

TITLE: **LOST SISTER** by Dorothy Johnson PRODUCER: Martin Garrison, BY MOUTH

AUDITION DEADLINE: 10/21/2026

EMAIL AUDITIONS TO: martin@bymouth.org

CAST OF CHARACTERS (by compensation)

RANCHER, 50's, USA, educated but with a slight Texas drawl
2702 words x (3) takes = **\$815.**

AUNT BOSSY, 39, USA, refined Texas drawl, married to Uncle, sister of Gabby & Prissy & Mary, aunt of Boy | 579 words x (3) takes = **\$175.**

MAJOR HARRIS, 40-50, USA Midwest accent, US Calvary Officer, Westpoint
586 words x (3) takes = **\$175.**

HAND, 20s, USA, medium country drawl, Rancher's ranch hand
260 words x (3) takes = **\$78.**

MA, Age 26, USA or UK/AUS, Mother of Boy | 190 words x (3) takes = **\$75.**

BOY, Age 9, slight country drawl, will grow up to be Rancher
139 words x (3) takes = **\$75.**

INDIAN INTERPRETER, 40-50's, Fluent, educated Canadian or USA Asian accent when talking to Lost Sister. Broken American-Indian accent when talking to everyone **except** for Lost Sister
159 words x (3) takes = **\$75.**

AUNT GABBY, 37, USA, refined Texas drawl, sister to Bossy & Prissy & Mary, aunt of Boy | 137 words x (3) takes = **\$50.**

AUNT PRISSY, 35, USA, refined Texas drawl, sister to Bossy & Gabby & Mary, aunt of Boy. 99 words x (3) takes = **\$50.**

LOST SISTER, 48, Fluent, educated USA Asian or Canadian accent when talking to Interpreter. Extremely broken USA American Indian accent when talking to everyone **except** for Interpreter. She's been restored from forty years living with the Indians, aunt of Boy
80 words x (3) takes = **\$50.**

AUNT MARY, late 50's, USA, refined USA mid-West accent, older sister to Lost Sister, aunt of Boy
136 words x (3) takes = **\$50.**

UNCLE, Age 45, USA, very refined (for a man) Texas drawl, married to (and dominated by) Bossy, uncle of Boy
19 words x (3) takes = **\$35.**

LIEUTENANT, 20s, USA Midwest accent, US Calvary Officer, Westpoint
65 words x (3) takes = **\$35.**

1 [Sounds of a semi-desert landscape with scrub trees and
2 sagebrush. Sound of wind--and faintly in the background,
3 the sound of a Death Song being sung by an old Indian woman.]

4 RANCHER VO: It's an old story that never seems to have an
5 end out here. Old ways give way to new--which give way to things
6 even newer still. It's never easy--there's always a
7 fight with change, and probably always will be.

8 The different tribes fought with each other--then with the
9 strange white trappers an' traders. Then both fought with the
10 settlers, who brought their fences an' their cattle--and all
11 three fought with the newcomers, who brought the railroads an'
12 the towns--with their straight streets--and the houses with
13 their parlors--the fancy stores and saloons--and with the lawmen
14 who enforced the rules--always the rules. And those rules kept
15 changing--making it hard to remember the old ways.

16 I'm no different. I grew up in the store my family had run since
17 it was a lone trading post in the middle of nowhere. When I was
18 grown, I ran that store--learning to hate shopkeeping, with its
19 ledgers and inventories--and the ever growing list of rules that
20 tied me in knots. So when I got the opportunity to sell,
21 I jumped at the chance--and took to raising cattle, a decision
22 I've never regretted. The rules are still there--but they're at
23 a distance. If your fence gets broke, you fix it--and go round
24 up the strays who got out.

25 (Sounds of wind and Horses hooves growing closer)

26 RANCHER: Find anything in the breaks?

27 HAND: Nossir. Jumped a nice muley buck, but no sign a' those
28 steers.

29 RANCHER: We'll worry about that buck after we find these
30 knotheads and get 'em back behind the wire. I found tracks
31 coming down off of th' ridge--looks like they're headed up this
32 box canyon.

33 HAND: If they're there, we'll have 'em quick.

34 RANCHER: No sign of tracks coming back out--so those boneheads
35 gotta still be in there. Let's go get 'em and get 'em home.

36 (Hoofbeats heading into the canyon fading out. Sound of a
37 trickling stream as hoofbeats come closer.)

38 RANCHER: They're running outta places to hide. Should be able to
39 find some soft tracks over by that crick to let us know which
40 way they're headed. (Sound of dismounting; footsteps getting
41 closer to the spring) Ya see anything?

