewa kept his eyes on the Flute Clan boy as he talked. The boy was his only worry. The boy had gone to school at Flagstaff and he had a job with the post office. There was talk that he did not plant his corn patches properly, that he did not properly know his role in the Kachina Society. Tuvi could be counted on but the boy must be taught. Lomatewa spoke directly to him, and the boy listened as if he had not heard the old story a thousand times before.

"Sotuknang destroyed the world because the Hopis forgot to do their duty. They forgot the songs that must be sung, the *pahos* that must be offered, the ceremonials that must be danced. Each time the world became infected with evil, people quarreled all the time. People became *powaqas*, and practiced witchcraft against

one another. The Hopis left the proper Road of Life and only a few were left doing their duty in the kivas. And each time, Sotuknang gave the Hopis warning. He held back the rain so his people would know his displeasure . . ."

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