

We are pleased to acknowledge Eugene Pool for his permission to use a selection from his novel, "The Captain of Battery Park," in this training program.

If, after reading the following chapter, you want to find out what happens, you can find the book at local libraries.

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CHAPTER 2

Melanie knew her way around the streets near Battery Park because she visited it so often. Once she reached Greenwich Street, though, she wasn't at all sure she was going to be able to find the sign she was looking for.

Greenwich Street was dark and deserted. The rain had dwindled to a drizzle, making halos about the flickering filaments of the street lights. On some corners there were lamp posts, but no lights. The bulbs had been smashed and never replaced. There was absolutely no traffic on Greenwich Street, and no one on the crumbling sidewalk but Melanie.

It was not hard to figure out why. The only buildings on the street were warehouses, their windows blank, dark or broken. The loading doors were tall and wide and rusted, and the platforms below were strewn with trash.

In the darkness Melanie deciphered the names of the companies that had used the buildings in the great days of sailing ships. ATLANTIC CORDAGE & HEMP, NEW YORK-PANAMA-BUENOS AIRES SHIPPING, BARKER & SONS: PACKETS, BLUE WHALE TRANSPORT.

Melanie had never heard of any of them. Her wet sneakers squished along the pavement. Slop, slop. The sound echoed off the abandoned warehouses. She clutched the bird tightly against her chest, as much for her own comfort as for its protection.

Melanie was just about to turn back, for the street seemed ghostly and dead, except for an occasional rat or two scuttling in or out of a gutter. Then the street angled off to the right and widened.

There were a few more lights on this block, and they shone, hearteningly, on the rough old cobblestones beneath Melanie's feet. She had given up the pavement after the first deserted warehouse, walking right down the middle of the street so as to be out of the shadows along its edges.

There, just as the man had predicted, high on the brick wall of a warehouse to her left was a black, oval sign that bore the gold letters KIDD. It hung beneath a single bulb over a steep iron stairway glistening with rain. Melanie stopped at the foot of the stairs. Now she could see other smaller letters on the sign. VETERINARIAN, they said.

"Well, all right," Melanie said aloud and ran up the stairs. Beside the black steel door was a doorbell. Melanie rang it with her elbow because she didn't dare set the tern down.

For a long time nothing happened. She leaned on the doorbell again. Still no response. She stepped back, looking up at the sign. Sure enough, it said KIDD. She surveyed the bleak expanse of dark, empty street. Although the rain had stopped, the wind was still blowing. She shivered.

All of a sudden the door flew open. A scream split the silence, and

Melanie leaped back.

"Don't be worried, now. Prince Andre's a little excitable. There, there. There, there."

Framed in a yellow glow from the doorway was the man Melanie had met in Battery Park. His cape was gone, and she could see that he was wearing a very normal business suit. On his left shoulder, wings raised, beak snapping open and closed, was a bright green parrot. "There, there, Prince Andre. Come in, now. Come in. Here, I'll take the bird. You've carried him long and far."

Melanie stepped hesitantly in. The man lifted the tern from her. Immediately the door clanged shut, echoing through the cavernous building. "Follow me," the man said. "Right up these stairs."

The stairs spiraled up and up. Melanie soon fell behind and stopped to rest. She heard footsteps high above her, growing fainter and fainter, so she caught her breath and hurried on. Above the sound of her own steps, she could hear the incessant chatter of the parrot.

Rounding a corner, Melanie stumbled forward onto a landing. At the far end, the man was standing. He was holding another door open for her. "Come along now. Come along now. No time to lose."

Melanie smiled up at the man as she stepped through the door. She was gasping for breath.

"Awk!" cried the parrot, bowing low for a closer look at her as she passed him. Melanie scampered forward. Once through the door, she stopped in amazement. The close, winding stair hadn't prepared her for such a room.

It was a single gigantic room that, Melanie guessed, took up most of the top floor of the old warehouse. The walls soared to what must have been twice the height of a normal house, and the dimness of the higher reaches made it impossible to actually see the ceiling.

The far wall, facing Melanie, was composed of small, leaded windows that stretched as far to each side of her as she could see. There must have been thousands of them. Like the plaster walls, the windows, too, rose until they became lost in darkness.

