

# Ravaging Myths



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**RAVAGING MYTHS**  
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## PROLOGUE

Man first occupied the Americas over a hundred thousand years ago and has survived events that led to the extinction of many other creatures on the continents. Destined to wander, he traveled in pursuit of food from other continents around the globe and ended up in the Americas like everywhere else mostly by chance. Over the millennia the influx of people migrated from the outer reaches of the Americas to the interior, slowly populating both continents. The people who eventually crossed the ice age Beringia land bridge were only some of the more recent arrivals in prehistory. Assessing this from the present, each successive wave of people could be viewed as either immigrants or invaders on their arrival in the Americas, and we may never know what their impact was on the inhabitants already present. We do know that many complex and unique cultures developed, flourished, and then disappeared over the course of time leaving mere remnants of their prior existence.

By the time the Europeans crossed the Atlantic and landed in the Americas, millions of native people with thousands of distinct cultures already occupied the two American continents.

Unfortunately, the European arrivals had an absolute disregard for the people already present. Even though they were immediately struggling, the new arrivals were determined to claim what they called the 'new' and 'uninhabited' land for their already existing imperialistic countries across the ocean. The Europeans were nothing more than invaders clearly set from the start on taking the Natives' land by any necessary means even to the extent of outright genocide.

Sadly, this is what happened in our own recorded history. But the Americas did not have to evolve in that way. Changes at innumerable points in our history could have led to a tremendously altered world.

The world of Ravaging Myths traveled a different path. The native population was not decimated by European disease. The millions of natives would have fared very differently against 16<sup>th</sup> century invaders.

## CHAPTER 1

I arrived.

The smell of hot dogs and stale popcorn filled the otherwise dry, clean air. Only I could smell them, and I hated hot dogs and popcorn.

It was starting over again, and all I could think was 'we make our own hell...we make our own hell...'

It had once been simple.

Wakeup.

Eat.

Go to work.

Work.

Eat.

Work.

Go home.

Eat.

Go to bed.

The pattern fell apart during 'go to work' number whatever, a particularly regrettable weekend day on which I had been covering my friend's patients for him while he was on vacation out of the Shawnee Nation. Cross coverage is a standard practice among physicians, and you do it for others if you ever have hopes of taking vacation yourself. That, or pay through the nose for a locums doctor and have complaints from your patients for months afterwards because let's face it, a temp is a temp. Patients would generally rather have their own doctor, but in their doctor's absence, they preferred a handpicked local colleague over a temp any day. It's reasonable. Opening up the details of your bladder, bowel habits and everything else medical is rough on a person. Throw in some diarrhea and a little STD or some sexual dysfunction and, well you get the picture. Having to cross that 'Hello, this is me and this is my disgusting and embarrassing problem' bridge once in a lifetime with a stranger is already one too many. That aside, I was filling in for my friend and had to take a quick ride to Marion to do hospital rounds on the few patients he had there. This

entailed a short drive north up the congested International freeway, and then another short hop to the hospital.

We have to insert "CRASH" at this point. Actually, not just "CRASH", but "CRASH WITH LIFE-THREATENING, COMA-INDUCING, PLATE IN MY SKULL HEAD INJURY".

Everything changed...

It started like this...the smell of hotdogs and stale popcorn...

The accident had been horrific. Thirty-two dead, a hundred and seventeen injured. Fog had been to blame, or at least fog, and a long convoy of eighteen-wheelers. It had been early A.M., and a high-speed traffic stream had been headed up the freeway towards Chicago. Crazy fog lulled us all into a driving stupor. Then, one mistake led to another, and...well, I think the picture has been made pretty clear..

I was one of the lucky ones, not dead, but not really all that alive either. You see, I was in a coma. Peacefulness and bliss under the influence of morphine poured into my veins to sooth my horrifically broken body. Outward appearances could be deceiving, but not in my case. That was as good as it would get for me after that wreck. Or, at least, that was as peaceful as it was going to be for me from then on. Of course, I didn't know this at the time because I was in a coma. Like I said, peacefulness...bliss...

Life sucks, and then you die, but only if you're lucky.

For me, the smell of hotdogs and stale popcorn filled the air.

O.K., here we go...Rhythmic, but uncontrolled 'flopping' (i.e. seizure), and my coma world shifted. The horrid smell of hot dogs and stale popcorn faintly lingered, but nothing else was familiar.

