

## BLANKET OF WISDOM

I wondered out into the prairie and began my long but familiar walk down the poled road. The sun was up and the Arizona dust bowl that had been my home for nearly twenty years exhaled an uneasy breeze, swirling and cursing. As I gazed up into an azure sky, there they were – the wispy vapour trails stretching far into the distance; as my favourite song confirmed, ‘...over geometric farms, charmed.’

I didn’t know this would be the last time I would ever see my family’s shuttered homestead, peeling white paint with sticking sashed windows and creaking doors, ebbing and flowing tormented by varying temperatures. My bedroom window, front top left, chiselled into the roof like a hostile lookout post, showing the full decayed truth. I always had a feeling of tumbleweed isolation gained from this bleak terrain. But not today.

I had written over a hundred stories, none of them worth much, but nonetheless given some credence by an impressed Editor. I had no choice but to answer my calling to the city limits. I guess my Editor saw someone naïve with a restless zest. My learning had been limited, in fact there were only ten of us at the village school, but Reverend Lawrie ensured an appreciation of language and safe passage by way of Copeland’s *Simple Gifts*.

My father, devout but detached from religious icons, had given me advice - most of it completely useless for this emerging free spirited, politically fuelled time. And my favourite song? It was right; my father’s advice was all false alarms drifting into icy altitudes.

I had been observing in my stories a strange wanderlust, but was now driven to an American expressionism reaffirming basically, that I had lived a life thus far on a diet of time and defining seasons. I suppose these ideals needed some massaging once resident in the grease and grime of the city; alas, my father’s advice in contrast to what was forthcoming being sadly forgotten the moment I stepped onto that dusty road and headed east.

I placed my wrought iron key under the earthen muddied chipped pot, the same pot that had been a wedding anniversary gift to my parents from an elderly Chief of a tribe residing on an adjacent reservation. Mindful that our family homestead stood on their ancestral lands, the Chief offered the pot to remind us of our illegal occupation but that we had somehow understood the spiritual significance of the site and thankfully had chosen to barely scar by way of farming. Indeed, despite everything, my parents and I, an only child, became an extension of the Chief’s own and each year at harvest, the tribe would join us for a great celebration.

On this morning, with a satchel of writing and a small suitcase, my next chapter began accompanied also by my most treasured item - a blanket from that same Chief’s son. How honoured was I? That blanket had been passed down generations and would go on to reveal its own wisdom.