

# Friendly Fire

A One Man Play  
by Rick Foster

Copyright 1997 by Rick Foster  
all rights reserved

for production information contact

**Rick Foster**

P.O. Box 1848

Columbia, CA

telephone: 209 532-95506  
email: [rick.foster@duendedrama.org](mailto:rick.foster@duendedrama.org)

**Friendly Fire** was developed in 1995 at Sierra Repertory Theatre in Sonoma, California, to tour the schools of the Mother Lode and San Joaquin County.

It was first performed November 5, 1995 by Van Gordon under the direction of the author. Subsequently the play has enjoyed seasons at Yosemite National Park in 1996, 1997, 1998, & 1999. Since 1998 it has been performed more than a hundred times by Thomas F. Maguire in schools from Imperial to Trinity Counties, and in museums and National Forests throughout California.

# Friendly Fire

by Rick Foster

*A wharf on the Mississippi River in Atticus, Missouri. A crowd of people wait. Jeff Blake enters. He seem wryly amused that there are so many people waiting.*

Well, well, well.

Mornin' Widow Stevens.

Mornin' Charles. Mornin' Kit —

Mornin' to you, Judge Jones.

Good mornin' . . . ever'body.

I reckon you all come down to hear what I got to say before that steamer takes me away? How 'bout that!

Ever'body comin' down to the river to hear what Old Jeff Blake has to say. If you didn't show me I'd'a never believed it. . .

All right then. . . all right.

I guess I do have something to say. Though I'm pretty sure you don't want to hear it.

First off, I ain't no hero.

I only got the gumption to tell you what I'm gonna tell you, because in exactly forty-five minutes that river boat there is gonna blow its whistle. I'll step on board, that paddle wheel will start turning, and I'll be on my way back to California, never to see the state of Missouri again. I'll tell what happened out there and you decide what you're going to do about the Donaldson brothers, if anything, which I doubt, cause you probably ain't no heroes neither.

Well then, you might recall, eleven of us, including Bill and Pete Donaldson, started out for the Gold Rush on January 2, 1849. Just two years ago. Hard to believe.

I was one of that group that just knew, we was gonna be RICH! Our hands trembled when we thought about all that gold!

## FRIENDLY FIRE

I won't dwell on the journey cause I reckon the Donaldsons told you that when they passed through and they wouldn't have any cause to lie— not about that part. We reached California, pitched our tents in a place called Sullivan's crik, and commenced to diggin' up the earth with the other maniacs.

They was always a few California Indians coming and going around the camp. They come around the camp wearing hardly nothing at all, or sometimes a shirt or a hat or whatever they'd got aholt of. Some of 'em would bring in some fish or venison, or even gold, which they'd trade for blankets or whiskey.

I couldn't stand to look 'em in the eye. It was because I knew they was doomed. I knew, like everybody else, that America had a Manifest Destiny. We was selected by God. Our nation was gonna stretch from sea to shining sea. It was our privilege and our duty to civilize this wilderness. And when civilization came, the Indians would have to go. Savages ain't got no place in civilization, ever' one knew that. And Indians was savages, that was common knowledge. But still, it don't seem right to look a man in the eye when you— when you really mean to deprive him his whole way of life.

Where was I? . . . Mining. When we commenced digging and got our first gravelly little chunks of gold, we was in ecstasy. But in fact, mining is murderous work. All day with pick an shovel, getting that dirt into a cradle. Moving huge rocks with our bare hands. Getting water from the crik. Rocking that cradle, and pouring that water, and shoveling more dirt to wash, and looking for the gold at the bottom. From first light to after dark we was at it, crazy as loons. Blisters, bunions, diarrhoea from the bad food—that's what mining is.

Some men was striking it rich at Sullivan's Crik. Three boys in the tent next to ours took out \$20,000 each in a week. We wasn't near so lucky. We found gold all right, an ounce or so per man per day. Here in Missouri that would make you wealthy in no time, but in California ever'thing cost so much it was barely

## FRIENDLY FIRE

enough to keep us alive.

About the middle of May, the Donaldson brothers went off to scout out better diggings. They come back said they had just the place that was gonna make us all rich at last. We loaded our mules with provisions and lots of guns and slipped out of camp real quiet, cause if the others had got word we knowed about new diggings, we'd a had a stampede on our hands.

We set off after midnight, into the wilderness. Before dawn we passed the last camp of white miners and into pure Indian territory. Late that afternoon Bill stopped us where the trail was snaking down a canyon toward a crik.

