

Cordelia Hawkins

The old wagon was slowly making its way west toward the little crossroad settlement with a dilapidated sign post which said “Hound Dog”. This sad and lazy collection of Hogans , Dugouts and shacks was home to a group of Mescalero Apache Indian half breed families and cross relations that were, in part; dependent upon the generosity of relatives living on the Mescalero Reservation! When commodities and meats were handed out by the Government officials, it was amazing how much wound up in Hound Dog! The wagon driver was thinking, “ This place is well named, sleepy, lazy and lookin for a handout!”

“You Drunken Heathen,! the Good Lord will strike you blind!” These words of greeting from Cordelia Hawkins , 55 year old Civil War Widow lately of Monroe County, Tennessee. She was speaking to a half asleep derelict of a drunk Indian seated under the falling down roof of a roadside Livery Stable The Indian said, “Issh too late! Old Squaw! Already done ! Post trader Sell Good Lord fire water! Very bad for Indian! –No she-e-e for three days! Head has big hurt! Good Lord Firewater bad medicine ! I Great Chief Ghen Viter will have Council with Indian Agent Freeman! Young Braves must be protected from White Man evil!”

Cordelia said, “Well old Chief Indian, whatever your name is; I am not an old Squaw! My name is Mrs. Cordelia Hawkins. I’m a white woman from Tennessee, and I need to have someone fix my wagon! It’s swaying from side to side as bad as you are, but not; from an over indulgence of Firewater! Considering your present drunk condition, I’d say you are incapable of fixing anything, however; if you are really concerned about the morals of your children; I think you would serve great value to your young braves as a bad and terrible example!”

The old Chief was insulted by this lowly ancient looking, unbelieving Squaw! Standing tall and proud, he puffed out his chest almost to the point that it stood out farther than his belly saying, “ Old

Squaw! I, Chief Ghen Viter am highly honored among medicine and holy men of tribe, because like the favored Raven, I receive visions from the Great spirits and messages that come only to those within tribe that are worthy to receive knowledge. I am great medicine man – I speak to animals!”

Cordelia responded with, “ Oh You Great Chief Hen Fighter! What kind of medicine are you drinking that makes you think you receive visions and make animals talk to you! I think you better lay off that Good Lord Fire Water! I asked about getting my wagon repaired!”

The Chief waved his arms saying, “ No old Squaw! Day is coming to close. I go to Hogan for much needed rest!’ Cordelia angrily responded with, “ You lazy, bleary eyed heathen, it’s barely high noon! I need my wagon fixed! I need to get to Bisbee, Arizona territory! There’s six hours of daylight left before sundown!” The Great Chief replied, “ Old Squaw does not understand. Is old Indian custom, handed down for many moons; to seek rest during heat of day! Tomorrow I fix!” Cordelia sent him on his way with, “ Yeah! Old Indian custom; handed down for many moons! You haven’t seen many moons lately dinking that kerosene and tobacco laced swill! Face down in the dirt is the wrong way to be lookin for any moon! One thing for sure, you don’t have worms, less they’re in your head! I’ll be here at daylight and if you don’t show I’ll burn the damn place down!” Chief Ghen Viter slowly walked away wagging his head saying, “ Old Squaw Hawkins angry! Does not understand ancient Indian customs!”

Cordelia had to be content with staying overnight , The wagon wouldn’t take another days travel until those wheels were fixed! She tended her mules and planned a dinner of smoked buffalo meat. Checking her guns, she was thinking, “ I’ve been lucky so far . No one has threatened this old lady yet, but I’ll be ready! “ Her beloved husband, John Hawkins had been an exceptional man and husband.

His injuries from the great war between the states had left him a cripple and Cordelia had to run the Farm for the past eight years. She was well trained to handle most problems herself and she was an excellent shot with the long gun. She was equally good at short range with the small bore Shaw and Hawkins pistol she carried in her apron pocket. Her son Ron, in Bisbee Arizona had sent her a message to come west when her John died. He had insisted, in his letter; that she book passage on the Overland Stage. Cordelia did not want to give up all of her keepsakes or her two favorite mules. She sold the Farm, loaded her wagon, and headed for Arizona! She realized a little too late that using their old farm wagon was the wrong thing to do. She should have bought a new one, and reconsidered going it alone! Now though, it was too late for either decision!

The buffalo meat was excellent. She had wondered , how a fresh killed buffalo lay in a field where a number of others had been killed and butchered. She figured that maybe this one had been injured and came back to the field of slaughter to die. It didn't make good sense, but she was not one to look a gift horse in the mouth. She had built a fire nearby and smoked a good portion of both hindquarters. This cost her two full days ,but her meat supply was taken care of. The two squares of bacon she brought along would add a little variety to smoked buffalo! Some of the thin dried strips were like candy for her mules, Tom and Morgan.

