

THE PREMIER MAGAZINE OF THE WEST

# COWBOYS & INDIANS

JANUARY 2000

*George Strait*

THE KING OF  
COUNTRY MUSIC  
SPEAKS OUT

EXCLUSIVE EXCERPT: Tony Hillerman's Latest Thriller  
The Trail of Tears ■ Fort Worth Turns 150 ■ Clay Walker

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# COWBOYS & INDIANS

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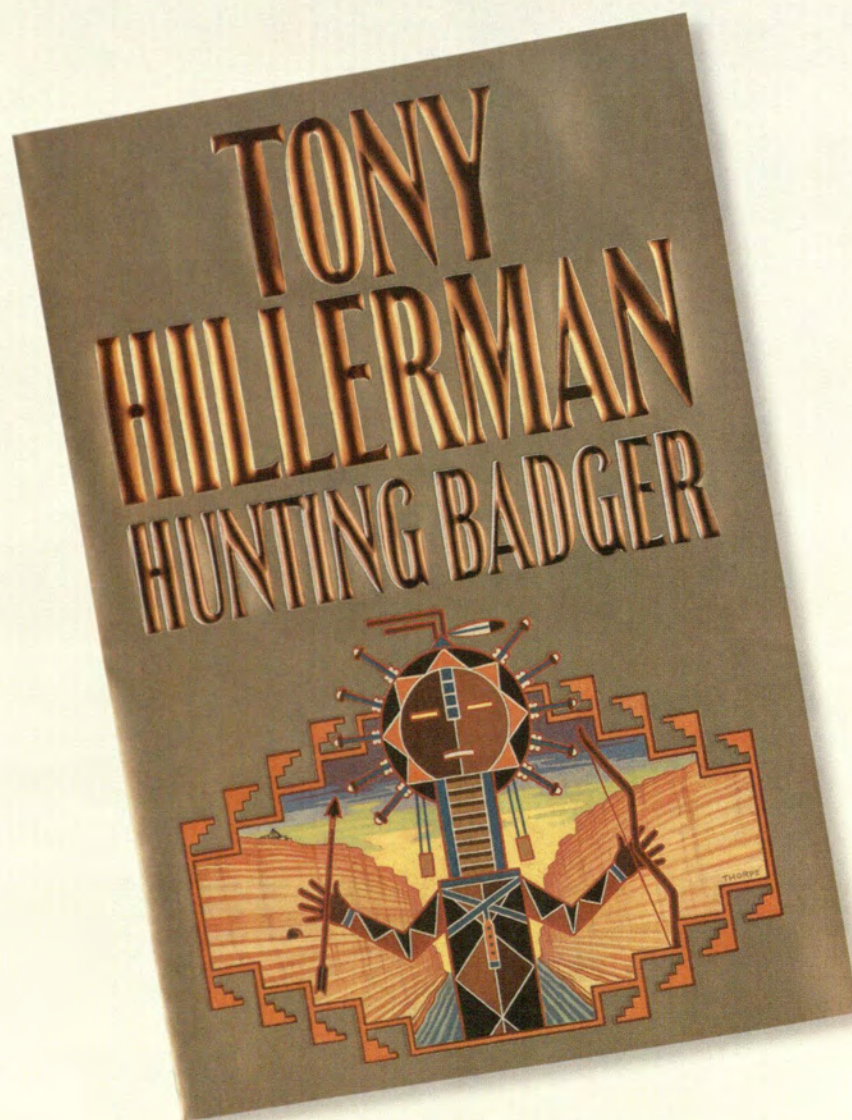
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# COWBOYS & INDIANS

*exclusive excerpt*



IN TONY HILLERMAN'S NEW NOVEL, CHEE AND LEAPHORN  
UNTANGLE A MYSTERY AS DEEP AS A DESERT CANYON AND PRICKLY AS A CHOLLA

Excerpted from HUNTING BADGER copyright © 1999 by Tony  
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*artwork by Peter Thorpe*



## Mystery Man

Tony Hillerman's 14th Navajo mystery is his latest in a series that changed the genre forever. With 16 million plus books read around the world, the author now has scores of imitators as well as fans both on and off the reservation who wait impatiently for the latest intrigues of Navajo policemen Jim Chee and Joe Leaphorn. Not bad for a writer who was told by the agent who read his first book to rewrite it and "get rid of all that Indian stuff."

Today, the 74-year-old author appears to delight in his characters as much as ever. An unassuming, engaging, thoroughly Western character himself, Hillerman speaks candidly about their evolution. When asked which character he identifies with most, he answers, "Leaphorn is easy for me. He's my generation. If he lived next door, we'd get along. I have more trouble with Chee. He's an amalgam of the students I had back in the anti-war era. They were intellectual, idealistic, romantic, not pragmatists. Both Chee and Leaphorn are getting older, however, and changing some."

And the women, who come and go? "You wouldn't believe how many



people let me know they couldn't stand Janet Pete!" Also, in *Hunting Badger*, a key character dies, and the author is asked to comment on that. "Yes, I killed him off. Why? Because I want my books to be very real, and this is what happens in the real world. Old people die."

The basis of *Hunting Badger*, Hillerman explains, was the Four Corners manhunt that occurred in 1998. It's always disturbing to him when anyone tries to override the people who know best. "To do police work in the West," he comments, "you need cops who understand the arroyos

and mesas and people. I believe we need the FBI but they should stick to the things they can do. I wanted to bring out in the book the savvy of the local people, though I didn't want the plot to turn on politics. It's ultimately about a guy wanting money—greed, the great motivator."