Four or five lamps hung by long cords from the ceiling. Below each lamp was an island of furniture and leafy, tropical plants.

Melanie wandered into the room and felt as if she were gliding through a South Sea archipelago. Palm, oleanders and bougainvillea bloomed on either side of her. The sweet smell of moist earth filled her nostrils.

She reached the wall of windows and saw below, between the outstretched fingers of the docks and beyond, the Hudson River. A tug was slowly leading three barges downstream -- Melanie could tell by the pattern of lights. Closer to the building, she could see another smaller river -- this one made up of the red, yellow, and orange lights of moving cars.

"I am William Kidd, Veterinarian, among other occupations," said Dr. Kidd, snapping on a light over a long, low table by the windows. He laid the tern down gently. "Who are you?"

"Melanie Motion," said Melanie, turning towards the doctor.

"That's a nice name," said the veterinarian, looking at the bird, not at her. "Would you mind stepping over here? I could use your help."

Melanie stood next to the doctor, on his left. Boxes of shiny instruments lay on the table before them. Dr. Kidd took a swab of cotton from a cylindrical aluminum container and opened one of several medicinal jars in a rack. Melanie started back at the sharp, stinging smell.

"It's a little ether. I'm going to have to move his wing around a bit to see if it's broken. I think he'll be happier with a sniff of this. It'll make him a little dizzy. Keep him relaxed." The doctor waved the cotton over the tern's bill, where, Melanie knew, the nostrils were. The bird's eyelids stopped flickering and closed.

"He's still breathing. He's doing just fine," said the doctor. He threw his cotton into a wastebasket at his feet. Then, once again, he laid his huge, rough hands on the tern. Once again, Melanie was amazed at the gentleness of his touch. She was also struck by the speed with which his fingers moved.

For a moment there wasn't a sound in the room but the noise of the doctor's breathing and the creaking of a lamp swinging somewhere in the vastness of the doctor's quarters. Mesmerized, Melanie followed the hands over the bedraggled, brightly-lit body.

Dr. Kidd began speaking again, explaining as he worked. "He looks just fine here in the front. No ribs broken. No bruises under the skin. You see here, where I'm moving my hand? The down isn't pierced. Wet and dirty, of course, but unpierced.

"Under here, just below his cap, right down at the base of his neck, where the back edge of his skull is, I don't like what I feel. A little swelling. Some sort of lump.

I believe that's why he's only been half-conscious and didn't complain too loudly the whole time you were carrying him here. He has a concussion -- a mild one, probably, because his eyes were half-open, but a concussion nevertheless. Do you know what a concussion is?"

"I've heard people talk about them," said Melanie, "but I've never had one."

"That's good. It's a blow on the skull. Makes you silly as a gray goose in spring. Not much fun to live with, but not always dangerous. Now over here; this wing, why it's fine. See? Full articulation. That means it bends all the ways it's supposed to bend. This one, on the other hand... We'll have to be very careful with this one.

"Now, if you would step over to my other side. That's fine. Perhaps you could put a hand on his chest, there. Just lightly. Just to keep him in place while I move things around here."

The light was very bright, close up, and Melanie had to squint. Her hand trembled, feeling the thudding of the heart beneath the down. The heart was so frail, so fast compared to her own!

The doctor's hands eased the unfolded wing up off the table. "I'm feeling all along the bones now," he said. "The bones are hidden in all these feathers. So far everything seems fine. The humerus seems whole. So does the ulna. Those are the big wing bones. The littler ones seem all right, too. That brings us to the shoulder, which is what worries me. Hum..."

The doctor's fingers moved around the bird, cupping the back of his wing. Suddenly, the tern twisted on the table beneath Melanie's

fingers. She saw his beak open. "Okay. That's it. It's back in place again."

"Back in place again? What's back in place again? I think that hurt him, whatever you did."

"It's done now." The doctor smiled at her. "His shoulder was dislocated. The ball of the wing-bone -- its end -- had popped out of the socket. He must have hit something awfully hard, or gotten an awful twist." The veterinarian had picked up an elastic bandage. Cutting a few strips from it, he wound them around the tern's shoulder and clipped them.