Cordelia was busily engaged with breakfast when a hungry Ghen Viter showed up. Some Indians would not eat bacon, but ol'Ghen was not one of those. He readily consumed everything in sight and looked for more. Cordelia offered him a piece of smoked buffalo. Ghen said, "Where does old Squaw get Buffalo?" Cordelia then told him of her finding a fresh kill on a field in north Texas and couldn't understand why it was there killed but untouched! Ghen said, " **There is old ancient Indian legend that says a beautiful maiden was captured by Wolf People. She was to be sacrificed to Wolves. Legend then says,**

Buzzard and Hawk see the beautiful maiden tied to a tree and rescued her from the hungry wolves. After that, whenever the people of her tribe went on a big hunt they always left one buffalo for Buzzard and Hawk to feed on. But, Great Chief Ghen Viter does not understand mystery. You say your name is Squaw Hawkins, but you have look of old Buzzard! One who could not attract husband for many moons! It is Indian tradition that Squaw cut herself in mourning for lost husband. Those deep marks on face cannot be from age , but scars from loss of many husbands, how many times were you given back to Father?"

Cordelia had to hold her temper, the pistol in her hand would relieve her of the Chief's intolerable insult, but she first needed the wagon fixed. She was thinking, " Maybe I could just shoot him one leg at a time!"She held her temper and said, " The spokes are loose on the front wheels and this makes the wagon wander and sway a little! They need to be tightened!" Chief Ghen said, " Yes! Look back down trail, Old Squaw's Wagon makes snake tracks in road! Is bad omen! Evil Spirit comes to Hound Dog!"

Cordelia said, " Chief Chicken Fighter! Your evil spirit was here long before I arrived! I could smell this place before I left Texas and your colony of flies met me two miles out! Believe me, I wish to leave this place as soon as possible! How about you fix my wagon before high noon gets here and you have to take your beddy bye nap!"

Chief Ghen, angrily went to the brush and cut a number of green limbs from the mesquite bushes. Returning , he trimmed these with his knife and hammered them into the sockets around each spoke. He said, " Old Squaw needs to replace when these fall out, but right now wheels are fixed!" Cordelia looked at his shabby fixing job and was skeptical that it would hold up for a mile down the road. Testing the wheels, however; they were much tighter than before. Cordelia wondered , "What will this Great Chief want in exchange for fixing her wheels? Probably two dollars for a bottle of Firewater!" She was right,

but the Great Chief Chicken Fighter also wanted to come to dinner! He was looking for beans and buffalo! All he could eat!

Cordelia wanted to leave Hound Dog, but it was too late in the day and she needed to feed the Great Chief his dinner. Later that afternoon, she returned from staking out her mules , to find that the Great Chief Chicken Fighter was trying to light her fire. He was sitting on the ground busily engaged. She observed that into a piece of soft wood he had cut three small holes. He was holding a ten inch hardwood stick with a tapered end in his other hand. Cordelia couldn't resist asking," What kind of a mystical Indian Hoodoo contraption is that ?" With a disdainful look at her ignorance ,the Chief said, "My wise fathers, The Ancient Indian Gods gave the Indian many wonderful things and opened the door to many mysteries. This is how to make wonderful fire and bring this great mystery to life!"

Cordelia watched in interest for a good five minutes. The chief was vigorously twirling the hardwood stick in one of the small holes of the soft wood He had been at this task for sometime with an avid expression of expectation that smoke and fire would come at any moment. "Oh Great Chief Chicken Fighter", she said, "The Great white Gods of Europe have given us a thing called the Sulfur match which works wonders! Look!" Sweeping the match across a stone; fire erupted from this stick immediately starting the campfire!

Chief Ghen stopped his fervid activity ,jumped to his feet and started shaking all over! Cordelia was concerned! The ragged old wind bag looked like he was going into some kind of a spasm! " My God !" she said, " What is your problem? Are you having a fit? What is that thing you're shaking?" The old Chief, continued his gyrations, refusing to stop. Finally near exhaustion, he breathlessly said, " Is ancient Ceremonial Medicine Rattle! I Shake rattle to chase away terrible evil spirit! I shake arm ,I shake hand, I shake legs,I shake body, I shake until even spirit is weary, but you old Squaw, are still in camp!"

Taking a long breath, he went on, “Tonight is new moon. Tonight I make Council Fire! Tonight I hold Council, Plan for coming raid against my enemy. Old Woman, you are outcast, only men of tribe smoke, your pipe evil. Women forbidden to smoke! Women also, not permitted at Council Fire !” Cordelia said, “ I don’t know what you’ve been drinking again, but In case you failed to notice oh great Chief, this is my fire and I’ll smoke any damn time I please! Your ceremonial Council fire is nothing but smoke and ashes of your mind! Maybe your great Gods should have told you that even a Council fire will not burn without fire wood! Oh Yes I know ! gathering fire wood is Squaw job, braves must have hands free at all times to protect family against enemy and go on noble hunt for food! But you oh great chief have no family and your hunt for food seems to end at my iron kettle !”

Once again the Great Chief was offended, saying, “Wise Holy Men of tribe have long taught that the natural eye does not always see truth. Your eyes ,old Squaw are blinded in the presence of Great Chief Ghen Viter! For many moons tribe has sought Council of Chief Ghen Viter to explain mystery of unknown. As a wise Holy Man, I give worthy council knowledge to you , Old Squaw! I cannot speak with forked tongue!”

Cordelia then said , “Thank God ! Maybe you’ll shut up for a while and my poor ears will finally get some peace! It’s too bad your forked tongue doesn’t affect your breathing!”

