

Joe Robinson hated water because he could not run on it. He could not walk on it either, though he was treated like a god. Joe saved Marysville, a town whose only respite came in the form of snow. He marveled how Marysville wore snow like a mask, concealing its misery.

Like any 1930's town, Marysville nearly died. Its appendages atrophied with the national demise. Forestry and fishing grew anemic. Ebey Slough, forming the southern border, was pocked with rotting docks and decaying trawlers snared by their own abandoned nets. Adjacent lumber mills fell prey to decomposing kelp and invertebrates along the shore. Acres of fertile fields became unintentional compost mixed with failure. Marysville was ready to be euthanized.

Joe's ascension began in 1936. He was brilliant, born with twelve fingers and thirteen toes, an unbelievable pianist. The entire world was in his imagination, where his mind traveled like Marco Polo. Rather than for his brains, however, Joe was idolized for something simpler, his feet. He was a violent runner with malicious intent, charging his six-foot two-inch frame violently into any defender who could not get out of his way. Every morning Joe stepped upon the shore of Tulare Beach on the northern edge of the Tulalip Indian Reservation, inhaled decaying barnacles, and ran south to Spee-Bi-Dah then north to McKee's, four miles in sum. He ran with teenage thoughts of Camille Odyssey whom he met the previous spring in 3rd period chemistry oozing pheromones.

Upon one morning run, Joe saw a UFO, unearthly in its swiftness. In the distance Joe saw Chester George. Chester loped with the grace and beauty of the Pacific Northwest towards Spee-Bi-Dah, a newly developed Puget Sound beachfront that was once Tulalip's traditional salmon drying grounds, while Joe was charging like a predator

south directly at him. But Joe betrayed his posture and waved. Chester appeared to nod. Ten minutes later, each had reversed his course, meeting along the shore.

“You’re a swift runner,” Joe said. He was measured, struggling not to sound out of breath.

“Yeah, you know, I could be famous, enit, like Jim Thorpe.” Chester too kept an even face, no signs of weariness. He was stoic, fifteen.

“Enit? What’s enit?”

Chester reshaped his face. “If I told you, you might steal it, you know?” Then, Chester’s face swelled one inch in every direction. Joe imagined it was a smile.

“Hmmm, yeah maybe,” Joe said as he looked at black birds dotting the pale sky. “So, what are those, ravens or crows?”

Chester had no idea. He almost looked at Joe and said without answering, “Look at their beaks.” Joe shrugged nonchalantly, spoke of the upcoming school year, their first at the high school in the center of town, and offered to shake Chester’s hand. Chester wondered if it held betrayal, but in a flash he took Joe’s hand. Then, just as quickly, Chester ran home, desperate to outrun the truth.

One Sunday morning when half the tribe was inside Saint Anne’s Mission admiring Jesus’s hair, Chester George ran backwards seven times around the ashes and charcoal of the tribal longhouse trying to resurrect its walls. Instead, his grandfather appeared.

“Hey, Chester! I used to have long black hair you know?” Tiatmus said, closing his eyes to see. “Did you know Samson was an Indian yeah? We were all little Samsons until they cut our hair, stole our strength and our shoes, made us wear government issued

boots, stiff trousers so we couldn't run. They covered our heads with hats big enough to sleep in, causing us all at once to forget our Lushootseed names you know?"

Actually, Tiatmus descended from Patkanim, an Allied Tribes Chief who signed the historic Point Elliot Treaty of 1855. He led the Indian warriors who fought for the whites. It was clear to Patkanim that the whites would ultimately take the land by force, thus rendering his actions as sacrificial to his reputation while achieving sustainable peace for his people. The tribes were sent to reservations, including Tulalip, which embraces Tulalip Bay, sloughs, creeks, and rivers along a vastly wooded land extending north through junkyards and broken promises. Many tribal land owners were conned into selling their beachfronts, including Tulare, Mission, and Spee-Bi-Dah, leaving a land divided by money, roads, streams, and family history.