"We'll leave this wing free, I think. There. That about does it. Would you set him over there -- quite carefully, now -- on that piece of blanket. Wonderful. He'll be groggy from the ether for a while, then he'll wake up."

The doctor straightened up and looked Melanie full in the face. "Now, how about you? You look chilled and miserable. How about a cup of hot tea?"

The doctor had looked so dramatic in Battery Park. Now, with the light of the hanging lamps softening his features, he seemed kinder, less strange. Still, she couldn't keep her eyes off the gold ring in his ear; it flashed in the light as he moved. She had never seen a veterinarian wear an earring.

"Thank you," Melanie said, "but I really think I should be going. You see, Barney doesn't even know where I am, and I'm very late already. He'll be worried."

"Barney? Who's Barney?" The doctor was making his way through the jungle of plants. Melanie followed him.

"Barney? Well -- he's just Barney."

The veterinarian turned. "Is he your father?"

"No," replied Melanie. "My father's dead."

"Is he? I'm sorry to hear that." Dr. Kidd frowned. He walked on again, but more slowly than before. "And your mother?"

"They were zoologists," said Melanie. "They were studying marmosets in South America when my father got some disease no one had ever seen before. They were flying him back to the United States when he died -- on the plane." Melanie stopped. She looked up into the darkness above her. "My mother died a few days afterwards, in New York."

The doctor had stopped by a sink. In the gloom Melanie saw the red ring of a hot plate. She heard the splash of water from a faucet. Dr. Kidd filled a kettle and put it on the ring.

"Barney's my uncle, actually; he's a newspaper reporter," Melanie said. "And I'm going to be an ornithologist -- that is, professionally. I'm going to work for the Bronx Zoo or the National Wildlife Federation. Something like that. When I'm older. I'm going to travel all over studying birds."

"Like your mother and father did?"

Melanie looked up at Dr. Kidd. For a moment she didn't say anything at all. She rarely talked about her parents. She looked at her feet. "Yes," she said. "I like to do things like my father and mother did."

"That's good," said Dr. Kidd firmly. "That's very good."

For a moment they were both silent. A draft from somewhere set the lamps swinging; the shadows lengthened and shrank, lengthened and shrank, on the walls. The kettle hissed. Then it shrieked.

"Here we are," Dr. Kidd said cheerfully. "All set. Follow me, now. Have a sip of this and then we'll call up old Barney and set his mind at ease."

The doctor guided Melanie back through the islands to a long sofa on a raised platform before the window wall. They settled down and looked out on lower Manhattan. The couch was well-worn, full of comfortable hollows. There was a fine pocket for a shoulder, two super scoops for knees, and a perfect cave for a single skinny elbow.

Leaning back contentedly, Melanie sipped her tea. She looked over at Dr. Kidd. The parrot that had frightened her so before was now sitting quietly on his shoulder again. Melanie hadn't even seen him arrive.

She smiled, taking another swallow. She was quite unafraid of Dr. Kidd now and sure that he had given the tern the very best of treatment. A big, thick book about emperor penguins lay on the table before them. She was just reaching for it when Dr. Kidd spoke.

"Do you know," he asked, turning to her, "how unusual it is for an Arctic tern to be in New York City?"

"As unusual as it would be for an emperor penguin to be walking the streets," said Melanie.

"What did you say?" The doctor gave her a startled, suspicious look.

Melanie pointed at the book. "A tern in New York is just as rare."

"Oh, quite so." Dr. Kidd leaned back again.

"Do you think that he was just going by and the storm blew him in?"

"I don't think Arctic terns ever come very far inshore. Of course the storm was important." Dr. Kidd took a sip from his mug. "But I don't think it was enough, all by itself. Terns are no slouches when it comes to flying in high winds."

Melanie nodded. She remembered watching the tern come in over New York Harbor through the storm.

"Perhaps he was chased," said the doctor, "and then became lost. Perhaps he was driven up the harbor by the storm and then got lost. I've made a good many acquaintances that way."

"Acquaintances?" The sweet, heady tea, the soft sofa and the fact that her clothes had finally begun to dry, warming her legs and arms, all these things had made Melanie feel very relaxed and happy in a sleepy way. She snuggled deeper into the couch. "What do you mean? Acquaintances?"