42 HAND: They was here--but it looks like they're still headed in.
43 (Sound of boots scuffing dirt then stopping) Hey--what's this?
44 [Sound of hands rummaging in dirt] Gosh, Boss--there's--
45 bones here! They look--human. Prospector, don'tcha think?

46 RANCHER VO: That was my guess, too. But when I got close,
47 I saw--protected by a log--scraps of faded cloth that looked
48 like it'd once been a respectable lady's dress. And inside that
49 cloth, human bones--it was true. I tried to push it back under,
50 but it was too late.

51 HAND: Gosh! that ain't no shirt--that's a dress! It wadn't no
52 prospector at all, it's a WOMAN! (Awestruck) Hey--dintcha'
53 have a crazy old aunt who ran away with the Injuns?

54 RANCHER: Nonsense. It could be anybody.

55 HAND: What if it was her! My Ma used to say my Pa and my
56 uncles was part o' the search party that went lookin' for her
57 back in 'Seventy. Wasn't that when that crazy Injun lady went
58 missin'?

59 RANCHER VO: It was no use trying to pretend--least not to
60 another man--that I didn't know about my Indian aunt. So my mind
61 started driftin' back--back to that time forty-odd years ago
62 when she first showed up at our home--my aunt who'd been living
63 with the Indians.

64 [Sound of rocks being thrown at a bottle]

65 I was nine-years old--an' our household was full of women back
66 then--Ma and my three aunts, who I called (not to their faces)
67 AUNT BOSSY, AUNT GABBY and AUNT PRISSY. They annoyed me with
68 their bustle--and with their chatter--and dominated my poor
69 UNCLE, who did his best to escape them behind the counter of the
70 store.

71 [Sound of the store doorbell as a someone enters.]

72 UNCLE: May I help you today, sir?

73 AUNT BOSSY [whispered in bossy tone]: Ask him for his LIST!

74 RANCHER: When Ma told me the Lost Sister was coming to
75 live with us, I couldn't believe it. Indians had killed my
76 father, a cavalry lieutenant, two years before. I hated Indians
77 --an' looked forward to wipin' 'em out when I got older.

78 BOY: What'd she live with the Indians for?

79 MA: They captured 'er--when she was a little girl. She was
80 three years younger than you are. Now she's comin' home.

81 BOY: If them Redskins ever got ME, I wouldn't stay with 'em
82 long!

83 MA (loving): Ah! They won't get you--they'll NEVER get you.

84 RANCHER VO: Ma wasn't exactly happy around my aunts--but she
85 flat out refused take us back East where she came from. Uncle
86 did mind the store--

87 UNCLE [extremely mild-mannered]: May I interest you in
88 something, Ma'am?

89 RANCHER VO: --but he was just Aunt Bossy's husband. The only man
90 who had really belonged--was my father, my aunts' baby brother.
91 Ma stayed to protect my heritage.

92 AUNT BOSSY: Go out and play now--you're in your Uncle's
93 way here in the store.

94 RANCHER VO: One day, Major Harris from the fort--came to the
95 store to let us know my Indian aunt was coming. Neither Bossy,
96 Gabby or Prissy had ever seen the one they called the
97 Lost Sister. She'd been taken in a raid before they were born.
98 Aunt Mary had known her--she was older--but she lived far away
99 and wasn't well.

100 AUNT BOSSY: Of COURSE she must come to us! She's our own
101 flesh and blood. Our poor, lost sister--torn from her
102 home forty years ago!

103 MAJOR HARRIS (bluntly): She's been living with the hostiles all
104 these years. She was only five when she was taken. It's
105 reasonable to assume she'll behave like an Indian woman.²⁷

106 AUNT BOSSY: MAJOR HARRIS! I CANNOT permit anyone to speak that
107 way about my own dear sister!

108 AUNT PRISSY (Entering perturbed): Perhaps we should have
109 dresses made. We don't know what she'll have with her!

110 AUNT BOSSY: The'll be time enough to take her to the dressmaker
111 after she settles in a day or two. Then she can shop to her
112 heart's content.

113 AUNT GABBY (Entering excitedly): ALL the ladies in TOWN are
114 anxious to MEET her! We must have them ALL over for TEA!

115 AUNT BOSSY: Now girls--we mustn't ask her too many questions at
116 first. She must rest awhile. She's been through a
117 TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE.

118 HAND (In the Present): From what I heard, it musta' been.
119 Forty years livin' with those savages musta' been AWFUL.