After Chester's parents died together, he lived on the Rez with his grandfather, Tiatmus, in a two-room wooden shanty with no insulation or hot water and a leaky faucet of collected rainwater that only ceased dripping in the freezing winters. The grey cedar home was a few hundred yards from Saint Anne's Mission, a church that housed the US government's Tulalip Indian School. Tiatmus attended as a child, as did Chester's parents, aunts, uncles, and two older brothers. Chester and Tiatmus often walked together to the longhouse that had been burnt to the ground.

"This is where it happened," Tiatmus would always say to anyone who would listen. Only Chester did, which is why he became the first tribal member to integrate Marysville's public high school. The previous spring the school board had announced their remarkable "inclusion," with the clause: INDIANS MUST PAY \$200 TUITION PER YEAR. "This is our Wounded Knee," Tiatmus continued. "We were gathered for our first

time as a whole tribe since the Mission was erected, maybe 50 years after, maybe 2,000. We sang for the salmon and qalqalexix, that's how we say killer whale, yeah? Anyway, your mother and father were guests of honor as they gathered some of the joy that had been stolen a century ago. But the white men wanted to steal it back. Your mother and father were warriors and refused. So, the U.S. Government, sent here to protect us from ourselves, burned the long house into the ashes before you, ashes of your mother and father that give life to these two yellow cedars that we weed around every Sunday. That is our church."

Chester George often wondered if his grandfather came from the sky the same way as snow, for Tiatmus had pure white hair and only one name. Chester was only three the first time he had this thought, but his mind was already full of centuries past. Tiatmus frequently filled Chester's mind as the tribal storyteller, keeper of truths and lessons to be shared upon asking. So, one day Chester asked, "Where does snow come from?" Tiatmus looked directly through Chester into his own mind to find the truth.

"Mother Nature and Father Time had many arguments, and both were always right, though sometimes, nature was bypassed, and time occasionally bent. But, one day they agreed: man was in too much of a hurry, yeah? So, Mother Nature grew very cold and created snow while Father Time showed her how to sprinkle it in order to slow people down, sometimes to the point of forgetting time all together." He looked at Chester and added, "You know, time may be forgotten, but he won't stand still. That's his nature."

Chester looked at his grandpa for several seconds then asked, "Yeah, but where does it come from?"

About a week before school and football season began, Joe and Chester met along another run about 200 yards below the ashes of the longhouse. Chester looked hard at Joe, who seemed entranced by two cedar trees. “Those are my parents,” Chester said.

Startled, Joe’s imagination was reduced to a mumbling, “what?”

“Follow me.” Chester invited his alien friend into the sacred. “My grandpa tells us the white man burned down our longhouse. Maybe they did, yeah?” Chester closed his eyes like his grandfather, “But what really happened is this: My mom and dad wanted to be ‘traditional.’ So, they planned a raid on Whiskey Ridge. They managed two kegs and three cases of moonshine. When they arrived that night, my grandpa was telling a story alongside the fire in the center of the longhouse. My father interrupted in triumph, inspiring his cousin, my uncle Louie Louie, to slap him with congratulations on the back, causing my dad to trip and fall face first with the moonshine in the middle of the fire. My mom rushed to help and fell on my dad. My parents became the largest bonfire in tribal history. They fertilize those trees. That is my truth.”

Joe looked down, speechless. A wide smile appeared on Chester’s face as he punched Joe in the arm. “Did you believe that?” Chester asked. “Man, white people will believe anything, enit?” He laughed, punched Joe again, and ran to the shoreline.

That night Joe stood at the water’s edge watching the phosphorescence shimmer and dance. He imagined it like mating. He imagined Camille Odyssey and wondered, *is she real or just intuition?*

That night truth crept towards Chester George. He burned driftwood by the shore and inhaled his ancestors. At low tide Tulalip Bay releases the stench of Puget Sound’s

soul. Its soul lingers in the night where it fertilizes ideas. That night Chester's ideas were ignited, and he imagined the entire Pacific Ocean was filled with gasoline.