Dr. Kidd leaned back, pointing to the highest row of windows. Melanie rubbed the sleep from her eyes and stared hard. High, high above, she saw a hinged window. A chain held it open.

As she stared, a dim shape passed through with a rapid flutter of wings and disappeared into the gloom of the ceiling. Gradually Melanie's eyes became accustomed to the dark, and she was able to see

rafters and crossbeams, forming a complex network beneath a steep peaked roof. The beams were alive with birds.

Putting her cup on the floor, Melanie sat up straight. She couldn't see colors, but she could identify shapes. There were two ravens -- she could tell by their shaggy throats and their thick tails; three herons -- great blue herons, probably.

There were small shorebirds -- she could see their spindly legs -- and what looked like a pheasant. She could make out the shape of a resting whip-poor-will.

"There are over a hundred birds up there," said Dr. Kidd. "You don't notice them at first, of course, when you come in from the light outside. Most of them are asleep, or close to it, right now.

"As I said, some found their way here because they were lost. Others were chased. Some just know about me. Those orioles up there -- they're on their way north. They're just plain tired from migrating.

There are finches, tanagers, swallows -- even a toucan. That's the bird with the hooked bill sitting up there by the open window. She escaped from a sailor who was going to sell her to a pet shop. Prince Andre brought her here."

The parrot, perched on Dr. Kidd's shoulder, coughed humbly.

"Do they just come and go as they please?" Melanie asked.

"Of course," said Dr. Kidd emphatically. "That's the point -- to keep birds and animals out of cages." He glared at his hands. "I worked on a zoo ship once; I didn't know it was a zoo ship until too late."

"You were a sailor?"

"Before I was a veterinarian," said Dr. Kidd. "Sea legs run in my family, you might say." He winked. "A great-great-great uncle of mine gained some notoriety as the captain of his own ship."

Melanie's eyes widened as she realized just who this great, great-great uncle had been.

"A fine man," cautioned the veterinarian, holding up a hand. "Misunderstood. The history books don't do him justice."

"I'm sure," said Melanie politely. She waited a moment, then she said, "But how did you get to be a veterinarian?" Melanie was interested in pirates, but she was even more interested in people who spent every day caring for animals.

"Oh, that's a long story," said Dr. Kidd.

"Well, what made you stop being a sailor?"

"Ah!" The doctor turned, staring out the windows at the cars gliding to and from Battery Park. "It was the zoo ship, but it turns my stomach just to think about it!"

He looked at Melanie.

"It's a cold, wet night. I think I've helped your tern friend, but I haven't done much for you at all. Would you like something more than a cup of tea?"

"No, thank you," said Melanie. "But please, tell me about the ship.

I'd like to hear about that."

The two studied each other for a long moment in the dim light. Dr. Kidd could easily have been a pirate himself with his swarthy complexion, heavy beard and gold earring. But, Melanie thought, something was missing; there were no hard lines in his face. There was experience, but that was different from hardness. The doctor, gazing at the girl, saw determination in her direct look.

He considered what she had said about her family. He remembered how much she seemed to know about birds.

"All right," said the doctor. "I'll tell you the story."

Turning, he placed both hands on his knees and stared out the windows, down the river into the distance, into the past.

Prince Andre stepped from one shoulder to another, but the veterinarian gave no sign that he noticed. Settling on the right shoulder, the parrot quietly began to preen. High overhead in the darkness, drowsy birds shifted on their perches, and Dr. Kidd's private aviary, overlooking the lights of the teeming city, settled into silence.

We are pleased to acknowledge Eugene and Miranda Pool for their permission to use selections from "To Be a Man: A Tale of the Original People" in this training program.

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Long ago, when the land we now call America was only forests, plains, rivers, and mountains, you could look up at the night sky and see each star as clear as a pebble in a stream. The howls of wolves could be heard for miles on a still evening, and the smell of fragrant white pines carried almost as far.

In these times the Original People, now referred to as Native Americans or "Indians," were numerous. Because they were the only race of human beings living in the land, they could speak to the animals and be understood, and the animals would communicate with them in a way to be understood as well.