Ghen responded with, “Listen! Old Woman, I do not speak with forked tongue. I am of the Dakota tribe Assiniboine Dog soldier, “Matao Tope”very famous for ferocity and courage in battle having won much Glory in the defeat of Cherokee and Cheyenne Warriors. I have stolen many horses and counted coup on many enemies!”

Cordelia responded, “I know nothing of your tribal values or battle victories and the much glory you claim to have won fighting Cherokee and Cheyenne ,but your Continual triad of boastfulness and braggart

rapping has become a fearful war wound in the Assiniboine of this old Squaw ! Never mind your ungrateful insults, the food is ready!"

Cordelia noted that as long as the Great Chief's mouth was stuffed full; he couldn't talk! "Thank God!" Later that evening, Chief Ghen headed for his Hogan. He offered no thanks for the big meal, but Cordelia was satisfied. He offered no insults either!

The morning brought a beautiful clear blue Arizona sky. It also brought a freighter coming from the West! Henry Dalton was his name and his courteous and gentlemanly manners were a great pleasure to Cordelia. He was from a Missouri family and had served in the recent War. Cordelia related her own story and the circumstances that had placed her in the destitute town of Hound Dog! He was interested in the repair job on her wheels and said," Ma'am, it's a cheap fix, but the green shims will dry and fall out. You need dry shims and a good soaking in water to tighten those spokes! If you could drive a little further along , there's a ford in the river where it would be great to layover a day and soak those wheels." Cordelia said , " I truly suspected that ol'Chief Ghen Viter had no idea what he was doing. He's the Indian that owns this broken down excuse for a livery." Cordelia was interrupted by Henry quickly saying, " There can't be two Ghen Viter's! My God! I just passed Pegleg Smith, the Outlaw and Killer Horse Trader; two days ago! He's looking for Ghen Viter! Wants to kill him! Says that Indian cost him twenty horses! Ma'am , you don't wanna have anything to do with Ghen Viter! Ol' Peg Leg has three bad looking hombres with him and I'd bet every one is a killer!" Cordelia wished that Henry could have stayed over, but time was money and he wished her "Good Luck" as he drove off.

That evening, Cordelia was putting supper together when the Chief arrived horseback, wearing an impressive full feathered head dress and painted for the war path! Cordelia greeted him with," Ahh! Great Chief Chicken Fighter, you're more feather headed than I thought and what do you call that hammer headed, sway backed thing, you're

riding ?” The Chief was insulted ,but replied , “ This is Swift Beaver! Great Apache War Horse ! This Great War Horse bring much Glory to Great Chief Ghen Vitar !” Cordelia said, “ Well , Oh Great Chief Chicken Fighter, from the looks of that overgrown pot belly he’s packin; I’d say he’s a lot like his owner. A good eater! And, as a Great War Horse, I’d still say , he’s a lot like his Warrior owner. A good eater!”

The Chief was almost angry, saying, “ Old woman cannot see War horse Glory! I have painted Swift Beaver with his many war honors! See arrow on neck for honor in battle. Hoof prints on legs for horses captured. Hand print on hip is greatest honor for returning Great Chief Ghen Vitar home from battle” Cordelia answered saying, “ Oh Great Chief Chicken Fighter, I see the paint job you did on your old nag; but I also see the real reason behind the symbols. In your normal drunken state, the hoof prints tell you which way is up and the arrow shows you which end is the front ,but I do agree with the hip hand print ! A fitting reward for bringing the drunk home!” The Chief angrily stormed off on his Great Apache War Horse!

Minutes later , he returned, carrying his spear. The smell of Buffalo and beans drew him rapidly back to the campfire. Cordelia said, “ Oh Great Chief Chicken Fighter, I have heard the story of Peg Leg Smith and wild horses. Is it true that you stole twenty of his horses?” Once again ol’Ghen puffed out his chest to the point he could hardly breathe. His boastful answer was, “ Yes ,I Chief Ghen Viter ride one mule and lead other mule to Peg Leg camp. He has corral of maybe thirty wild horses that he steal from settlers. I put many packs of dynamite on pack saddle of lead mule. Is plan to light one minute fuse on mule’s back and send to corral. When mule blow up ,all horses stampede to box canyon north of corral. There we Indians catch horses! Cordelia said, “ And Chief Ghen, you think this was a good plan?” the Chief said, “ Is not just good , but great plan! I say it take great Indian wisdom and cunning Warrior to build such great victory!”

Codelia said, “So you’re gonna blow a perfectly good mule all to hell on the chance you might steal twenty wild horses!” The Chief said, “ Plan was great ,but lead mule will not run to corral when fuse lit. Lead mule follows me on other mule! I scream at mule to go other way, but he wants to blow me up! I run like hell into river! Water puts out fuse! Mule don’t blow up , but horses stampede in wrong direction from yelling. Indians catch some ,but most get away! Ungrateful Tribe blames Great Chief Ghen Viter for bad Stampede. Outlaw Peg Leg Smith is very angry; wants to kill Great Chief Ghen Viter! I leave mountains! Move to safety of Hound Dog!”