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No one questioned the deity of Thor Karlsson. His rule was absolute. He accepted nothing but sacrifice, and no sacrifice could appease him. For ten years the Marysville Tomahawks led the Snohomish County small schools in athletic futility. But, in 1934, Thor Karlsson was hired to eradicate the losing culture, if not the racism particular to the northwest. The Tomahawks were red and white, symbolizing a politically convenient ideal of Caucasian-Native symmetry and unity. At first, Joe idolized Coach Karlsson. However, Coach Karlsson's veins coursed with hubris, refusing to play or even speak to Chester George, placing young Joe Robinson in a moral predicament. Karlsson ignored reason. His attitude made Chester appear small on the outside. That's how Karlsson saw him, a shrunken boy wearing the skin of defeat, a born loser. So, Chester was just a practice tool, a blocking dummy and bag holder. Karlsson never appreciated that Chester George shared something in common with Joe Robinson. He could run.

Coach Karlsson was imposing, both in physicality and will. He was anchored by two bulging calves and capped by a monolithic head, coarse white hair like a polar bear and ghostly white skin except his cherry blossom pink face, creased by white wrinkles of disdain and inner chaos. He had an aggravating tick, always finishing everything he said with a squinting emotionless smile. At his core, Karlsson was a coward, overlooked, of course, by winning football games. Winning cures ills and produces hope. In Joe Robinson hope would not disappoint as he gave life to a community's expectations and set them free to live as long as anyone cared about records and fantasy.

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Football was an extension of Joe's nerve endings. In the thirty-year history of Marysville's varsity squad no freshman had ever started for the Tomahawks, except during The Great War. 1936, however, offered promises like those of the New Deal. On the first day of tryouts, Coach Karlsson unconsciously verbalized his thoughts, "Good God, he runs like a horse!" In 1937, Joe became the first sophomore to be named team captain. His teammates dubbed him War Admiral. *The Everett Herald* noted, "He is at once graceful and urgent like a violin... he runs as though he's being chased by himself."

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Genetics perplexed Joe Robinson. Somehow, though, his glacial coach seemed to believe men have some sort of say in their racial make-up, which is a basis for pride and social order. So, Joe's explosively fast yet silent friend and teammate, Chester George, was relegated to the practice squad as the Tomahawks marched towards the state's *all-time consecutive games played without a loss* record, a record to be sure that was as important to Thor Karlsson as the white of his skin.

By 1938, the eyes of Washington Prep Athletics were upon Marysville, a mere five miles north of Everett, the National Champion of prep football in 1920. They beat the Tomahawks 98-0 that year. It was the last time any Everett team stooped to play lowly Marysville. During the 1920's Everett had run off a record 41 consecutive games unbeaten, annihilating the former record by 17 games. Marysville completed the decade without a winning season. Entering the 1938 campaign, Marysville's win-streak stood at 32.

Co-captain Dale Holmes, a gritty lead blocker, joined Joe in the backfield. They led the nation as the leading scoring duo, though it was akin to calling Hank and Tommy Aaron the greatest homerun hitting brothers of all-time. As the Tomahawks' victories mounted, Joe continued a streak of his own which began in the third game of his freshman season, most consecutive games rushing for over 100 yards, fifteen entering his junior season.

Following each victory, Camille and Chester met Joe at The Barrel for celebratory hamburgers and ice cream. Joe carried their entire order in one hand. Some stared at the threesome, a few older folks protested by leaving and calling Chester an apple, red on the outside, white on the inside. Others didn't seem much to care, just happy with another Marysville win. "Great game, Joe! You sure showed them today Joe!" the young and old said, while the owner of The Barrel, Hilton James, savored the profits attached to this young boy with the incredible feet.

The majority of the 1938 season lacked any real competitive drama as the Tomahawks peeled off seven consecutive victories, with an average winning margin of an astonishing 38 points. Week eight, however, proved to possess all the drama the community of Marysville could stomach. Their collective chip on their shoulder was the size of their pretentious neighbor directly to the south, Everett, king of the state's large schools. Everett knew their number one squad would never be allowed to play the infinitesimally smaller Tomahawks, but their legendary coach, Enoch Bagshaw, who went on to coach the University of Washington, proposed the previous spring that their #2 squad add Marysville to the schedule. Everett's #2's were much like UCLA basketball's freshman squads of the 1960's, not allowed to play varsity games, UCLA's

freshmen routinely gave their varsity great trouble, often defeating the undefeatable in intra-squad games. Everett's #2's carried the same audacity as their #1's. Winning was their right.