120 RANCHER: It was the only life she knew.

121 RANCHER VO: I didn't dare try to explain she'd married a
122 brave who loved her--an' that she'd loved him--and had
123 raised his three children. Yes, she HAD been through a
124 terrible experience--just not the one my aunts thought.
125 She'd been wrenched from her family--watched her husband and her
126 people killed--and now was being turned over to strangers.
127 She hadn't been FREED--she'd been made a CAPTIVE.

128 HAND: But weren't your aunts her FAMILY?

129 RANCHER: Them? No, they were total strangers. They weren't even
130 born when the Indians took her.

131 (SOUND of a coach stopping outside, horses neighing.
132 Steps of people climbing off the coach.)

133 AUNT BOSSY (Throwing open the door and stepping onto the foot
134 board): Welcome Dear Sis--

135 RANCHER VO: Ma and me watched as Aunt Bossy's cry died on her
136 lips--and her outstretched arms dropped to her side.

137 You see, the Lost Sister was a legend--the captive child,
138 with blonde curls and big blue eyes--a fairy child who ran on
139 dancing feet. But what came out of that coach was an old woman--

140 in worn moccasins, wearing a ugly dark dress that didn't fit her
141 bulging body. Her grey hair was growing out from being cropped
142 short to get rid o' lice. She stood--staring, helpless among her
143 captors. An INDIAN INTERPRETER, a half-breed with greasy hair
144 to his shoulders--an Army tunic over his native dress--
145 stood beside her.

146 AUNT BOSSY (Recovering her composure): Poor dear! I'm your
147 sister! Sis-ter. [Pause] And these two [Pause] are your sisters
148 as well. [Pause] You must be--tired--from your long journey.
149 [Pause] Please, come into the parlor. Ahem--Major Harris, must
150 this (indicating the Interpreter) PERSON accompany us inside?

151 MAJOR HARRIS: You won't be able to talk to her unless he's
152 present. NOT because it's regulation mind you. But because she's
153 forgotten English. Technically, your sister's still a prisoner.
154 She'll be in your custody--she may walk in your fenced yard,
155 but she must not leave it without official permission. Ma'ams,
156 this may be a heavy burden to you all--but she's been told all
157 this--and has expressed a willingness to conform to these rules.
158 I don't think you'll have any trouble keeping her here.
159 If I did, I wouldn't have brought her. Good afternoon, Ma'ams.⁹⁶

160 LOST SISTER (Haltingly): Mah-Ree?

161 AUNT BOSSY: Mary? Oh! Aunt Mary lives far away. [to a child]
162 Far--away! And she isn't well--isn't well!--but she'll come as
163 soon as she's able to. Dear sister Mary!

164 RANCHER VO: When the interpreter translated this, the
165 Lost Sister looked sad and had no more to say. If this was
166 her new prison, well--she would endure it.

167 AUNT PRISSY: But--where are her THINGS?

168 AUNT GABBY: Perhaps tomorrow--we can take her to the store--
169 to see what she'd like.

170 AUNT BOSSY (Quietly): There's no hurry.

171 RANCHER VO: Aunt Bossy, you see, understood before the others that
172 the Lost Sister was going to be a problem. I don't think she ever
173 stopped hoping that one day she'd end her stubborn silence--and
174 begin to relate the events of her life among the savages over a
175 cup of tea in the parlor.

176 HAND: She couldn't speak English?

177 RANCHER: Nope. No more than she could flap her arms and fly to
178 the moon.

179 AUNT BOSSY [whispers to sisters]: I think it best if we make her
180 something proper to wear ourselves.

181 RANCHER VO: It was no surprise when they decided not to take
182 their Lost Sister shopping. Instead, they made her a handful of
183 dresses--and told her with signs--and some interesting
184 pantomime--to change her dress, which she did.

185 She was a model prisoner, my Indian aunt--and she accustomed
186 herself--finally--to sitting on the chair in her room.
187 She seldom came out--which was a relief to her sisters.
188 She preferred to stand--hour after hour--looking out of her
189 bedroom window--staring at the blue mountains.

190 AUNT GABBY: We've brought you a pair of ladies shoes from town,
191 my dear.

192 RANCHER VO: She accepted--but she always wore moccasins--never
193 the fancy shoes her sisters bought her. Though she seemed to
194 treasure those fancy shoes all the same.