The Chief had become so entranced with his story that he started waving his spear in excitement, and dancing near Cordelia’s camp fire! Cordelia quickly backed away from the waving spear, saying; “What kinda voodoo are you up to now?” Chief Ghen responded, “Is ancient ceremonial Ghost dance. Sacred body motion and song only known to very few medicine men of great status and wisdom like me. Is great honor to perform for rain and harvest season! Will bring back spirits of ancient Warrior’s and knowledge to aid Braves in battle! Is great honor for you to see me, Great Chief Ghen Viter; perform dance!” Cordelia replied, “ Maybe a great honor in eyes of Great Chief Chicken Fighter ,but I think you should have performed this dance before you tried to fix my wagon! Seems to me you could have used a little help! Maybe one of these spirits of yours knows a little something about soaking wagon wheels to tighten up the spokes!”

The chief was highly insulted and in an elaborate gesture ,he grabbed his six foot brightly feather decorated spear, looking at the sky, waving his arms; he called on all the great Spirits names that he could remember. Brandishing the spear in a sweeping motion ,he thrust it into the ground and loudly said, “Jamming spear in dirty ground is sign of much anger and to make War!”Cordelia says , “That’s all well and good and very impressive, but beware of stabbing your big dirty foot! It’s hard to make out the difference!”

Once again , the Great Chief suffered through and responded to; a few insults to enjoy a good meal. His interest and curiosity though wasn't satisfied concerning Peg Leg Smith. He said, " Where does old Woman get story of Peg Leg and wild horses?" Cordelia said, " I was gonna tell you that a passing Freighter related the story to me and also warned that Peg Leg and three of his killers are headed this way, looking for you!" The Great Chief Ghen Viter became so pale that he would pass for white eyes; a thoroughly frightened white man! Jumping to his feet , he said, " I must leave ! I must travel far! Peg Leg will kill Chief Ghen Viter! I must get away!" Cordelia said , " Hey! Great Chief! Settle down, Peg Leg is two days down the road. Eat up! You won't get killed tonight!"

The Chief could eat no more! He was too worried to take on more than three servings. Cordelia observed that the ragged old wind bag was shaking again, but this time in fear. She said, " Well Great Chief, it appears that you might could use some help. I've got an idea! I've still got most of my late husband John's clothes. If you'll get rid of all that Indian garbage and put on a white man's clothes, you could pose as my hired man for a few days until Peg Leg passes through the country! I'm gonna stop over at the Little Rio for a couple of days to soak these wagon wheels before heading on down to Bisbee. Peg Leg should be outta the country by then!" The Chief replied, " Great Chief Ghen Viter is not afraid of white man! I am brave warrior! I will not hide in white mans clothes!' Cordelia said, " Yeah! Great Chief Chicken Fighter, you say you're not afraid of white man , but there are four white men, and all killers. Painted up the way you are , you'll make a colorful target and a very brave looking dead Warrior ! Oh and think of that old skate you call a War Horse! He would be perfectly happy to escape as a Jackass when the bullets start flying"

The Chief really looked bad , when Cordelia asked, " What type of guns do you have for protection?" Seeing his reaction, she angrily said, " Damn you! Chicken Fighter! You traded your weapons for

Firewater; didn't you!" It was obvious. For once, the Great Chief had nothing to say. He had no weapons! He would be totally helpless when Peg Leg showed up! Those killers would handily hang him or drag him to death!

Cordelia knew that it might be the wrong thing to do ,but she pulled her husbands Spencer repeater out with a bandolier of shells and handed it to the Chief saying, " I can't turn my back on murder even when the victim deserves it! And look! you Great Chief Chicken Fighter, I want this gun back when Peg Leg leaves . It's not a gift that you can trade for Firewater! If you come back without it looking for a belly full of buffalo, I'll give you a butt full of buck shot!"

A half hour later,the Great Chief Ghen Viter was completely transformed with a rifle in his hand. All the false bravado and bluster were back in Spades. Once again he was the Greatest Apache Warrior, Chief Ghen Viter, the Brave Dakota Warrior Matao Tope, the Great Wise Holy man , the best horseman ,hunter, and tracker, in the whole Territory! Cordelia was beginning to wonder where he hid his bottle. She said, " Oh Great Chief Chicken Fighter, I know you're all these wonderful things, but you better go south for awhile. I'll be at the Little Rio Crossing for two or three days. Come that way, I may have news of Peg Leg by then and you can return my rifle." Once again the Great Chief Chicken Fighter, left with no Thanks to Cordelia for the big meal or the loan of a rifle. She was satisfied , however ; because he was apparently outta insults!

Three days later , Cordelia was seated in her wagon on the west side of the river crossing when four horsemen come in view heading her way. She checked her pistol and moved her Henry rifle up beside her. Four horsemen coming from the west could only mean one thing.

Peg Leg Smith and his killers! She was glad that she had sent the old Chicken Fighter south. As Peg Leg rode up it was easy to identify him. His oak leg was strapped around his upper thigh in a “U” shaped fashion with a post extending down into a boxed stirrup. Cordelia, knew him to be the killer outlaw described by Dalton; and cocked the little pistol with her hand in her apron pocket. She was prepared to shoot him first , if it became necessary!