Joe Robinson was stuck by his growing unrest with his coach's refusal to allow Chester George to integrate the line-up but even more so by his own lack of courage to confront the man. Joe's unrest underscored the tension of Saturday afternoon's game set at Trojan Field on the campus of Everett Junior College.

The game, agreed upon under an unseasonably warm May sunshine, was set for November 11 at 3:00 in the afternoon. It was frigid, the kind of day that freezes every nose hair into a prickly needle. Marysville's quarterback, Pink Ericksson had the flu. And worse yet, lights were installed the previous season, allowing Everett's #1's to play on Friday nights while the Trojans of EJC played Saturday mornings at 10:00. This game would be the third on the same grass field in less than twenty-four hours. The eight previous quarters, not to mention the dozen other games earlier in the season, created a quagmire flash-frozen by an invasive Alaskan air.

Everett did not welcome invaders, not from Alaska and especially not from Marysville. Wave upon wave of Marysvillains crossed the Snohomish River by foot, jalopy, and horseback, intent on arriving during the EJC game to get a seat, but the stands were already cram-packed by half of Everett, not so much to keep warm, but to ensure all visitors would have to stand at field level for the entire high school game. A contingent of Tulalip fans arrived in a motorcade of new cars, bought from Marysville's lone automotive entrepreneur, Roy Patson. It was a rare occasions to see a tribal member's car off the Rez, a difficult lesson for Mr. Patson. As a sovereign nation, a city businessman

was not allowed to repossess property once on the Reservation. The tribe had discovered that a simple down payment was all that was necessary to claim a new car, a blessed irony of loopholes. Defaults on payments could not be claimed, giving rise to a car-of-the-month club then ultimately hundreds of abandoned and rotting car lots spread throughout every tribal back yard.

The crowd became a singular living organism with individual parts. Roy Patson saw it as five thousand potential customers. Mr. Nittle, a Junior High science teacher who faked fainting spells during class in order to be resuscitated by adolescent girls, inserted himself into a pocket of pretty high school girls, but he was too cold to have a seizure.

The first quarter proved costly to the Tomahawks as Dale Holmes caught his right foot in a frozen rut on the Marysville 20 yard-line near the Everett sidelines on a 28 Army Sweep. At the snap of his ankle, the collective Marysville/Everett *OH!* was eerily stifled then accentuated by the collective murmur, *what if that happens to Joe?* Chester naively stepped forward to volunteer his services, but he was invisible. As nature would have it, Holmes instinctively grabbed for his foot before his body was down, unwittingly and at the precise moment uncaringly fumbling the football, Marysville's first turnover in eight games, another record. Seagull defensive end Sonny Lambright scooped up the gift and toted it into the end zone, 6-0 Everett. The extra point, however, was blocked by a fully extended Joe Robinson, unconcerned by the career-ending ravines etched into Trojan Field. If Chester George was encouraged, the wind chill made sure his face could not expand.

The two offenses continued to sputter as a weakened Pink Ericksson had difficulty receiving snaps while Bud Lofgren, his center, had half-frozen fingers and

could barely put pressure enough on the ball to hike it. *I could play quarterback*, Chester George allowed himself to fantasize, but not out loud. 6-0 Everett half-time.

The second half began with what seemed to be the penultimate nail in the Tomahawks' coffin. Sammy Dyer, the freshman who would, the following spring, set the county mark in the 100-yard dash, took the kick-off back 77 yards for another Seagull touchdown. They attempted a two-point conversion, running a 49 wing toss behind their 6' 3" 240 pound left tackle, Hyman Rucker. The path looked as wide as the Columbia Gorge until Rucker caught a cleat on a frozen dirt clod, tripping atop 5' 4" corner Jimmy Wilkes, creating a stalwart obstacle which derailed Everett's wing-back at the two yard-line. Everett 12 Marysville 0.

The Everett stands thundered only briefly with excitement, not wanting to give the impression that their imminent victory was ever in doubt. Marysville took little solace in yet another moral victory, the moral being they would always be losers.