We looked down, some hundred yards below us, where six Indians was working a flat to get gold out of the crik bed. These Indians was as naked as the day they was born and their camp was real simple, just a fire place, a few blankets, and a little storehouse where they kept some grub, bows and arrows, fish traps and the like. No guns at all.

Bill turned in his saddle and he said, "This is it. You boys wait here while Pete and I gets things started." Then he shouted out, real friendly, some Indian greeting he'd learned. They shouted back, like they'd seen him before. He and Pete rode down. In a minute they was trading a little barrel of whiskey for a buckskin bag of gold. Then they rode back to us. We all watched them Indians gather round the barrel and commence to drink the damnable whiskey for about fifteen minutes. Finally Bill pulled out his rifle. "All right, let's do it."

Not a single word had been said as to what we would do, but every one seemed to know, like a worm knows how to turn himself into a moth. Ever' man pulled out his rifle. I was the only one to hesitate. Bill looked me square in my face— "Come on, Jeff, you know we got to do this thing."

. . . I don't know how to describe what I did then.

In a way I knew exactly what we was doing. But in another way it wasn't as if I was doing it. It's like I was watching myself, and the man that was acting wasn't connected to the man that was watching. What I saw myself do was take out my rifle and begin shooting with all the others. Some of them Indians run for their

## FRIENDLY FIRE

bows and arrows but it was hopeless, us being so high above. We shot and shot till they was all laying still. Through it all I didn't feel a thing, just numb. Just . . . numb.

We rode down to the Indians' camp. The boys dug a hole. I watched Bill and Pete and the others drag the dead Indians over and throw their bodies in along with their baskets and stuff. Sudden-like my feelings hit me right here. I staggered up the canyon and it seemed I chucked up every bite I'd et since I left Missouri. I sat and looked at the crik moving for a long time. I knew that I couldn't go on being a part of what was happening. I guess I didn't want to be rich quite bad enough.

It was turning dark when I got back to camp. The others was roasting a haunch of a deer which the Indians had left hanging on a oak limb. Bill Donaldson picked up the barrel of whiskey and said, "I reckon we all deserve a celebration."

He poured a big cup for each man, even me, "Gentlemen, I propose a toast to the best day's work we ever did. Look here at this here deerskin bag. Twenty pounds of gold nuggets. And lots more in the ground."

Jim Wilson raised his voice. "I don't feel too good 'bout hanging 'round. Them dead Indians might have friends here an' abouts."

Dirty Pete answered, "This is a free country, Jim. You ain't no prisoner. But if you leave you forfeit your right to any share of the gold."

Bill said, "There's easy pickings here. With luck we'll dig out thirty or forty thousand in a week and then be gone."

I waited while the others got themselves so oiled up with whiskey they fell asleep. The fat old moon peeked over the rim of the canyon. I saddled my horse and snuck away without nobody noticing.

I give the horse his head thinking he'd find his way back to where we come from. The path looked good in the moonlight. But when it started to show morning I realized we'd gone farther into the mountains than we belonged. Climbing up a ridge to get my

## FRIENDLY FIRE

bearings I saw that I had just rode past the biggest Indian village I ever heard tell about. My blood turned to ice.

Day was coming on fast now. Perched on that ridge I was about as concealed as a barn in a wheat field. I was certain them Indians would take my scalp for the slaughter of their people.

I dug my spurs into the horse's side so sudden he jumped and lost his footing. He went scrambling down the rocky face, pitched me off and disappeared. I sailed down into the canyon, hit my head, and felt my lights go out. When I did open my eyes I was looking into the faces of two serious Indians and a third one that was smiling.

Lord, I thought it was all up with me. I ain't no hero. I didn't even reach to see if my six-shooter was still in its holster. I just watched them watching me and talking me over in their own language. One of em reached down to touch my leg. Only then I saw that it was bent at an impossible angle and my knee was totally out of its joint. They carried me to their village where they laid me down. The young man that had been smiling grabbed my foot and yanked on it so I screamed bloody murder. But he knowed what he was doing 'cause I could feel that knee pop back into place. It was all too sore to hold my weight though. I didn't have a prayer of makin' my escape.

Pretty soon there was upwards of a hundred Indians gawkin' at me. One of the women holds me out a little strip of venison and another gives me a basket full of water. They was so friendly and kinda playful, it took the edge off my fear. Pretty soon I was eating and drinking and if I hadn't been in pain, I'd a been half way toward having a party.