One spring during this time, a boy named First Arrow prepared to celebrate his thirteenth birthday. A thin, lively boy, with short hair black as a raven, brown eyes, a skill in throwing knives, and a weakness for sleeping late, he was called First Arrow because he was the first child born to his parents.

His clan lived in what is now northern California, in a sprawling redwood forest that covered the flanks of a range of high mountains. On the far side, the forest ended at the edge of steep, rocky cliffs high above the Pacific Ocean.

First Arrow and his friends could stand at the edge and look down, making themselves dizzy watching the cold, frothy waves explode on the stony shore hundreds of feet below.

In First Arrow's clan, it was customary for boys to be recognized as men starting at age 13. This was the first of what we would call their "teenage years."

But in order to be recognized as men they had to pass a challenging wilderness trial. This was to be sure they had attained the maturity necessary for hunting successfully, living in harmony with their environment, and being part of a human community.

Now First Arrow's turn had come.

All the men in his immediate family -- his father, Bear Tracker; his grandfather, Shining Sun; and his two male cousins, Strong Wave and Stone Back -- accompanied him to the shaman, or wise man, who supervised the wilderness trial.

His name was Moon's Eye. He invited them to sit before him, on the ground, and when they were settled he looked at First Arrow, seated cross-legged beside his father, and spoke.

"Indeed," he said, "I've been expecting you. I know it is time for First Arrow to be tested. Boy, have you anything to say?"

"Moon's Eye," said the boy in a respectful tone, "I hope to make my family proud of me."

"You will, if you succeed," said the shaman. "If you fail, you know you cannot attempt the trial again for two full years. During that time you must live away from your clan. You will be sent as a servant to the Farming People in the south."

"I know," replied First Arrow. "I understand."

"Good," said the wise man. "Well, I hope you are ready." He turned to the boy's father. "We'll set out tomorrow for the mountains. When we return, in three days, either he'll be a man, or still a child. Either he will take his place a full member of our Council or be sent away to grow up in mind and body some more."

Bear Tracker nodded. He placed a hand on his son's shoulder. "I have a lot of faith in him. I am sure he will be successful, even though many are not."

The shaman nodded. "Tomorrow, then."

The next day the shaman and First Arrow set off for the mountains. The air was cool and shady under the tall redwoods, with a fresh, loamy smell.

But when they came out of the forest onto the side of the mountain range, the early summer sun burned their shoulders with its strength. They climbed up and over giant boulders littering the hillside until they arrived at a cave in the side of a smooth, gray shale cliff.

Outside rugged mountain pines, their twisted branches heavy with needles, sighed in the wind. A stream ran past, filled with flashing, silver-scaled trout, each of them as long as an adult's forearm. They were headed upstream on their annual journey to the high lake, which First Arrow's clan called The Spirit Mirror, where they would lay their eggs.

When the sun went down, First Arrow and the shaman went inside the cave to sleep. First Arrow lay awake long after the older man's breathing grew quiet. He listened to the pine needles rustling. He overheard a wolf, speaking its mind to another wolf, or just to the darkness.

He pictured in his mind what it would be like to return to his village as a man, a full man -- an adult. He also pictured what it would be like to take the trail south out of his village, all by himself, head down, tears in his eyes, if he failed.

The next morning, the wise man woke him early and said, "There are three tasks you must complete in this trial before you can be recognized as a man -- one each day. These tasks will test your

courage, your mind, and your heart. It is these capacities that are only imaginings in a child, but are fully-realized in a true man.

"Today, your task is to find the black bear, the most powerful animal who walks our earth. Bring me back a handful of his fur, before sundown, so I'll know you have the courage required of a man."

First Arrow was not surprised by the shaman's request. He had heard tales of others' trials. Sometimes the animal was a mountain lion, sometimes a caribou, sometimes the black bear. First Arrow nodded to the shaman. "I will be back before sundown with a handful of the black bear's fur," he pledged.

Then he stepped across the brook that ran in front of the cave. The trout were leaping from pool to pool, using the stream like a ladder to get up to the high lake where they would spawn, fulfilling their destinies.