Still scoreless entering the fourth quarter, Pink was exhausted and dehydrated as evidenced by the heaps of vomit frozen along the side-line. Marysville's fans cheered as loftily as they could to encourage their boys. Thor Karlsson paced pensively beneath the anxiety of fleeting fame. But, if coach Karlsson did not understand people, he did understand football, leading to the decision that solidified Joe Robinson's reign as Marysville's Messiah. "Pink, go stand by your puke." Karlsson moved Joe to quarterback to begin the fourth and decisive quarter.

Joe Robinson had never taken a snap in his life, but he knew the playbook almost as thoroughly as his coach. Plus, he understood people, leading the huddle with innate infectious confidence. With just four and a half minutes remaining and the clock running,

Joe, who had just 67 yards rushing, broke through the middle on an improvisation of their favorite play, 30 Army Trap. Instead of handing the ball to the fullback, Joe's regular position, then faking to and following the half-back, Joe faked to the halfback moving right then ran left, following his pulling right guard, a play now well known as a bootleg, 37 yards untouched in front of the Everett sideline. Extra point good. Everett 12 Marysville 7.

The Marysville crowd began to divide like an amoeba, blending into the front two rows of the bleachers to witness a modern miracle. The Everett fans were stunned into silent compliance.

The vaunted Everett defense had been penetrated for only the second time of the season, and Marysville was no longer shopping for moral victories. They needed to recover an on-side kick with less than four minutes to play.

The on-side kick failed. Seagull ball on the 50 yard-line. The Tomahawks, the entire town of Marysville, had two time-outs remaining. The Seagull's strategy was no great mystery: run, run, run, get a first down, take a knee, Seagull victory, forcing Marysville to awaken from a dream but not before feeling the fully vicious and mortal impact from the magnificent fall. The Tomahawks' strategy was just as plain: a stop, time-out, stop, time-out, stop, big punt return, an even bigger miracle.

In two minutes, Everett ran three plays straight up the middle. Marysville spent their two time-outs and met the Seagull's expectations equally, holding them to a mere yard, just three feet in three plays, but the clock ticked and ticked. The seconds dripped impossibly slowly on Everett's sideline. The Seagulls were forced to punt. Fifty-three yards away, Marysville's sideline seemed an entirely different time zone, a different

dimension, where time and space shed earthly definition. The unseen seconds *felt* as though they were melting like a bag of ice in a smelter, no time-outs, Joe Robinson standing alone with an entire town on his own ten-yard line awaiting a ball that wouldn't just be handed to him. The pressure was immense, the type where clouds go to die.

Sometimes the wind has ideas of its own, arriving from the Arctic instead of Hawaii. Sometimes the wind would steal a 13-ounce ball and remind you it was not round but oblong and pointed, intent on corruption. The flight of the ball carried all Marysville's illusions, all its delusions, with no operating scoreboard for defense. It was frozen. Time had to be kept by pocket watch on the field. *How much time will be left when I catch the ball, IF I catch the ball, get killed by the ball?* Was Joe worried? Was the town thinking for him? Would Thor Karlsson ever play an Indian?

At the moment Everett's punter, Jackson Fleet, kicked the ball into a wind-aided orbit around the world, fourteen days were compressed into 4.2 seconds. Alaska was struck by an 8.3 earthquake. Japan overwhelmed Canton, Hankou, and Wuhon. France and Germany worked out the details of a non-attack treaty as Europe's Jews were emasculated. Czechs were made German citizens, and Regan Heiner, Joe's German dad, was grateful he changed his last name to Robinson. A Dutch DC-3 crashed and burst into flames in Schipol killing six. The Red Sox Jimmie Foxx was named MVP. Sea Biscuit nosed War Admiral, and a Swiss doctor synthesized LSD. Father Coughlin spewed anti-semitism over American radio while Mother Mary Francis Cabrini was beatified as the first American saint. The Archbishop of Dubuque claimed Swing music was Satan's primrose path to hell, and Joe's mom was elated to be a Protestant.

In Sweden, Pearl Buck received the Nobel Prize for Literature, while Orson Welles convinced millions the Martians were on their way to end the good earth. But, no one in Marysville cared because this punt return, this moment was the whole of existence.