Peg Leg seeing a lone old woman seated in the wagon said, “ Good Day Ma’am! Are you and your husband stuck in the river?” Cordelia responded , “ Good Day to you sir! No I’m not stuck in the river. The wheels needed soaking and I’m giving them time to swell before moving on. A Freighter down the road a piece recommended it. I’m letting my mules graze while I’m here.” Peg Leg said, “ We thought maybe you needed pulling out. Where is your man?” Cordelia said, “ I’m alone. My husband died this past year and I’m going to my son’s Ranch to live.” Peg Leg said, “ Pretty dumb , Ma’am , if I might say so! A lone woman of your age traveling cross country. Pretty dangerous with Indians and Outlaws all over the country!” Cordelia noticed that they really didn’t believe she was alone. They kept looking all around. Looking for someone pointing a gun in their direction., or studying her good lookin mules! “Yes!” she was thinking, “They’re Outlaws and horse thieves all right and have that furtive look of killers!” She tightened the grip on the pistol in her apron pocket!

Peg Leg was suspicious that everything was not safe, but he could readily see that the wagon was empty. He said, “ Have you seen anything of a pot bellied , fat faced, feather headed toad frog of an Apache Indian. He calls himself Chief Ghen Viter! I was told that he hangs out near a dump of a village called Hound Dog.” Cordelia replied, “ Yes there couldn’t be two like him in the Territory. He was staying at

a broken down Livery Barn when I came through three days ago. He's awful lazy if you're expecting him to do anything for you. He couldn't fix my wagon wheels and that's why I'm setting here soaking them now." Peg Leg angrily stated, " That over stuffed wind bag couldn't fix a hole in a dirt pile. He stole a bunch on my horses and I'm looking to stretch his worthless redskin hide and kill the bastard!" Cordelia said, " Well sir, that Hound Dog town is about two or three miles back. If the wind would shift and come from the East, you could smell it from here! Keep your mouth closed when you ride in! The flies are terrible! Swatting flies at the Livery stable; that's where I saw him last! Peg Leg thanked her and wished her "Good Luck" as he and his men rode off.

Cordelia decided to hitch up and move on. Those killers might be back and old Chicken Fighter's goose was cooked if they caught him. She didn't want to be around to draw him to the crossing. It was way too close to Hound Dog. She would get on outta the country and forget about her Spencer . She hated to lose John's favorite rifle, but she was sure he would understand. The old Chicken Fighter was a worthless ol'sot, but a harmless and interesting adversary. She would miss his continual barrage of insults. Maybe? At the moment , she had to get some distance from those killers. They had shown too much interest in her mules! Keeping an eye out for the killers behind her , she pushed ol'Tom and Morgan at a ground eating trot!

In the meantime, Peg Leg and his right hand man , Johnny Largo were in conversation concerning the old woman in the wagon. Johnny was saying," Peg, we coulda easy shot that old woman and took those mules. They woulda brought a couple hundred dollars in Santa Fe." Peg Leg replied, "Johnny, you're still young and ignorant. If you don't wise up , you'll never get to my age, and I'm a good ten years younger

than that old lady. That peaceful and friendly old Grandmother was poised like a bear trap! She had a cocked pistol in her apron pocket and a Henry repeater right by her side! One wrong breath and I'll bet anything she woulda shot me! No, she didn't get her age by being a shy wallflower! That old lady's got sand! I don't wanna tangle with her!"

Johnny said," We could go back and bush whack her! I know I could hit her from a hundred yards out!" Peg Leg said, " Johnny, I came here to this hog pen of a town to kill that thieving Indian! If you want to kill that old lady and get those mules. You go ahead. We'll wait for you in Hound Dog if we can find ol'Ghen Viter!"

Johnny pulled up and headed back toward the river. The old woman was gone! Knowing that she couldn't be far, Johnny raced down the trail following the wagon tracks. He knew that she couldn't have gone far in the past hour or so. Those mules were good trotters and it was almost eight miles before Johnny came in sight of the wagon. Peg Leg was right , Johnny was young and ignorant. Cordelia had already spotted the dust cloud he had made rushing to catch her. She reasoned that it was one of Peg Legs killers wanting her mules and anything else she might have on the wagon. Why not? She was just an old woman and they were good looking mules! Cordelia laid on the whip and ran her mules to a wide open area on the road. Johnny raced after her , knowing that she could never out run his horse. He was congratulating himself on such an easy kill and robbery as he closed within a hundred yards of the wagon! Cordelia abruptly pulled up her mules, rolled backwards outta the seat with that sixteen shot Henry repeater. Laying flat in the back of her wagon, she had an open field of view and a target that had no place to hide! Too late , Killer Johnny Largo realized, the old woman had out smarted him and he was in terrible danger of never getting much older! There was no cover

anywhere within hundreds of feet! Quickly, he did something that really angered Cordelia.

Johnny bailed off and shot his own horse! Hunkered down behind the dead carcass, he pulled his saddle gun and began shooting at Cordelia. Bullets hitting around her were no strangers to Cordelia. She had twice defended her home against invading Yankees during the War! That Henry was deadly at a hundred yards and Cordelia penned the killer to the ground with seven quick shots! Holding her fire, she hoped that the killer would think she was reloading. Most repeaters in use were Spencer models and only held seven shells. Once again Cordelia out smarted the killer. Johnny jumped up running towards the wagon! Calmly, Cordelia lowered her aim from a killing chest target to a leg and squeezed the trigger. Johnny fell with a crippling broken leg! The fight was over as far as Cordelia was concerned. Johnny didn't think so. He continued to try and shoot her, even as she called for him to throw away his gun so she could see to his wound! She thought, "He deserves whatever comes down the road! His killer friends can come and get him! They'll be looking for him tonight! I guess I shoulda killed him!" She stayed low crawling back to the front of the wagon and sent Tom and Morgan on down the road! The other killers might come looking for her and she had to make tracks fast!

