

VISION OF EAGLE/STRENGTH OF BEAR

written by:

Allan Lombardo

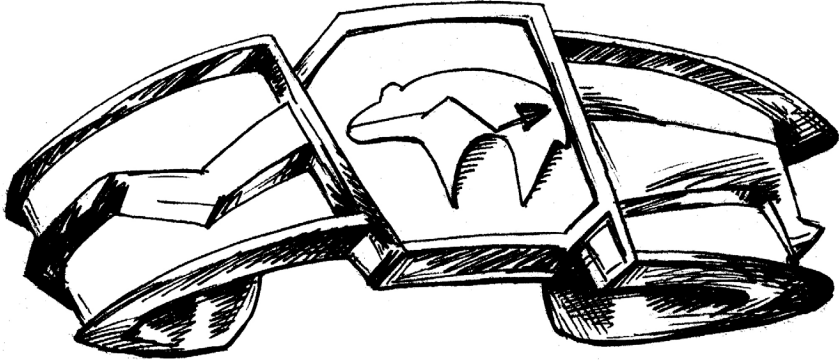
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Illustrations: Barrett Lombardo

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Buffalo Bounty Drawing in the chapter “A Past Live Awakens”
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The Bear Bracelet



I had a couple of hours before my dinner meeting with a prospective client in Denver. The recently refurbished hotel in which I was lodging had a pedestrian way leading to a recently built attractive shopping mall. Since I had been employed in the real estate industry for a few years, both in the retail development and property management areas, I enjoyed walking those 750,000 to 1,000,000 square foot retail centers to assess the current trends in regional mall construction and storefront merchandising. I passed a store selling Native American jewelry and art. It looked like a typical “mom n’ pop” enterprise trying to adapt to the newer ways of retailing. A white male looking about ten years my junior was leaning over one of the glass cases looking somewhat bored. I quickly scanned the various pieces of Hopi, Navajo, and Zuni silver jewelry until a certain bracelet caught my eye. I turned and

looked at the store salesperson.

“That’s Hopi and it looks like a Saufkie,” I stated with an air of authority. He handed me the belt buckle. When I saw the sale tag, I realized it was significantly under priced after verifying the artist’s mark. “You should be asking at least \$200 more for that belt buckle. You realize that his work is in the Smithsonian, don’t you? Are you the manager of this store?”

He looked at me as his face was blushing red and said, “Why would you tell me that I am not charging enough? Most customers would just buy the item, keep quiet, and enjoy the great bargain.”

I responded that I had been collecting Native American Indian jewelry and art for a few years and I did not appreciate retailers under pricing their goods. “They should be treated with the same respect as other world artists and craftsmen... and that includes selling their custom handmade works of art for fair market value and not discounted.” Both of us must have thought I was crazy demanding as a customer that a merchant should raise his prices.

The storekeeper began to stare at me with much intensity. He excused himself telling me that he needed to get something from a room in the back of the store. Returning he held a small white box and blew dust off the top of it. He proceeded to inform me that his grandmother owned this business for many years but had recently passed. On her deathbed she had instructed him that he must assume ownership of the store and continue its legacy. She also advised him that one day a white man would walk into the store, and as he was looking at that man, the

storekeeper repeated the exact words of his mother's mother: "You will see him as a golden bear, and when you do, you must give that man this box—for it will be his time to relive his destiny and walk the Red Road again."

"So, Mister, please take this box. It belongs to you now."

I rubbed the remaining dust off the top lid of the white box and opened it. Inside I found some yellowing tissue paper wrapped around an object. I carefully removed the paper and found an original Begay bracelet made of 14K white and yellow gold. It was a beautiful piece of Navajo art, very heavy and thick (not bendable), with two thunderbolts one on each side wrapping the sides of the bracelet and a turquoise stone carved into the shape of a bear with a gold heartline. I thought to myself that this guy was one slick marketer.

"I can't accept this. It is too valuable and you should keep it."

The shopkeeper shook his head and said, "I told you what my grandmother said. I've been staring at you and I keep seeing a golden bear. It's obvious to me that she knew about your coming to her store and now I must honor her request. So please take the bracelet."

I tried to put the bracelet on my right wrist doubtful that it would fit since the crafted metal was so thick and rigid. To my surprise the one-of-a-kind bracelet slipped on easily and clasped my wrist as though it was custom made for me. I thanked the shopkeeper, but told him I would keep the gift only if he accepted a check for a few hundred dollars and donate it to his grandmother's favorite Native American charity. After handing

him the check, I loosened and pulled my tie down and unbuttoned the top of my shirt revealing to this second generation retailer a gold chain around my neck with attached a 14K gold Hopi-Navajo handmade bear with a very pronounced heartline.

“By chance, is this the golden bear you saw?”

The shopkeeper’s body began to tremble responding with fear in his voice, “How did you know? Who really are you, mister?”

As I fixed my shirt and tie and adjusted my suit jacket, I quietly said, “I didn’t really...just a hunch...curious isn’t it? Maybe your grandmother’s bear bracelet is the key to my finding out who I really am or was once before.”

I returned to my hotel room and with no difficulty removed the bear bracelet. Since our wedding anniversary was this coming August, a few months away, I decided to put the bracelet away and give it to my wife as a gift. I knew it might be a little too big for her wrist, but she could wear it higher up on her arm. I re-wrapped the bear bracelet in its original tissue paper and placed it in the small white box. When I returned home from that Colorado business trip, I hid the bracelet in the box in my bedroom dresser. Every so often, throughout the remainder of spring and into early summer, I would think about the bear bracelet and ponder about the shopkeeper’s dying grandmother’s strange prediction and message.