1:37 remained in the game when Joe Robinson flawlessly fielded the expectedly errant flight of the over-weighted football. Ninety-seven seconds. As much as Thor Karlsson lived and breathed football, two-minute drills weren't even a novelty in high school football during the 1930's. An impressive 24-yard punt return still left the Tomahawks 66 yards shy of victory. Smoke stack steam arose from the two huddles, forming cumulus clouds, drifting word balloons in a comic strip, but no one was laughing. Throats were bound by the subterranean noose of tension and arctic wind-chill.

In just over a minute and twenty-five seconds, Marysville ran five plays for 41 yards, stopping the clock with three first downs. They were down to their final play. A Hail Mary? Too cold. Maybe Joe could throw it, but he never had. Swede put Pink Ericksson, nauseated and flimsy, back into the game; even the bitter cold could not resurrect any meaningful muscular rigidity. They needed to score, but they didn't have perceptible time to think. Pink lined up under center but curiously took a step to his left, just over the guard. The ball was snapped directly to Joe Robinson, another subtle adjustment to their favorite play, 30 Army Trap. Joe took the low snap on the fly, hitting the zero hole between the right butt-cheek of the center and inside the pulling guard who delivered a decisive trap-block to Everett's left D-Tackle. Joe instinctively cut back to the right side knowing his own line and sensing the over-pursuit of a desperate linebacking corps. Every step Joe took was masterful, never a false-step, always anticipating the pursuit. One man to beat. A fifteen year-old, befuddled safety, who by accident found

himself as the last impediment, a hero or a goat, was caught staring into the Marysville Messiah's transfigured eyes, overwhelmed by the Joe's majesty. Joe cut sharply to his left, aided by a one-inch frozen ridge of sod, propelling him past the lurching safety who waved his arms haplessly as though they were misshapen transplants. Marysville 13, Everett 12. Time remaining, 0:00. Streak 40 games, no losses.

In the heart of jubilatory chaos, Camille Odyssey broke from the crowd and nearly trampled Mr. Nittle, who had collapsed for real and no one cared. She joined a mountain of fans and hoisted Joe high atop Trojan Field overlooking Port Garner Bay. When Joe came down from the mountain, great multitudes followed. Joe was the only one who saw Chester George fading away as if he were being erased.

Marysville celebrated. Kunhle's sold out every last drop of Olympia beer. Across the street, the Friendly Indian Tavern opened its doors and taps to the overflowing and overly thirsty white folks willing to drink Rainier. Instead of flying fists, open hands slapped backs. Red and white drank together and vomited on the corner of 3rd and State together. The next morning, the town awoke reluctantly to the sound of church bells, hangovers, and the Great Depression. Chester George woke up Indian.

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"It's BULLSHIT! I'll quit, yeah?!" Chester yelled in the middle of The Barrel, "F-"

"HEY, Chief Smoke!" the owner of The Barrel, Hilton James, yelled, "get your swearin' candy-apple asses out-"

"Fuck you!" Joe and Chester yelled in tandem. And like magic, the profit-driven Mr. James disappeared. Then, Chester pushed Joe. "I don't need your fuckin' help!"

Joe looked on the verge of tears or eruption, a fine line between love and hate. And just as he was about to reveal the magnitude of whichever earth changing emotion he possessed-

“They’re crows.”

“What?” Chester and Joe looked at Camille then each other, confused.

“The black birds you see by the beach. They’re crows,” Camille said.

“How do you know?” the boys asked.

“They *caw*. Ravens *croak*.”

“Like a frog?” Chester asked.

“Do you believe that?” Joe asked. “Man, Indians will believe anything, enit?”

Chester’s smile nearly shattered his face. They were friends. That was their truth.

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The following week Marysville hung 52 upon visiting Cashmere. Marysville won its fifth consecutive Snohomish County Small Schools title. Joe Robinson had rushed for at least 100 yards in twenty-four consecutive games. He stopped by his coach’s classroom to thank him for the season while burdened by the hope Karlsson would play Chester George next season.

Marysville had tied Everett’s state record, 41 games without a loss, propelling a young team into the off-season with high expectations. But, Thor Karlsson had become an impatient man at the precipice of the hallowed record. “Ties are like kissing your sister,” he ranted. “I’ve taken a game with Ellensburg over Thanksgiving. They’re the Kittitas County champs.”