195 HAND: Why'd she keep them on the mantle?

196 RANCHER: Because they were a gift--I suppose.

197 BOY: Why don't she ever wear the shoes her sisters give 'er?

198 INTERPRETER: She wife of Great Chief. She know how, act humble
199 to those not so high.

200 RANCHER VO: Later...

201 INTERPRETER: Why don't you ever wear the shoes those
202 crazy women give you?

203 LOST SISTER: They're pretty but--why would I want to
204 pinch my feet?

205 RANCHER VO: To my aunts' chagrin, she refused to sleep in the
206 bed in her room. She insisted on sleeping on the floor. She
207 didn't eat with us either.

208 [Sound of Lost Sister loudly chewing and slurping and handling
209 her food]

210 BOY [whispers]: Ma, why does she eat with her hands? An' make so
211 much noise?

212 MA: That's how Indians are taught to eat, son.

213 BOY [excited]: Really?!

214 HAND: Golly!

215 RANCHER: After that, Aunt Bossy never had her to the
216 table again.

217 AUNT BOSSY (finding a slow-witted child): Now--there you are!

218 RANCHER VO: As their Christian duty, my aunts took turns
219 visiting their Lost Sister a half an hour each day. Aunt Bossy
220 took it upon herself to make her talk. MAKE, I said, not teach.

221 AUNT BOSSY: What are you looking at, dear? What in the world is
222 there to see out there? The birds--are you watching the birds?
223 Why don't you try sewing? Or you could go take a little walk in
224 the yard. Don't you want to go out for a nice little walk?

225 RANCHER VO: But the Lost Sister just listened--and blinked.
226 Aunt Bossy could've understood an Indian woman's not being able to
227 speak in a civilized tongue--but her sister was NOT an Indian.
228 She should be able to talk the language her sisters did.

229 AUNT BOSSY [losing her patience]: Please say something, my dear!

230 RANCHER VO: Aunt Gabby talked to my Indian Aunt too--but she was
231 delighted not to get any answers--and not to be interrupted.

232 AUNT GABBY: --and so I TOLD her, in NO uncertain terms--that I
233 was simply NOT going to be saddled with restocking BOTH the
234 Notions section AND the Dry Goods--while HER good-for-nothing
235 HUSBAND wastes ALL of his time in the LIVERY with his PRECIOUS
236 horses--

237 RANCHER VO: Aunt Prissy, meanwhile, went at her duties like a
238 martyr--clutching her Bible and reading aloud from it until her
239 time was up.

240 PRISSY (Grimly): And Jacob said to his mother, "And my Brother
241 Esau is an hairy man--but I am a smooth man..."

242 RANCHER VO: Aunt Prissy always took her clock with her so that
243 she wouldn't be tempted to cheat.
244 HAND: Sounds awful!
245 RANCHER: It was. Life in that house--full of childless women--
246 was pretty dreary for a boy like me. But I could sympathize with
247 my Indian aunt, because apart from my Ma, I felt just as trapped
248 as she did.
249 HAND: What about yer uncle?
250 RANCHER VO: Uncle knew who wore the britches in the family--
251 and it wasn't him.
252 AUNT BOSSY [frustrated]: Now go and help Mrs. Johnson with that
253 fabric--GO!
254 UNCLE [meekly]: Yes, dear.
255 RANCHER VO: He could be pleasant with customers at the store--
256 so long as Aunt Bossy wasn't in the room--
257 UNCLE: Why that's lovely, ma'am.
258 RANCHER VO: But the rest of the time, he was pretty much not
259 there.
260 AUNT BOSSY [complaining]: If that husband of mine wasn't bad
261 enough, now I have ANOTHER child--our dear sister!
262 RANCHER VO: Within a short time, my aunts had reached the end of
263 their tether. The Lost Sister did nothing because there was
264 nothing for her to do. Her gnarled hands musta been skilled at
265 squaw's work--butchering meat--scraping and tanning hides,
266 making tipis, beading an' embroidering ceremonial clothes.
267 But her skills were useless--and unwanted--in a civilized home.
268 She ate in her room, slept on the floor, and stood for hours
269 looking out the window. It couldn't go on.
270 HAND: What happened?
271 RANCHER: Nothing--not until Aunt Mary was well enough to travel.
272 In the meantime, Ma was called upon to bear her share of the
273 family duty.
274 MA: I'm afraid I'll start crying in front of her.

275 AUNT BOSSY: Just do your best, my dear. Speak loud and slow--
276 and don't use large words.

277 RANCHER VO: I listened outside the door when Ma went in.
278 My Indian aunt said something--then said it again until
279 Ma guessed what she wanted.

280 MA: Oh--I see! [Footsteps, door opened] Son, come in here.

281 RANCHER VO: Ma put her arms around me as I stood beside
282 my Indian aunt's chair. She nodded--and that was all there was
283 to it.