That was what it was like the first time it happened I can theorize, and one of several times I don't really recall because of the coma. Even so, the beginning is always the same now, and I can

speculate that it was always the same when I was comatose because it hasn't changed since. At least not until the next painfully fateful day I have to tell you about. This one truly changed everything.

As with me, I suspect that reliving the past is a tremendous nightmare for most people. I doubt that very many people would honestly want to go back and repeat a stretch of their lives without being able to edit as they crawled back through the seconds of that time. Imagine my misery as I recalled and related that brief period in my past to you. Not the best example of a good day in my life, to say the least. Now imagine even the best day of your own life...take the time to imagine that single, wonderful day...and then, fill the spaces left between those very fleeting moments which you actually choose to remember. What do you come up with but another crappy, miserable day that you desperately cling to for the sheer sake of preserving your sanity? All in all, as I said, life sucks, if you haven't heard it and actually acknowledged it before now.

My name is Marcus by the way..Marcus Lemonte. Doctor Marcus Lemonte as if anyone particularly cares at this point. Welcome to my own personal hell. And so we begin...

Spring had arrived in the Shawnee Nation, a generally beautiful time in a part of the country which includes virtually every inch of the region between the Sioux Nation to the west, the Cherokee and Chickasaw Nations to the south, and the Iroquois Nation to the north and east. The emergence of the leaves and the green fields could easily hold your attention, if you weren't otherwise occupied with the many cruelties of life. Unfortunately, this cruelty swallows up most people, and few actually acknowledge the good inherent to their environment until they're destined to leave it, i.e. a foot in the grave or more horrendous in some respects, a trip to the Shawnee Nation's epicenter, Chicago. Whatever the case, the Lemontes had no encroaching plans for either. The warm, bright day took them

unhesitatingly to one of the region's most beautiful locations, and they were soon scrambling up a steep slope towards Camel Rock.

Camel Rock, so named because it looks very much like a giant stone camel, is one of the Shawnee Nation's many scenic areas, and is swallowed up by the Shawnee Forest that spans the lower portion of the Shawnee Nation. Although Camel Rock is the most prominent feature, because how can you miss a giant camel, the region has many interesting and beautiful rock formations and multiple scenic viewpoints where the countryside can be seen for miles in most directions. Having done the top of the rock thing more times than they could count, the Lemontes started at the base of the hills for a change, and Marcus was soon lost in his own thoughts.

Struggling through the tall grass of the hillside, he felt the uncomfortable sensation of eyes probing his back. He had climbed nearly three hundred feet, but the feeling had not diminished since he first hit the densely overgrown trail. It was becoming unbearable, but he would go on to the top of the hill like a trooper. Nikki wouldn't understand if he suddenly gave up the climb, and he didn't think he would blame her. This insidious paranoia had been slipping in to his life since the crash, and hearing about the eyes boring into his back at the moment would only piss her off, to put it mildly.

Behind him, a small rustling briefly caught his attention, and his heart took a sudden lurch into overdrive with a new surge of adrenaline. His fear and anxiety would have been blatantly apparent to Nikki if she weren't so preoccupied with the very real struggle of maneuvering up the damn hill. The pounding in his chest drove him frantically to within a foot of her back.

"Hey, Nik.. do you want to take a break?" He blurted out in breathless desperation.

But she kept scrambling further up the hill, slipping in the loose rock as if fleeing from his question. She had to have heard him, he thought. He was only a few feet from her.

"NIKKI!" He screamed at the top of his lungs,

nearly losing his balance in the process.

With a swish of blond hair, her sweat-drenched face was suddenly glaring back at him. Her eyes blasted him with annoyance as she plopped down among the bug-infested weeds. He began to itch just looking at her slim, grass engulfed form.

"We're almost to the top." She stated matter of factly.

"I...I know." He stuttered, trying to mask his panic. "I just need a second." But he knew she saw through him. She had become very familiar with his wide-eyed paranoia, a little too familiar for his own fleeting comfort.