Scalping me seemed not to be on their mind. In fact they was behavin' like hosts with perfect manners. Ever' hour of the day they'd have someone come sit with me. The smiling young fellow who popped my knee back seemed to be special curious. To pass the time we started to study words of each others' language, names of things, like pine cone, basket, squirrel, dog.

I told him my name was Jeff Blake which got him confused. You see these people don't let hardly anyone know their real names, cause if a bad medicine man knows your real name he can

## FRIENDLY FIRE

poison you. I started to call my friend Laughing Fox, which was okay with him, cause it warn't his real name.

A week after they took me in, a strange fellow come running to the village. Suddenly the whole place was swarming like an ant hill. In a few minutes one of the locals took off running in the other direction.

See, they had their own news system. Ever' village had official runners. When anything important happened these runners took off for the next villages, passed the news to the next runners, and so forth. In less than a day, ever'body within fifty miles knew what happened.

This news, as it turned out, had a lot to do with me. The next village down had come across the Indians I'd helped massacre.

Some of the young men was all for taking action. One of em said: "This is a bad thing. First those Indians came from the north and started to take our gold. We did nothing to stop them.

"Now these white men come. Listen. If people kill deer on our land, without asking us, we can punish them. If they take acorns from our trees, we can punish them. I say if they take gold from our streams, then we can punish them. I say, punish the white men."

I was certain they'd start with the nearest white man they could find. But it didn't come to that because Laughing Fox's father got up and give a sermon:

"The Nang-Wa created the world. He made everything balance, made life and death balance each other.

"Then he said to the people: Go ahead, eat the deer, eat the salmon, eat good things. But when you take a life, help it to come back. It's all here for the balance. When you kill a deer, you tell it, 'Don't be sad, go find a new mother.'

"Never take a thing, if it can't come back. If you break the balance, destruction will follow.

"White man breaks the balance all the time.

"Those Indians mining gold, they learned bad ways from the white man. They took what can't come back. Therefore, the spirit let the white man kill them. One thing out of balance leads to



## FRIENDLY FIRE

another. It makes a landslide.

“So don’t you go killing someone. Don’t you get caught in their landslide. You put your foot in, pretty soon you are buried. White man, he puts his whole body in that landslide. He will destroy himself. We should leave him alone. That’s what I have to say.”

And so it was, the people didn’t go on no warpath.

When Laughing Fox finally explained all this to me, it really made me think. One good thing about talking with Indians is that they let you think as long as you need to. So first I thought, ‘Whew, what a relief they ain’t gonna be killing me.’ And then I thought, ‘Whoa, what if that old man is right? What if us white folks are gonna mess up so bad we just kill each other off?’ Then I thought, ‘Whoops, this may happen, but it ain’t gonna happen soon enough to keep us from killing off these Indians first.’ And then I thought, ‘Uh-oh, I gotta warn these people their way of life is doomed.’ And then I thought, ‘If it’s doomed, what’s the use of warning them? Let them live their last year or two in the old way they love so much.’ But then that didn’t seem right neither, so I decided not to say none of the things that was in my mind and I asked my friend, “How can I be of some use to you people?”

Laughing Fox almost bust a gut. It was such a very funny idea that *I* could ever be useful. So I decided to watch and listen real careful and find what I could do and I’d just show him not ever’ white man was a total bungler.

Ever’ village had its official speaker. Ours was the father of Laughing Fox, who I’m gonna call Thundering Crow, cause that ain’t his real name. Ever’ morning he’d get up on top of our dancing house, which we called the hangi, and he’d commence to shouting:

Uke, uke aitun!

Wake up. Wake up. Wake up. Wake up.

Get up. Get up. Get up. Get up.

## FRIENDLY FIRE

It's time to go hunting. Hunt deer, hunt squirrels!  
Go out together and bring back the meat!  
And you women, go out together.  
Time to gather wild onions. Wild potatoes.  
When you pull them up, make the ground loose.  
Make their brothers grow next year.  
Put all you can into your big baskets.  
Come back and cook.  
Make some bread, make acorn bread.  
Make onion soup so the people can eat it!  
People get up. People around get up!