284 Later--

285 MA: She likes you. (kissing the Boy) And so do I.

286 BOY: But I don't like HER--she's STRANGE.

287 MA: She's just sad, son. She had a little boy like YOU once,
288 ya know.

289 BOY: What happened to him?

290 MA: He grew up and became a great warrior. She must be
291 proud of him.

292 BOY: Did he ever fight Papa?

293 MA: I don't know. The Army has him in prison somewhere.
294 He's a dangerous man.

295 RANCHER VO: And he was. A proud man, a chief. A bird of prey
296 whose wings the Army had clipped--after years of trying. That
297 was one thing my Ma and my Indian aunt had in common: they both
298 had sons. Aunts Bossy, Gabby and Prissy were childless.

299 [Sound of a rock being thrown at a bottle and breaking it]

300 BOY: Gotcha!

301 RANCHER VO: I took to playin' in the yard so I could stare up at
302 her as she stood looking out the window at the blue mountains.
303 She never smiled at me like my other aunts did--but she'd
304 look at me sometimes, deep in thought, as if measuring my worth.
305 I could get her to look at me sometimes--by performing athletic
306 feats--like walking on my hands. [sound of walking on hands]
307 For some reason, I valued her silent attention.

308 MA [yelling]: Time for dinner, son.
309 RANCHER VO: I only saw her scowl twice. Once when Aunt Prissy
310 slapped me--
311 [Sound of a slap.]
312 AUNT PRISSY: That'll teach ya!
313 LOST SISTER: Why did that sour lady hit that good boy?
314 INTERPRETER: She said he took an apple from the barrel.
315 LOST SISTER: An apple from the barrel? We don't hit a good boy
316 for that!
317 HAND: And I thought Injuns were cruel.
318 RANCHER: That's what they think of us.
319 BOY: God damn it, Ma--leave me be!
320 RANCHER: That time, my Indian aunt's scowl was for ME.
321 I never did that again.
322 BOY: Aunt Prissy, can Indians go to heaven?
323 AUNT PRISSY: Indians are godless heathen sinners who are
324 unworthy of salvation.
325 BOY: But in Church they say All have fallen short and are in
326 need of salvation." Doesn't that mean Indians too?
327 AUNT PRISSY (irritated): Don't you have chores to do? Stop
328 asking silly questions.
329 RANCHER VO: One day a young LIEUTENANT arrived--with the
330 Interpreter. Aunt Bossy carefully placed a towel on the
331 chair where the Interpreter was to sit.
332 AUNT BOSSY (friendly to Lieutenant): No you sit here,
333 Lieutenant.
334 LIEUTENANT: Thank you, ma'am.
335 AUNT BOSSY [far less friendly to Interpreter]: And you--here.
336 RANCHER VO: Ma brought in my Indian aunt.
337 INTERPRETER: The young warrior chief and these crazy women want
338 to take your picture.

339 LOST SISTER: They've already captured my body--now they want to
340 capture my spirit, too. NO.

341 INTERPRETER (to Lieutenant): She say No. Take picture,
342 take one's spirit.

343 LIEUTENANT: But Ma'am--your son's had his picture made.
344 Don't you want to see it?

345 INTERPRETER (to Lost Sister) They have a picture of Eagle Head.
346 They want to show it to you.

347 LIEUTENANT: If we show you his picture, will you let us take
348 your picture?

349 INTERPRETER: (to Lost Sister) The young warrior chief says
350 you can see your son's picture, if you let them take yours.

351 LOST SISTER: Only if they let me KEEP Eagle Head's picture.
352 His spirit will be safe with me.

353 INTERPRETER (to Lieutenant): She say, she KEEP picture of
354 Eagle Head, you take Eagle Head mother picture, okay.

355 LIEUTENANT (to Lost Sister): No, I'm afraid you can only
356 look at it. It belongs to us.

357 INTERPRETER: They say you can't keep it.

358 LOST SISTER: NO! I have nothing of my son! Only for his
359 picture will I do this!!!

360 INTERPRETER: She not want look. She keep--or nothing!

361 RANCHER VO: My Ma shivered as we watched--for she understood
362 something my aunts never would.

363 MA (breathless whisper): She's gambling for high stakes--
364 all or nothing!

365 BOY: Will they let Her keep the pi'ture?

366 MA: I believe they will, son.

367 RANCHER VO: Ma was right. That photo's the one in all the
368 history books--the half-white chief--the brave and valiant
369 leader who was not quite great enough to keep his people free.