Cordelia took cover that evening in a hilltop grove of trees keeping her mules close to hand. They would warn her of any visitors. The following afternoon, she became worried! There was dust on the trail behind her. That night she dry camped without a camp fire. Buffalo jerky and water was her evening meal. Once again, she tethered the mules close for protection. Morning brought another beautiful blue sky day, but a light dust already hung in the distance on her back trail! Cordelia hitched up and headed west without her morning coffee! The small dust cloud persisted. Cordelia decided that she couldn't keep up

the tiring pace. Tom and Morgan needed a good feed and rest. She decided to pull off the trail a ways and let her pursuers go on past. Maybe she could lose them and they would continue on west!

Entering a long valley, she noted the trees grew close to the trail on both sides . A knoll on the north side looked good to her for hiding her wagon and there was plenty of grass for the mules. She tethered her mules and walked back down to a patch of dense brush near the trail. A small mound offered her some protection and a rest for her rifle when shooting became necessary. One thing bothered her! She couldn't see but a hundred feet down the road. Peg Leg and the killers following , would all be right on top of her when they showed. The shooting would be quick and deadly at close range! Cordelia was thinking, " I can't choose my shots. I'll have to shoot to kill! There'll be too many for me to give any quarter!" Suddenly! There was noise down the trail! Hoof beats coming rapidly! Just as suddenly! They stopped! " Damn!" she was thinking, " I didn't hide those wagon tracks well enough!" Then through the thinning brush, she saw the legs of a horse! Slowly it walked in her direction! Easy, ever so easy, she pulled the hammer back on her rifle so it wouldn't make a loud click and warn the killers where she was hidden! Holding her breath she took aim at the killer's upper body and took up the slack in the trigger! One more step and the killer would clear the brush! "Oh God No!" She yelled! It was Ghen Viter!

The old Chief almost fell from his saddle in surprise yelling , " Old Squaw! Don't shoot! It's me!" Cordelia jumped up saying , " Damn you, I almost shot you! Why the hell are you sneaking up on me!" The Chief replied, " I catch you! I bring rifle! I hungry!" "Yeah!" Cordelia said, " You bring rifle ,but mostly you're hungry!" Cordelia was upset and frightened. She had almost killed the old bastard! As worthless as he

was, she knew she would have regretted it for life ,if she had squeezed that trigger! She knew that she needed to settle her nerves. She said, “ Come on Oh Great Chief , I’ve still got plenty of smoked buffalo!” Maybe feeding him would help her. Damn! She was almost glad to see him! She thought, “ I’ve gotta be losing my mind!”

Later she asked , “ Did the Great Chief run into Peg Leg and his killers?” Ghen said , “ No , white men ride clear of Great Chief Ghen Viter! They afraid of Chief Matao Tope Dog Soldier and Great Warrior! Is great honor Old Squaw to have such Great Chief in your camp. I am named for striped animal like Badger, known as strong and vicious fighter!” Cordelia was thinking, “ He’s still just as big a blow hard as ever! I should have known!” She said, “ Oh Great Chief Chicken Fighter , Matao Tope could also mean a striped animal like skunk with a strong and vicious smell!”

Insults didn’t bother the hungry Ghen! After downing a good pound of smoked buffalo, the Great Chief was some what satisfied; and said, “ Old Squaw, as young girl ,you missed great honor . Is ancient tradition, the Wolf Pawnee at the beginning of planting season sacrificed a young maiden to their harvest God, the bright evening star! Is too bad ! One such as you would have been a great sacrifice and great chief’s such as I could sit in Council and sing your praise as part of the Great Spirit World! This would make wonderful sunrise in my ears, and I get much peace! After showing me Grateful Honor and Feast of Welcome , it is custom for Chief to offer up song to Great Sleeping Spirit! He immediately broke into a sing song Indian Chant! Cordelia, after a brief minute held up a hand saying, “I thought I was feeding a poor beggar Indian and as for your attempt at singing, I hope Your Great Spirit can handle a night mare! Please give my ears and your Great Spirit a rest. You sound like a dying calf in a hail storm!

What's that Damn Infernal thing you're beatin on?" Chief said. "This is highly honored Ceremonial War Drum! Used to inspire Braves to show courage during battle!" Cordelia said, ' I Think you got the wrong message. The Braves would rather face their enemy than listen to that Damn thing! You keep it up and you'll find yourself in a battle, all right! My shotgun against your ear drum and you may not see another sunrise!"