At first the only thing I could find to help was to go up to the oak flats with Laughing Fox and the others to burn off the grass and brush. I was scared we might start a forest fire but no, they knew just how to keep it contained. It actually protected the big trees, cause a lightning-struck fire wouldn't have no way to get up into the trees' branches. And it made the most delicious mushrooms grow and promoted the grasses whose seeds the Indians eat, and it kept the whole area looking just like pictures I seen of parks in England. In the Indians' hands the fire is friendly. Friendly fire, that's what keeps the land balanced and producing just what the people needs.

After we did the year's burning I wanted to make myself handy some other way. I thought I'd learn how to make arrowheads cause that's something you can do sitting down and my knee was still on the mend. They give me a hunk of obsidian rock to chip points out of, but I was all thumbs. Try it sometime. I wasted a heap of obsidian and they had to trade for it from a different people who carried it over the mountains.

If I couldn't make arrowheads, maybe I could make a bow. I got a good-looking cedar branch, shaped it down so it looked like a bow— sort of. I twisted some fibers into a bow string, and made me a dozen arrows. Laughing Fox seemed pretty skeptical but he let me go hunting with a gang of boys.

## FRIENDLY FIRE

We marched off into the chaparral—a tall white man and six little Indians. Them Indian boys could call rabbits by making a little kissing sound. In about an hour they had all the rabbits they could carry. Me—I had lost all my arrows but one. It was pretty humiliatin', but them boys pretended not to notice.

We stopped to rest and there, about forty feet up a pine tree, was this fat squirrel. I pulled back and let fly—I didn't hit him but the arrow come so close he twitched, lost his balance, and fell at my feet. I whacked him with my bow, and there was my kill for the day!

I did get the hang of making fish spears, 'count of I usta be a carpenter and their fish spears use some of the techniques of joinery I already knew. Also, I had me a real good case knife to shape the wood with. I thought that might be cheatin' but, well, they didn't seem to mind how I went about it.

Laughing Fox said one of my spears wasn't too bad, so he took me fishing. We spent half a day walking down to the pools on the river which was our people's place. His two wives come with us. It warn't really the best time of year, cause the salmon run was over. I think Laughing Fox just did it so's I could feel busy. The fish we hunted was trout, running up to about two feet long. But the water was low and they was about as spooky as confirmed bachelors in a room full of hungry widows.

Laughing Fox could creep up on those pools as quiet as a passing cloud. I'd watch from a distance and those big fish simply wouldn't take no notice. He'd raise his arm so slow and then WHOOSH that spear would dive. Eight times out of ten there was a big trout flopping between its points.

But just let me try it—I'd be doing it all just like him, I thought—and about the time I'd raise my arm, they'd all go skittering to cover. Laughing Fox and his wives had a lot of good chuckles over me. But he was real patient. He kept showing me and eventually something rubbed off.

The first time I hit one and I could feel them two points slide over the trout's back and the barbs dig in, why that was the

## FRIENDLY FIRE

greatest feeling of triumph I ever tasted. He was a big one and flopped around mightily, but I hauled him on the beach and after that I was able to catch about one fish for every six that Laughing Fox brought in.

We ate fresh fish and his wives dried the rest on rocks, and smoked 'em on a fire of willow branches. After a few days we had us a nice load to carry home.

When the people travels somewhere, it's the women who carry the loads. They use baskets, which sit on their backs and attach by a strap to their foreheads, leaving the hands free for climbing and whatnot. The men never carry no loads. It turns out there's a reason. As we was making our way home with the fish, I found that reason out.

Laughing Fox went first carrying only his bow, with his arrows slung over his back. I was the same way, but just cause it looked like the thing to do. About half way home, Laughing Fox stopped and there in the trail in front of us was a full-grown grizzly bear.

Grizzly, he stood up tall, squinted our way, wiggled that huge nose of his and drunk in the sweet smell of our fish. I glanced at the two wives who stood still, real calm. I was beginning to miss the big Kentucky rifle that had got me into trouble in the first place.

Laughing Fox, he notches up one arrow but doesn't raise the bow. I follow suit, though I know if I shoot it's gonna tickle more than hurt. . . The only good I might do is to make him laugh so hard we could run away.

Laughing Fox begins to talk, he says, "Cousin! I call you cousin because my father's brother has lived with you. Remember, you took him into your cave and showed him your dances. Now I greet you as a kinsman. I would like to give you a fish." Then he pulls a smoked fish out of his older wife's basket and lays it on a rock.

Old Grizzly he makes a few growly sounds, but then he drops to all fours, ambles off the trail, and waits for us to walk past. When we got up-trail a ways, the older wife, she asks

## FRIENDLY FIRE

Laughing Fox, “What did that bear tell you?”