370 Though you'd never guess it, that photo was taken after he was
371 captured. Head held high--eyes staring with boldness--but not
372 contempt--his long dark hair braided on one side and curling on
373 the other--and, in his hands a pipe like a royal scepter.

374 I asked more than once to see that photograph.

375 BOY: Can ya ask her if I can see his pi'ture again?

376 RANCHER VO: That image of the captive but unconquered warrior--
377 did it ever have an effect on me. I began to control my temper,
378 to cultivate reserve as I grew older--to stare with boldness but
379 not contempt at people who offended me.

380 INTERPRETER: The Boy wants to see the picture of Eagle Head.

381 LOST SISTER [chuckling]: Again?

382 RANCHER VO: I never met him, my Indian cousin--but I took
383 silent pride in him: Eagle Head--the noble chief of his tribe.

384 [Sound of woman stepping into coach.]

385 AUNT BOSSY: Here we go, sister--next to me.

386 [The coach door closes, whip is lashed and coach moves off.]

387 RANCHER VO: My Indian aunt went like a child to the
388 photographer's studio--early in the morning--when there'd be
389 fewer folks on the street to stare. Her photograph's not proud,
390 but pitiful. She looks out with no expression--no emotion,
391 no challenge--only the face of an aging woman with chopped grey
392 hair. The aunts put a copy in the family album.

393 One day...

394 [Sound of running footsteps and open/close screen door].

395 AUNT GABBY: Sisters! Sisters! It's a letter from sister Mary!
396 She's coming, she's coming!

397 RANCHER VO: At long last, Aunt Mary, white and trembling--
398 exhausted from her illness and the long journey--finally
399 arrived.

400 AUNT BOSSY: Dear sister Mary--we're so sorry that dirty,
401 lazy interpreter hasn't arrived like we asked for. Major Harris
402 called him back to the fort at the most inconvenient moment.

403 You must be so tired from your long journey. Perhaps it would be
404 better if you took a long rest before tirin' yourself further.

405 AUNT MARY: I've waited forty years for a meeting I gave up hope
406 of ever seeing.

407 AUNT BOSSY: Mary dear, I'm afraid I must prepare you for a
408 terrible shock. I'm afraid our dear sister is--

409 RANCHER VO: It must have been the sound of that familiar voice
410 from all those years before.

411 (Door's thrown open)

412 LOST SISTER: MAH-REE! MAH-REE!!!

413 AUNT MARY: OH DEAR, SWEET SISTER!!!

414 LOST SISTER MAH-REE! MAH-REE!

415 [Sounds of weeping]

416 RANCHER VO: Bossy, Gabby and Prissy left the room in embarrassed
417 silence--leavin' only Aunt Mary and her Lost Sister. So much to
418 tell, so much hardship and fear--and so much joy and triumph
419 too--and the older sister now here who could hear it all and
420 understand.

421 HAND: I thought you said there weren't no interpreter.

422 RANCHER: Weren't no need for one with those two. They sat
423 holding hands while the Lost Sister, now grown old and a
424 grandmother, told what had happened during those forty years.
425 Aunt Mary--she didn't understand a word--but didn't need to.

426 AUNT MARY: Is this a picture of your son? My, isn't he handsome!
427 A fine boy. You must be SO PROUD.

428 RANCHER VO: She understood the tone--if not the words--my Indian
429 aunt--and the tone was admiration. Her son was accepted by the
430 sister who mattered. Aunt Mary didn't try to make her
431 Lost Sister talk. She just sat with her for hours while the
432 Lost Sister poured out her soul. Just not in English.

433 AUNT BOSSY: Mary dear, I simply can't understand how you can
434 sit and listen to all that heathen gibberish day in and day out.
435 I simply can't understand why our dear sister is being so
436 stubborn about conversing in a civilized language.

437 AUNT MARY: You never mind--there's plenty of time for her to
438 learn English again. I think she understands more than she lets
439 on. I asked her if she'd like to come live with me--and she
440 nodded. We'll have the rest of our lives for her to learn
441 English. But what she's been telling me--she can't wait to
442 tell that. About her life, about her son.

443 AUNT BOSSY [thrilled inside]: OH! Are you SURE, Mary dear, that
444 you're up to the responsibility for having her?

445 RANCHER VO: Though she made a great show of it, Aunt Bossy was
446 terrified Aunt Mary might change her mind.

447 AUNT BOSSY (sighing dramatically): I do believe she would be
448 happier with you--though we have done all we could.

449 RANCHER VO: And while Bossy and the other two couldn't be
450 happier at the thought of the Lost Sister being someplace else--
451 so, it seemed, was the US Government.