Suddenly, a multi-legged form the size of a small truck scuttled down his arm, and the sensation sent him into a wild, flailing frenzy. Before he could even begin to get control of himself, he savagely smacked his arms and legs as the crawling seemed to overtake his entire body. The loose earth beneath his feet quickly began to give way and he slid backwards hopelessly. He felt the damn bug insistently driving towards his brain as he struggled to grab hold of any solid and stationary object in his path. But then the grass that had been a struggle to crawl up through gave way like open-air to his crazed attempts to stop his backward slide. Within seconds he plummeted to a rock ledge one hundred feet below Nikki, cracking his skull on the unforgiving stone when he landed. The ledge was a lucky break, if you could call it that, considering how far they had already crept up from the bottom.

His blackout was brief, but still long enough for him to find Nikki's hysterical face hovering over him when he came to. The pain rapidly engulfed his few coherent thoughts as he tried to get a grasp of what had just happened. No good, the pain was too much. He needed to go to sleep if he wanted to escape it. Drowsiness swept in, and he gratefully started to close his eyes. Nikki grabbed him by the shoulders and shook him, shook him hard. His pain multiplied beyond belief! She was trying to kill him as surely as the bugs had been boring toward his brain. With an enormous effort, he forced his eyes open to the blinding

sunlight and tried weakly to lift his head.

"Marcus, are you all right?" she begged, tears rolling down her face and fear apparent in her voice even in his dazed and semiconscious state.

"Uhhh.." The sound of his own voice pounded the throbbing melon that had once been his head. "I don't think so.." He forced out before he could be swallowed back up in darkness, the smell of popcorn and hotdogs nauseatingly taking a backseat to the pain.

The sudden onset of trembling in the rock ledge under his head quickly compounded the roaring pain that ate voraciously at his battered brain. The bugs had burrowed in somehow and were doing some massive damage! The violent tremors scared him into opening his eyes again, and he vaguely realized that Nikki was no longer hovering over him, if she ever had been. His pain became so severe that he believed he could literally feel waves of searing agony rushing through his body. The whole world surrounding him vibrated with a horrendous roar that made him feel like death was imminent, and he could clearly taste the rancid hotdogs whose stench filled his nose to the point of suffocation.

In what seemed like an eternity, but could in reality only have been minutes later, a gradual calm claimed the earth and slowed the small avalanche of rocks that had painfully showered Nikki and Marcus. By Shawnee Nation standards, it had been one hell of a quake, a six at least, and unheard of in the area for lifetimes. In fact, the last time this part of the Nations had shaken so hard, reports were that the Mississippi River had actually flown backwards for a while. Any buildings in the surrounding area would have eaten the full force of the quake, but stranded there on the ledge two hundred feet from the base and at what seemed to be the center of the earthen distress, the ability of any local building to take the quake was far from the first thing on Nikki's mind. Marcus was out cold, and judging by the quickly swelling mass on his forehead, he had a concussion at the least. Even though she wasn't formally medically trained herself, the years of

her life she had spent with Marcus had blessed her with enough superficial knowledge to bring a list of pretty damn scary thoughts to her head as he lay there unconscious. She knew it was proof that sometimes a little bit of knowledge could really be a bad thing.

Gently lifting his head, she discovered his hair was completely dry and his head was devoid of oozing or spurting blood. She tried her best to scan for any obvious damage, but knowing the names of injuries and having the ability to find evidence of their presence were two very different things and the latter was well beyond her superficial knowledge. The anguish of uncertainty quickly filled her mind as the helplessness of her situation gradually settled in on her. He was the doctor, damnit, and he couldn't do a damn thing for himself now! Tears refilled her eyes as their life together flashed through her thoughts.

Had she not been so distractedly terrified during the quake, Nikki would have seen Marcus's eyes roll back into his head and tonic-clonic movements rattle his body almost in time with the shaking of the ground. The seizure had been as brief as the quake, but just as troubling. Marcus hadn't experienced a full-blown generalized seizure since waking from the coma after the freeway tragedy. Up to that point, his foul-smelling auras had only preceded lapses in awareness that were extremely short-lived for the most part. Even then, their frequency had been serious enough to make him question his own ability to drive on several occasions since the coma. He was all too aware of the impact losing his driver's license would have on his ability to practice medicine as well as on his life in general, and had deliberately not followed up with his own neurologist after leaving the hospital for that specific reason. Seizure disorders always had to be reported to the DMV when confirmed, and he wasn't about to let that happen to him. He was still in possession of his full mental faculties, and his driving was generally limited to short hops from his home to the clinic or to the nearest hospital most of the time. The wreck had put his

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