“He said to tell my uncle, ‘Bad winter coming.’”

“What kind of bad winter?”

“I don’t know,” he said. “I never really understand what a bear means.”

After that we walked to the village with no more incidents.

That fishing trip had give me a little vacation from my conscience. But soon as we got home it started bothering me worse than ever. I was still a killer even if it turned out I was doing the work of the Nang Wa. Just cause our victims was punished for their lack of balance, that didn’t free me from my own punishment. I figured the only way I might get back on the good side of the Nang Wa was to find some way to save the people from the destruction I knew was coming. But I couldn’t see no way to begin doing that and it made me feel just as low as a man in a dungeon.

Laughing Fox saw my spirits was down so he said to me, “Jeff Blake, what you need is to get married.”

I said, “What!”

“It’s only natural,” he said. “Are you a water person or a land person?”

“Am I a what?”

“Are you a blue-jay person or a frog person. . . You have to be one or the other.”

“Well then I guess I’m a blue jay person.”

Oh that made him so happy. He just smiled like a rainbow. “So am I!” he said. “And that means you can meet my second wife’s little sister.”

What I hadn’t known was that every land person has to marry a water person and vica versy. Then the children are the same kind of person their father is.

So we went to the next village, about two hours walk, to meet his second wife’s family. That little sister was a pretty thing. I’ll call her Tanager, cause that warn’t her real name. She was monstrous shy, but her dark eyes give me the most thorough

## FRIENDLY FIRE

looking up and down I ever got.

After a while she offered me something to eat out of her little basket. I thought it was only good manners to take a bite so I did, and then I was hungry and it was good, so I took several more. Well, that just set off a storm of smiles in the whole family and they was talking so fast I couldn't follow.

As we was walking home Laughing Fox says, "So, you are going to marry Tanager."

I said, "I ain't agreed to nothing."

"Yes you did."

"I did not!"

"Yes you did! You ate from her basket. You're engaged."

I gaped so hard, a whole family of bats coulda made their nest in my open mouth.

And at that moment it hit me, hit me right between the eyes: These people was willing to accept me as one of them! Useless as I was, they didn't care—they was willing to accept me, just me. . . for bein' me. They was willing to take me in and do whatever it was to take care of me. . . They was willing. . .

Sorry. I don't reckon I'll ever know the words to tell you how that makes me feel.

For one crazy moment I thought: "I'll take Tanager and settle the family somewheres where they won't get killed."

What was I thinking? I know as well as you do that once the white world finds out a man has lived with Indians he ain't never gonna get a job and he's lucky they don't shoot him down like a dog.

I just had to talk to Laughing Fox about what I knowed was coming.

But I put it off till after the big festival. We had already sent out invitations far and wide. You got to understand that my people is organized into very small countries, each one maybe a hundred square miles. We call these a "nena." Each one is complete, there ain't no higher power. Our nena was the last one up in the mountains, cause higher up you couldn't spend the winter. The others was all to the north and south and west. We'd invited

## FRIENDLY FIRE

people from about six different nenas.

For days Thundering Crow had been telling us to get ready for the festival:

We have visitors coming. Lots of hungry visitors.  
Get the food ready. Bring deer and rabbits.  
Take your nets and catch a thousand quail.  
Big times start today.  
Eat some breakfast.  
Don't talk about starvation.  
Get ready for the Festival!

I wish I could tell you everything about that festival. I wish I could tell you about the people who walked three days to come. I wish I could make you hear the singing and laughing. I wish I could show you the games, the men playing football, the women with their basketball, the hoop games, the hand games, the acorn games. I wish I could dance you the dances and show you how the clowns, painted all white, kept the whole village stirred up. I wish I could make you understand the ceremony we had for everyone who died the last year, how we could all cry, how we washed ourselves clean. I'd have you sitting here till Sunday, but there just ain't time. In ten minutes that boat out there is gonna blow its whistle.

Lotsa times during that festival Tanager would come sit by me. The more she did, the more it hurt to think what was coming to these people, these so-called savages that had saved my life.

Well . . . Well well well.

Something did happen during that festival that made it easier for me to talk to Laughing Fox. People from a nena in the valley had been pushed out of their village by the whites. Their food for the winter got destroyed. We decided to take some in as did the nena just to the west of us—that's the one Tanager come from.