452 MAJOR HARRIS: Ma'am.

453 AUNT BOSSY: Major Harris.

454 MAJOR HARRIS: Ma'am, if it's agreeable to you--to transfer
455 custody of your sister, who was captured, to your sister Mary--
456 well, the US Government will present no hindrance. 27

457 AUNT BOSSY [in a rush]: Yes, it's agreeable, Major--perfectly
458 agreeable.

459 MAJOR HARRIS: We will now have this explained to her so that
460 she'll understand what she'll be undertaking. If we can get her
461 cooperation and if she understands where she's going,
462 this'll go a lot easier. [Footsteps] Interpreter, tell the lady
463 we will allow her to travel by next week's train with her sister
464 Mary, providing she agrees to cooperate. If she refuses, we will
465 be compelled to transport her under escort, which will be far
466 less pleasant.76

467 RANCHER VO: The Interpreter and my Indian aunt talked back and
468 forth for a long time--until the Major began to grow suspicious.

469 MAJOR HARRIS (Under his breath): Why are they jabbering on so
470 long, Lieutenant? Interpreter, what's the holdup? Does she
471 agree to cooperate or not?20

472 INTERPRETER: She ask many question about journey--about
473 riding on Iron Road. I explain--and she say--yes--she go--with
474 Sister Mary. It hard--make her understand--how far journey.

475 MAJOR HARRIS: Go out by the wagon and wait for me.⁹

476 INTERPRETER: I go. (Footsteps away.)

477 MAJOR HARRIS: They talked an awful long time, Lieutenant--
478 to discuss a few travel arrangements.¹³

479 LIEUTENANT: Yessir.

480 MAJOR HARRIS: After that bad business up North with Red Cloud
481 and the Fetterman Massacre, the reservation's been buzzing with
482 rumors. I don't know how far we can trust any of these
483 so-called "friendlies"--like our trusty Interpreter here. Keep a
484 close eye on him, Lieutenant.⁴⁴

485 LIEUTENANT: Yessir. [Footsteps away.]

486 MAJOR HARRIS: Ma'am--please have the prisoner ready for
487 transfer by ten o'clock this coming Tuesday morning. We will
488 have the escort at your door.²⁴

489 AUNT MARY: Must you insist on calling our poor sister a
490 prisoner? Hasn't she suffered enough?

491 MAJOR HARRIS: Ma'am, your sister was apprehended with her
492 tribal band in the middle of a raid on settlements. She was
493 captured while trying to escape with other hostiles who wounded
494 two of the rescue party. I'm sorry if the word offends you,
495 ma'am--but in the eyes of the US Government, she is a hostile
496 who attempted to escape custody. Your removin' her from the
497 Territory--and from the reach of her people--relieves us of
498 having to devote the resources to keep an eye on her--so we're
499 grateful to you--and happy to assist. But make no mistake--
500 we're not doin' this out of the goodness of our hearts. Until I
501 have your sister safely on the train pulling out of town
502 next Tuesday morning at five minutes after ten, I shall not
503 rest easy. Good day--ladies.¹³⁹

504 RANCHER VO: Things came to a head much sooner than the Major or
505 anyone else expected. It began when Aunt Gabby brought in my
506 Indian aunt's breakfast the following morning.

507 AUNT GABBY [Sound of a shriek and china crashing]: She's GONE!
508 She's gone out the window! She's gone out the window!

509 AUNT BOSSY: Impossible! That window's was fixed to raise no more
510 than a foot! How could she open it all the way?!

511 BOY: Betcha she took with 'er the pi'ture of her son.

512 MA: Go outside, sweetie.

513 AUNT BOSSY: No, wait! [to Boy] Run to the store--and tell your
514 Uncle to ride to the telegraph station--and wire the Major to
515 come at once! GO!

516 [Footsteps of Boy moving away]

517 AUNT MARY (Tearfully) Oh, why did she go? I thought she was
518 happy to go with me! I thought we'd be happy together!

519 AUNT GABBY: Oh the shame! How could our own dear sister
520 bring such humiliation upon us! How will we explain this to the
521 ladies in town!?!

522 AUNT PRISSY [with righteous anger]: It's clear she brought
523 heathen depravity with her into our home. What vile customs did
524 she practice all those years among those filthy aborigines?
525 Lie down with savage dogs, rise up with savage fleas!