Cordelia was looking at Ol Swift Beaver. The poor old crowbait needed some groceries. She tethered him with her mules. Later she said to Ghen, " Where did you pick up the nice saddle? I remember you riding an old Calvery straw pad." He replied, " Great Chief Ghen Viter is of Spirit World. Ancient ones leave beautiful saddle in trail for me!" Cordelia said , " Chicken fighter! You're a lying dog! You took that saddle off a dead horse this side of the river! Where was the rider?" Ghen said, " How does old Squaw know where saddle? There was no rider!" Cordelia said, " Because that saddle belonged to one of Peg Legs killers. He killed his horse and tried to kill me! I shot him in the leg and left him for his friends! I guess they found him!"

Ghen Viter , once again puffed up to deliver his latest profound advise and said, " There is ancient Indian legend which says the sacred White Buffalo is the most holy of all the Creators Spirit World. The White Buffalo is a woman spirit. When such as evil Brave tries to harm White Buffalo and rides Elk Dog to bring her harm. Both will leave bones lying among the people of the ground! The Elk Dog horse is dead! Soon evil rider will die also! You Old Squaw Hawkins are spirit, of "Waken Ptesan Wi", White Buffalo Woman! I Great Chief Ghen Viter must remain with you and protect you from evil harm! It is great honor and sacred duty of Great Lacota Tribe Chief Ghen Viter! "

Cordelia said, " Well Oh Great Chief! I wouldn't want you to give up your great Livery business in Hound Dog for my benefit. I still can't

decide which Indian Tribe you belong to. I'm not sure you do either! I think it's a matter of which tribe is getting the biggest government hand out! Your great extensive wisdom apparently has no Tribal limits or truth boundaries! I really believe, however; that your sacred duty and honor will begin to fade when the buffalo, beans and bacon run out!" Ghen replied, " It is welcome sunrise to my ears, that you Old Squaw finally see the Honor of having Great Chief Ghen Viter in your camp! I the Great Warrior Matao Tope will let no harm come to Buffalo Woman!" Cordelia could only shake her head! Her insults were wasted! The Great Chicken Fighter could only hear his own words!

On the trail to Bisbee, two days later and they were held up overnight in a terrible sand storm . Cordelia had put blindfolds on her mules to help protect their eyes. The chief noting what she did, put a dirty shirt over Ol'Beaver's head. When daylight arrived, Cordelia hitched up and followed the Chief out of the small tree grove they'd taken shelter in. One hour later and Cordelia has a feeling that all is not right! Calling to the Chief, she said, "Chief, are you sure that we are on the right trail? I have a feeling of unease. Something is wrong!" The Chief replied, " Old Woman, I scouted for the Great General Cook! I am greatest Indian Tracker in country. I track since I can walk. I track buffalo, deer, antelope, lion and bear! Old Women and children always feel scared and confused in great wilderness!" Cordelia said, " Ok, Ok! But are you sure we're on the right trail? With that storm , maybe the trail was covered!" The Chief replied, " Old Woman, I am great tracker! See tracks in trail !This is trail to Bisbee !" Cordelia looked down at the dirt ruts and exclaimed, " You idiot! Those are our tracks! We're going back the way we came! No wonder the great General never caught Apache Chief Cochise! With the likes of your help, it's a wonder he ever found Arizona!"

Cordelia was upset! Once again she had made a mistake, expecting the Great Chicken Fighter to do something right! They had lost a good three hours of travel and she didn't want to scare the

Great Chief, but there was dust on the trail behind them ! She pushed Tom and Morgan to a ground eating trot! It was necessary to find a place they could defend against Peg Leg and his killers. Old Swift Beaver was soon showing the wear of a long trotting pace . Ghen Viter , was becoming concerned for his Great War Horse, saying as he rode close, “ Why old Squaw run horses? Swift beaver has come far! Is tired; needs rest and feed!” Cordelia said, “ Great Chief Chicken Fighter, your old nag was tired and needing rest five years ago. He is no longer the Great War horse of younger years. Here! I’ll stop! Tie him on back and you can ride with me in the wagon!’

Stopping , Chief Ghen ; climbed aboard as Cordelia suggested, saying, “ It is great honor for Old Squaw to drive wagon for Great Chief Ghen Viter! Wise Holy men and Great Chief’s of Tribe are always held in highest honor by all Squaws.” Cordelia said, “ Don’t let your Great Honor get as big as your pot belly. I was thinking of that poor old skate of a horse “ Swift Beaver”. He needed a rest from carrying all of your bouncing Greatness!”

An hour later and Cordelia noticed that the dust behind was gaining on her! Quickly turning onto the side of a sharp bluff with an open field in front . Cordelia set the brakes and jumped down from the wagon and started to unhitch the mules. Ghen was startled, saying , “Old Squaw, why we stop? This not a good camp site.” Cordelia said, “ I stopped ,because this is a good place to put up a fight! We’ve got a cliff like behind us and an open field in front.” Pointing back at the dust on the trail, behind; she said, “ No cover for Peg Leg and his killers! Check your rifle! Hurry and put the mules and your horse in that wash out behind the wagon . We can lay down in the wagon and shoot anyone trying to attack us!”