So I was able to tell my friend, "What they done to the people downstream they are gonna do to us, and everyone."

Now Laughing Fox was a very smart man. But this was just

## FRIENDLY FIRE

so far outside anything he'd ever known. . . He couldn't get his mind around it.

So I told him how the United States got rid of England, by all the colonies uniting together. "It's the only hope," I said. "You got to get all the nenas everywhere to make a single force and you gotta organize em to deal with the white man." Finally, he could see that I was right, but he couldn't see no way to get so many completely independent peoples organized.

Winter had come on by now. We was running low on meat. Not only did we have lots more mouths to feed, there weren't so many deer as usual. The whites was killing them off by the hundreds. And they never set their souls free.

Some of the folks we'd took in was feeling real bad about the hardship they imposed. A few of the guests at Tanager's nena said they knew where some meat was. They went down to Mariposa and come back with six mules they'd stole.

Well, they got the mules slaughtered and their carcasses hung up to cure when the thing happened that I knew would happen. A small army rode up into the mountains armed to the teeth. They shot up Tanager's village, killed her mama and her papa, and about thirty other people, and then burned the whole village down. Next day they come up and burned us out. Ever bit of food we had stored for the winter. Then they went back to Mariposa, feeling like they was George Washington or something.

What can I say?

Starvation stared us in the face. I thought the only hope was to go down and try to find some authorities. Tell em what happened to us. I knowed there is a Indian Commission that sometimes keeps people from starving.

I put on my old, torn miner's clothes. But my feet had got all callused and bigger so my boots didn't fit. Also I had pulled out my beard like the other Indians, so I only looked like a white man between the neck and the ankles.

I persuaded Laughing Fox and Thundering Crow to come with me as representatives of the people. We started off for



## FRIENDLY FIRE

Mariposa.

I guess I'll never know if that idea could have worked. When we was coming around Mt. Bullion, going towards Mariposa Crik, some whites opened fire on us.

The first shot hit me right here and knocked me down. The second shot went right through Thundering Crow's brain.

Laughing Fox bent over me with a look of concern I'll never forget. "Get outta here," I said, "The people need you. I'll come back . . . Go!"

He turned and fled as I lost consciousness. Next time I opened my eyes I was staring up the barrels of three six-shooters.

"Wait," I said, "I'm American."

"You don't look American. You ain't gone and went native on us have you?"

"What if I said I had?"

"Then we'd treat you like a native and take your scalp back to the bar where they'd stand us a round of drinks."

"Trouble is, your hair ain't straight and black, so maybe they wouldn't."

Well, I ain't no hero. I passed out again before I could answer.

I was unconscious for near a week. I finally woke up in a tent hospital. Oh, they treated me with real Christian kindness, just as soon as they was satisfied I was a white man. . . Real, tender kindness, god bless 'em. . . Somebody had even went to the trouble to fabricate a story, how I was rescued from bloodthirsty savages who was holding me hostage. When I told 'em the truth they said I was delirious. Said it with such pitying kindness! Said I was dreamin' up a story in my feverish brain. Oh, I couldn't possibly know anything 'bout how savages really is.

Jim Wilson come to see me. Remember, he was the one who was scared we'd be killed by friends of our victims? Well, he said three of our party got drunk one night and drowned in the river. One more was killed in a knife fight over a Mexican woman in Mormon Creek. Bill and Pete Donaldson had disappeared, along

## FRIENDLY FIRE

with most of the gold. That left Jim and just one other to keep on with the work of bringing civilization to California.

What more is there to tell? It was a month before I could move around, even a little. Jim lent me money. I went looking for Indian Commissioners to help my people, but they wasn't expected to reach California till 1851.

So I come back here to Missouri.

. . . Why?

I thought I had to do something about the Donaldson brothers. But they've already come and gone on to Chicago. And anyway— I can see now, even if I went on to find 'em, they are such a small part of the problem, I'd be wasting my time trying to bring justice down on them.

I guess I had to come home, just to prove it couldn't be done. I don't belong here. . . Likely I don't belong anywhere. Likely that's the balance the Nang Wa wants me to live with, positioned exactly half way between two worlds. I don't know. . . Likely.

So it's back to California, back to where my people was. If Laughing Fox or Tanager is still alive, I reckon they're between two worlds too. Not the same as me, but near enough.

If I can find them, and if they'll have me, then I'll throw my lot in with them. If not, well. . .

I ain't no hero, but I ain't giving up.

The End