526 AUNT BOSSY [Regaining composure and taking control]:
527 Draw the blinds, sisters. And lower your voices. Let's not make
528 a bad situation worse by losing our heads. It's clear we've
529 failed because of our dear sister's folly in letting the Indians
530 make a complete savage out of her. We must make it plain to
531 Major Harris that we were beguiled by her native cunning--which
532 allowed her to get away--despite our best efforts. She's gone
533 back to her own--and we must wash our hands of her!

534 RANCHER VO: Later...

535 BOY: Why're they all so angry at her, Ma? Why'd she run away?
536 Where'd she go?

537 MA [gently]: The poor thing's been so unhappy here. Your aunts
538 don't understand. Aunt Mary means well--but taking her out of
539 the Territory--that takes her far away from the only life she
540 knows--and the people she loves. The only thing missing from her

541 room was the dress Aunt Mary gave her--and the picture of her
542 son. I hope she can make it back--to her people.

543 RANCHER VO: Soon the Major arrived--along with the Lieutenant, a
544 dozen troopers and six civilian scouts. The Interpreter had
545 vanished too--together with two dozen braves from the reservation
546 --and their families. All signs indicated they were heading North.
547 The Lieutenant was then sent with the scouts to search for any
548 traces of what direction the Lost Sister was heading--and they
549 returned shortly.

550 LIEUTENANT: The old gal left a pretty clear trail heading
551 directly South. But the signs petered out when we got into open
552 country.

553 MAJOR HARRIS: That cunning BASTARD!!! He leaves an obvious trail
554 going North to make us believe he's headed to the Dakotas--
555 but then he slips a message to his Momma to let her know he's
556 really running South--to get across the border--while we
557 look for him in the wrong direction! Too clever for his own
558 good THIS time! Lieutenant, you take a message to
559 Sergeant Barnes to call back C Troop from the Northern pursuit--
560 and to catch up with me and the rest of the Regiment following
561 the trail SOUTH. Take one of the scouts with you. I'll get the
562 rest of regiment ready to move out in two-hours' time.111

563 HAND: They never did catch Chief Eagle Head in the South,
564 did they? I heard they caught him far away from here.

565 RANCHER: That's right--he and his band ran free for another
566 year before they cornered him--far up North. But they didn't
567 catch him that time--thanks to her.

568 HAND: Well guess we'd better head back--and bring a mule to
569 collect her bones, eh?

570 RANCHER: No. Let her lie where she is. You go find those
571 steers.

572 HAND: But--ya can't just leave her here! It isn't decent to
573 leave a white woman unburied!

574 RANCHER: She never was a white woman. She lived most of her life
575 a member of the tribe--where she married and raised her children

576 --and grandchildren. Like one of her own people, she chose the
577 path that led her here. Here she stays.

578 HAND: If she was my aunt, I'd bury her in the family plot.

579 RANCHER: She's in the family ALBUM. She doesn't need to be in
580 the family PLOT. I won't make her a captive again.

581 HAND: Well it just doesn't seem RIGHT to me. [Horse rides off].

582 RANCHER VO: I watched my him until it he rode out of sight. Then
583 I got down off my horse and kneeled next to the
584 log to pay my last respects.

585 [SFX over rest of the narration]

586 I see it now. Your plan never was to join your son. On his
587 flight from the reservation, speed would be everything. A
588 mother--even a loving one--would only slow him down. Another
589 mouth to feed--with tired feet and old bones--would allow the
590 gap to close too soon. So you chose to widen the gap. After
591 figuring out how to remove the peg in the window so it would
592 open all the way--you slipped into the yard--and followed the
593 stars on the path you'd chosen as soon as you learned of your
594 son's plan.

595 You traveled fast. Your moccasins left a clear path for the
596 Army's Indian scouts to follow SOUTH--cunning men who could
597 read every turned stone, bruised leaf, and broken twig to find
598 what they were hunting.

599 After ten miles, when you'd drawn far enough away, you slowed up
600 to take the time to cover your tracks--because you were just as
601 skilled as they were. That's when your path--your careful path--
602 brought you up here--to this little spring in the blue mountains
603 you'd stared at from your window--carrying only what was needed
604 for your final journey: the blue dress Mary had given you--and
605 Eagle Head's picture to keep his spirit safe--and to draw
606 strength to complete your final task.

607 As you sat by the spring and waited for death, his face gave you
608 the strength to welcome the end when it came.

609 Your sacrifice couldn't buy him his freedom forever. They
610 cornered him finally far to the North, where he sang his Death
611 Song and died in battle, as a warrior should.

612 But you bought him another year.

613 I can hear your Death Song now.

614 It's a happy one.

615 I hope you remembered me in it. Somehow, I know you did.

616 THE END 586 Words