Ghen yelped in fear, “ Peg Leg!! He will kill Ghen Viter!” Ghen grabbed old Swift Beaver and leaped into the saddle saying , “ I go! , I go!” Cordelia angrily said, “ Where do you think you go? These killers

will kill us both!” Ghen yelled , “ They chase me! Old Squaw is safe! I noble Apache Warrior will ride ahead to make safe trail for Old Squaw!” Ghen whirled old Swift Beaver, and lashed him into a dead run headed West, as Cordelia screamed at him, “ Noble Apache Warrior, my butt! Come back here you chicken livered yellow bellied Redskin!” She was fuming mad! Thinking, “ I shoulda shot the worthless bastard when he popped outta the trees! I’d be a whole lot better off! Brave Noble Warrior? Running for all he’s worth like the Noble yellow coward that he is!”

Quickly, Cordelia tethered her mules and moved her trunks in the wagon to serve as protection. Her Henry was fully loaded and her pistol was laying fully loaded on the wagon bed nearby! Cordelia was as ready as she could be. She lay down behind her trunk of keep sakes and waited for the rapidly approaching dust cloud on her back trail! Cocking the Henry , she was as ready for killing and if The Great Chief showed ; he would be first!

Suddenly, breaking through the tree lined trail into the open field of her Battle Ground was a four up Freight Wagon! “ My God!” she yelled it was Henry Dalton, the Freighter! Not the killer Peg Leg! What a relief! Henry pulled in next to her wagon saying, “ Hello again, Mrs. Hawkins! I made a quick delivery in Santa Fe, but I didn’t expect to see you again! Thought you’d be in Bisbee by now!” God was she ever glad to see him! She said, “It’s wonderful to see you Mr.Dalton! You have no idea! I thought you were Peg Leg and his killers!” Dalto said , “ No Mrs Hawkins, you don’t have to worry about him for a good while. He’s on the trail east of Hound Dog headed for Ft. Smith, Arkansas. I saw him at a Wagon Train Camp. They were burying one of his men, a Johnny Largo. Said he was wounded in a gunfight and died from gangrene in a broken leg. Wouldn’t let them cut his leg off. Peg Leg said that he tried to tell Johnny, a wooden leg was better than a wooden box. I guess Johnny liked the box better!”

Cordelia decided to let well enough alone and nor burden Mr. Dalton with her story or that of the Great Chicken Fighter Chief Ghen Viter! Dalton was evidently in somewhat of a hurry as he had been going east. Saying his “Good Bye and Good Luck.” He left at a high trot, headed for his family and home in Globe Arizona.

Cordelia felt bad about the killer Johnny, dying as he did; but also remembered what the Great Nobel Chicken Fighter had said about both the horse and rider dying trying to harm White Buffalo Woman! Maybe the yellow bellied dog had been right about something! “ Well,” she was thinking, “I’m shet of him and will probably never see him again! It’s just as well! I’ve got two mules to care for . I really don’t need another braying Jackass!” Cordelia was wrong!

The great Chief Chicken Fighter came walking in on a worn out old Swift Beaver, just as Cordelia was getting supper together! Ghen said, “ Haloo Tae Go Tae. Old Squaw! Is Honor to welcome home Great Chief Ghen Viter to Campfire! There no sign of Peg Leg and Killers! Holy Raven Spirit sings spirit song to Great Chief Ghen Viter! He sings that I, Great Warrior Matao Tope brings fear to hearts of my enemies. They flee to East! Trail is now safe for Old Woman!”

Cordelia was stunned! This insufferable Coward had returned claiming a great Victory over his enemies! He had ran out on her like a scalded dog, and here he was again looking for a handout! She was thinking, “ How in the name of God , did this wind bag know that Peg Leg had gone East? Had he been hiding nearby and overheard Dalton’s story? Would that mean he had been concerned for her safety and hung around in the nearby brush? Was that possible? He was an Indian after all, and fully capable of such a thing!” Cordelia would never know. She was almost afraid to suggest it! She preferred to think of him as Cowardly insufferable! It made her feel a lot better! Thankfully she was only a few days outta Bisbee and her family. The Old Great Chief Chicken Fighter could find his own way after that!

God it was wonderful to be in Bisbee and join her son and his family. It had been a long three years and Ron's two girls had grown a foot or better. The Grandson little Ronny Junior was just like his Dad. They were all overjoyed to see her again. The Kids stared in awe and some fear at the fully War painted Indian Chief that rode in with her. She assured them that he was totally harmless and had befriended her on the trail. She thought, " Boy that was sure stretching the truth! The old Chicken Fighter's lying , must be rubbing off!"

A great welcome home and big feast celebration was in order to welcome Cordelia! "Naturally!" she was thinking, " The Great Chicken Fighter thought that it had to be in his Honor! Who else could possibly equal the Supreme Glory of such as the Great Chief Ghen Viter! Oh well! A couple more days and His Majesty would be leaving! The air would be clearing and maybe she could feel relaxed again! Would she really welcome seeing the ragged old wind bag riding his worn out old "Swift Beaver" off into the sunset?" She got her answer the next morning !

Grandson Ronny came storming into the kitchen excitedly blurting out! "Grand ma! Granma! Grandma!, did you know that Chief Ghen Viter was a great and very famous Apache Warrior, that he is also a famous Assiniboine Dog soldier that defeated hundreds of Cherokee and Cheyenne Warriors?" Then , he proudly went on with, " He's going to stay on and go to work for Dad guarding our Ranch!!" Cordelia, sadly, shaking her head and resignedly rolling her eyes just said, " Oh God!!"

The End!