It wasn't hard for First Arrow to find a black bear. In those days the land was rich with wildlife. He came upon a huge male tearing apart a rotten log in search of the ants and grubs inside. The bear had his back turned. First Arrow coughed politely. "Bear," he said. "I need a handful of your fur. I need to show I have the courage of a man."

The bear dropped the log and turned, standing up on his hind legs. He was so tall he cast a shadow on the boy. First Arrow could feel the heat of his huge, furry body. "You need a handful of my fur, do you?" He roared with laughter. "Well," he said, "I have plenty of fur to give away. Plenty. It's also hot enough that I'd gladly part with some. But I'm also proud of my looks.

I'm proud of my thick, shiny coat. I hate to part with any of it. I'm afraid you'll have to wrestle me. You'll have to throw me to the ground to convince me to part with even one hair of it." He laughed, staggering forwards waving his paws. "Can you do that? Come on, now. Are you strong enough?"

Let's go!" cried First Arrow.

The two struggled all morning, but neither could gain a clear advantage. First the bear would lift the boy off the ground, crushing him so tightly he could hardly breathe.

Then First Arrow would wriggle free, sliding down his smooth, slippery fur. He would dart between the bear's legs, turn around, and snatch up one of his hind legs, almost -- but never quite -- toppling the bear before he could whirl around, shake his foot free, and snatch up First Arrow again.

At noon they paused. Both were panting. They sat in the shade of a mountain pine. "Boy," gasped the bear, "you'd better give up any thought of being a man. You'll never throw me to the ground. I'm too strong and you're not clever enough."

"Bear," replied First Arrow boldly, "you couldn't be more wrong, Look at you. You're blowing like a dying whale. I'm afraid you'd better give up any thought of keeping all your fur." Jumping up, he sprang forward, butting his head right into the creature's stomach. First Arrow so surprised him, the bear fell over backwards, with a roar.

First Arrow leapt to his feet. In each fist was a clump of fur. Turning, he ran off. The bear sat up, groggily. He stared after the disappearing boy. Looking down at his fur, he saw two bare spots. He shook his head and moaned.

First Arrow sprinted all the way back to the cave, clearing the stream in a single leap.

"Good work, First Arrow," said the shaman, nodding. "I see you have the courage of a man."

The night flew by. In no time it was morning again. First Arrow and Moon's Eye once more stood outside the cave as the sun turned the grey mountain gold.

"Strange," said the old man, pointing. "See how all the trout have leapt up the stream, except one. The next pool is too high for this one to jump to. How tired he looks."

First Arrow knelt by the water. The trout was swimming in slow circles, his mouth opening and closing. "What will happen to him?"

"Who knows?" replied the shaman. "It's his destiny to climb to the high lake. Your destiny is to become a man, if you can. Stand up now. Here is your second task. It is to bring me the feather of an eagle, before sundown today. Then I will know you have the ability to think effectively. To be thoughtful. To use your mind maturely, like an adult."

Once again it wasn't difficult for First Arrow to find the creature he was looking for. He discovered a huge bald eagle sharpening her talons on a boulder at the foot of a cliff. Scree, scree rasped her claws on the rock. First Arrow felt chills up and down his back. When he asked for a feather, she shrieked with laughter. "That's all you want? Just one feather of mine?"

First Arrow nodded.

"Well," she said, stretching her wings to their full extent, some eight forearms long, "I don't mind. I'll be happy to give you one. As a matter of fact, you can have your choice. All you have to do is to come on up to my nest. It's on top of this cliff." Flapping her wings, she leapt into the air, laughing. She hovered just above his head, blocking the sun. "I'll be waiting."

First Arrow watched her circle up and up, cackling as she went, until she was just a speck against the turquoise sky. He looked the cliff up and down. He thought he had never stood at the bottom of a bluff so high. Or so sheer. Or so smooth. How could he ever climb it to reach her nest?

But then, he stepped a little closer. Tilting his head to one side, he studied the surface of the cliff. He looked carefully and thoughtfully. He began at the very bottom and slowly worked his way visually up and up, until he could no longer see any detail.

When he was finished, he had noticed that there were little bits of rock sticking out in places. There were ledges here and there. Shrubs had taken root. The cliff wasn't smooth, as he had first thought. It was quite rough, in fact. And it wasn't straight up and down, it had a slope, when he looked at it carefully, thoughtfully. It leaned in at the top.