Sometimes people don't hear each other even when they are the only two in the room, but this day Joe Robinson demanded to be heard. "Coach, you gotta play Chester. He made every practice, never complained. He's faster than-"

Coach Karlsson scoffed at Joe's idealism, then lifted his eyes. "Listen. Your *friend* is a born loser. I don't want any part of losing. Now do what you're best at, and run along." Joe was dumbstruck. And, although he was treated like a god, Joe Robinson didn't have the courage to be crucified.

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It seemed all of Marysville had an aversion to play a meaningless game. Several townsfolk and parents fruitlessly voiced their concerns about traveling over the mountains of Steven's Pass during a holiday. Traditionally, Marysville played rival Monroe in the annual Snohomish County Small Schools Turkey Bowl, but that came to an abrupt end in 1934, the year Marysville's win streak began. That year both teams entered the Turkey Bowl undefeated. The winner would be named County Champs, no small reward in 1934. Misfortune, however, dealt the Bearcats' team bus two flat tires and a cracked axle on the outskirts of Snohomish. By the time the bus could be repaired, the sun was long set. By rule the game was not rescheduled, the outcome a bitterly disputed forfeit. Marysville was declared the winner and County Champions by a score of 2-0. Monroe refused scheduling the game ever since.

Karlsson's team obediently loaded the bus in pursuit of a record they'd just as soon set against a rival next season. Joe sat in the rear next to Chester both silently praying, not having a clue what else to do. Every mile that passed along the scenic highway fell upon Joe's shoulders like an avalanche of despair. The tension was only

briefly interrupted as the bus passed through Monroe, where dozens of people awaited with eggs and rotted vegetables. Karlsson winced and smiled.

Near Sultan a posted sign warned of impending snow, not early for the season but unexpected just the same. Just a few more miles to Gold Bar and they were headlong amid a blizzard. Karlsson's malefic glare encouraged the bus driver to continue. "We'll be through the heavy stuff by Skykomish," he said, "then over the pass, lunch in Leavenworth, and all downhill to Ellensburg." The tension in the center of Joe's brain squeezed away all thoughts except failure and disappointment. But, sometimes God answers prayer.

As the bus neared Skykomish, a forest ranger stood, one hand up, in the center of the snow-packed highway. "The highway is closed," he said to the aging bus driver. Coach Karlsson arose to protest, his face pink and raw like corned beef, but the ranger didn't recognize the god of high school football. "Sorry sir, but this bus'll turn around in the interest of safety and my authority."

Karlsson placed his left hand firmly upon the bus driver's shoulder and said, "You will pull this bus over in Startup so I can place a call."

The Ellensburg Superintendent's phone rang four minutes before noon, the game scheduled for two o'clock. A determined yet composed Thor Karlsson voiced his plea. "Under the circumstances, would you please consider postponing the game until next week or when the pass is re-opened?"

It made no difference to the superintendent, but he responded plainly enough, "I'm sorry, but rules are rules." The game was forfeit: Ellensburg 2; Marysville 0. Ellensburg, Everett, and Monroe celebrated. Coach Karlsson's granite facade crumbled

under the abstract weight of irony. He quit in shame. The streak was over, and as Chester George left the bus, he asked Coach Karlsson, “So, you gonna kiss your sister?”

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In 1939, practice fields across America broke into cold dewy sweats. The Tomahawks won their sixth consecutive county championship, while Hitler blew up Europe. Chester George started the season at half-back, replacing graduated Dale Holmes. Chester broke his left leg in the first game and never played another down. He was the first Tulalip tribal member to graduate public high school, his daughter, Cheryl, the second eighteen years later. The Army found a use for Chester as he held the remnants of the Lushootseed language. Three years after the War, Chester George was killed by a drunk driver on Marine Drive. His spirit lived for several years atop a sign that read: *Please Don't Drink and Drive—In Memory of Chester George.*

In the spring of 1950, Joe Robinson, whose feet were blown off on Iwo Jima, was invited to the dedication of Tulalip's new longhouse. Two magnificent yellow cedars guarded the entrance. Joe listened, as Tiatmus told of the legend of Chester George the Native hero of Marysville football. Joe wasn't the hero of this story. He didn't have to be. God he loved the snow.