In fact, the more First Arrow turned the problem over in his mind -- the more he considered it -- the more opportunities he saw for places to put his hands and feet. The more possible he thought it was that he might be able to scale it, at least as far as he could see.

Carefully, First Arrow began to climb.

Once or twice he couldn't find a handhold, and had to squeeze his chest into the rocks, sliding up the very face itself. Another time, he missed a foothold, sending down a shower of rock chips. The time it took before they hit the ground made him realize, with a shudder, how high up he was.

But he reached the top at noon. He totally surprised the eagle, who was napping in her nest, head under a wing. Waking her, he chose one of her finest, longest tail feathers, snowy white with chestnut flecks like minnows.

All down the backside of the mountain he could hear her complain, her shrieks echoing among the peaks, but when he presented the feather to the shaman, and told him how he had thought out a way to climb the cliff, the old man smiled. "Good, First Arrow, good. A man is not a man unless he has a useful mind."

Once again the night passed quickly. The morning of the third day arrived.

"What is my final task?" asked First Arrow eagerly, stretching in the sun and bobbing up and down on his toes. "I can't wait to be a man."

"Of course," nodded the shaman with a smile, "like every boy. Your final task is to bring me a perfectly round, perfectly smooth stone. Then I'll know you have the heart of a man."

First Arrow stopped bouncing and frowned. "But that seems so easy. And, anyway, what on earth does a stone have to do with the heart?"

Moon's Eye only looked up at the sun. "You're wasting time, First Arrow."

"I'll be back in a flash," said the boy, leaping the stream.

But he was not. First Arrow searched the whole morning. He found rocks all over the hillsides, but they were flat and thin, not round. Most of them crumbled to his touch as well.

He found rocks in the forest, under the gnarled, blowing pines, but they were jagged and rough, not smooth. He found rocks in the streams, and they were smooth, because the water had washed over them for millions of years, but none was even close to being perfectly round, although plenty were oval.

At noon First Arrow didn't stop to eat. He searched all afternoon, stopping only once to rest, and to drink from a stream, but with no further luck. He felt he must have picked up and discarded over a thousand stones.

As the sun descended, he made his way back to the cave, empty-handed. The long shadows descending from the mountaintops matched his depressed mood. "How can such an easy thing be so hard?" he wondered to himself. "I faced down the bear. I outsmarted the eagle. How can such a small thing as a stone -- a thing with no actual life in it -- keep me from becoming a man?"

He stopped at the stream in front of the cave. The lone trout was still there, its fins beating slowly as it hovered in the water, just above the pebbly bottom.

"Poor fellow," said First Arrow, kneeling. "We're both defeated, aren't we? We both didn't reach our goals. Well, at least I can help you along your way." Reaching down, he picked up the trout gently, in both hands. It wriggled, but he held it safe between his fingers.

Gently, he lifted it over the rocks into the next pool. He smiled when he saw the trout's tail flick once, then a second time, as it leapt, on its own, into the next higher pool, splash! Then into the next, and so on up the stream, until it was around a bend and out of sight.

First Arrow glanced back at the first pool. Just beneath where the trout had been floating, was a perfectly smooth, perfectly round stone. It had been hidden by the trout's body until First Arrow lifted him up.

First Arrow plucked the stone from the water. As he stood up, holding it in the palm of his hand, the shaman came out of the cave, arms outstretched. Instead of a plain face, he was smiling.

From under the pine trees on either side stepped First Arrow's father, grandfather, and his two male cousins, also smiling.

First Arrow gasped in surprise.

"Close your mouth," Moon's Eye chuckled. Facing him, he put his hands on the boy's shoulders. "You have passed the final test. Even when it would have brought you no advantage, you stopped to help a fellow creature. Clearly you have the heart of a complete man. You have the capacity to feel for others. Strength, thoughtfulness, kindness: these are the three qualities that make a man.

"First Arrow, with pleasure I welcome you into the company of men."

First Arrow grinned.

His relatives, Bear Tracker, Shining Sun, Strong Wave, and Stone Back threw their hands in the air and shouted. The hills rang with their cries.