What readers love about the books is the lore and mythology and sense of place in Indian Country that Hillerman infuses into his narrative. From all accounts, he has a higher percentage of avid readers among the Navajo nation than anywhere else. When asked to comment about misconceptions people have about his subjects, he says, "They would rather be referred to by their tribal names than lumped together as 'Indians.' And the tribes are so different in their philosophies and religions." He says he chose to focus on the Navajo because "they have a wonderful system of values I admire."

Hillerman, who lives near the Rio Grande in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with his wife Marie, is now occupied with two projects, writing his memoirs and working up the plot for his next mystery.

—Charlotte Berney

### CHAPTER ONE

Deputy Sheriff Teddy Bai had been leaning on the door frame looking out at the night about three minutes or so before he became aware that Cap Stoner was watching him.

"Just getting some air," Bai said. "Too damn much cigarette smoke in there."

"You're edgy tonight," Cap said, moving up to stand in the doorway beside him. "You young single fellas ain't supposed to have anything worrying you."

"I don't," Teddy said.

"Except maybe staying single," Cap said. "There's that."

"Not with me," Teddy said, and looked at Cap to see if he could read anything in the old man's expression. But Cap was looking out into the Ute Casino's parking lot, showing only the left side of his face, with its brush of white mustache,

short-cropped white hair and the puckered scar left along the cheekbone when, as Cap told it, a woman he was arresting for Driving While Intoxicated fished a pistol out of her purse and shot him. That had been about forty years ago when Stoner had only been with the New Mexico State Police a couple of years and had not yet learned that survival required skepticism of all his fellow humans. Now Stoner was a former Captain, augmenting his retirement pay as a rent-a-cop security director at the Southern Ute gambling establishment—just as Teddy was doing on his off duty nights.

"What'd ya tell that noisy drunk at the Black Jack table?"

"Just the usual," Teddy said. "Calm down or he'd have to leave."

Cap didn't comment. He stared out into the night. "Saw some lightning," he said, pointing. "Just barely. Must be way







out there over Utah. Time for it, too."

"Time for the monsoons to start," Cap said. "August thirteenth, isn't it? I'm surprised so many people are out here trying their luck on Friday the 13th."

Teddy nodded, providing no fodder to extend this conversation. But Cap didn't need any.

"But then it's pay day. They got to get rid of all that money in their pay envelope." Cap looked at his watch. "Three thirty three," he announced. "Almost time for the truck to get here to haul off the loot to the bank."

And, Teddy thought, a few minutes past the time when a little blue Ford Escort was supposed to have arrived in the west lot. "Well," he said. "I'll go prowling around the parking areas. Scare off the thieves."

Teddy found neither thieves nor a little blue Escort in the west lot. When he looked back at the Employee Only doorway, Cap was no longer there. A few minutes later. A thousand reasons that could happen. No big deal. He enjoyed the clean air, the pre-dawn high country chill, the occasional lightning over the mountains. He walked out of the lighted area to check his memory of the mid-summer star scape. Most of the constellations where he remembered they should be. He could

recall their American names, and some of the names his Navajo grandmother had taught him, but only two of the names he'd wheedled out of his Kiowa-Comanche father. Now was that moment his grandmother called the "deep dark time," but the late-rising moon was causing a faint glow outlining the shape of Sleeping Ute Mountain. He heard the sound of laughter from somewhere. A car door slammed. Then another. Two vehicles pulled out of the east lot, heading for the exit. Coyotes began a conversation of yips and yodels among the pinons in the hills behind the casino. The sound of a truck gearing down came from the highway below. A pickup pulled into the Employees Only lot, parked, produced the clattering sound of something

being unloaded.

Teddy pushed the illumination button on his Timex. Three forty six. Now the little blue car was late enough to make him wonder a little. A man wearing what looked like coveralls emerged into the light carrying an extension ladder. He placed it against the casino wall, trotted up it to the roof.

"Now what's that about," Teddy said, half aloud. Probably an electrician. Probably something wrong with the air conditioning. "Hey," he shouted, and started toward the ladder. Another pickup pulled into the employee lot—this one a big kingcab job. Doors opened. Two men emerged. National Guard soldiers apparently, dressed in their fatigues. Carrying what? They were walking fast toward the

Employees Only door. But that door had no outside knob. It was the accounting room, opened only from the inside and only by guys as important as Cap Stoner.

Stoner was coming out of the side entrance now. He pointed at the roof, shouted: "Who's that up there? What the hell—"

"Hey," Teddy yelled, trotting toward the two men, unsnapping the flap on his holster. "What's—"

Both men stopped. Teddy saw muzzle flashes, saw Cap Stoner fall backward, sprawled on the pavement. The men spun toward him swinging their weapons. He was fumbling with his

pistol when the first bullets struck him.



**"Almost time for the truck to get here  
to haul off the loot to the bank."**

## CHAPTER TWO

Sergeant Jim Chee of the Navajo Tribal Police was feeling downright fine. He was just back from a 17-day vacation. He was happily reassigned from an "Acting Lieutenant" assignment in Tuba City to his old Shiprock home territory and he had five days of vacation left before reporting back to work. The left-over mutton stew extracted from his little refrigerator was bubbling pleasantly on the propane burner. The coffee pot steamed—producing an aroma as delicious as the stew. Best of all, when he did report for work there wouldn't be a single piece of paper



work awaiting his attention.

Now, as he filled his bowl and poured his coffee, what he was hearing on the early news made him feel even better. His fear—his downright dread—that he'd soon be involved in another FBI-directed back country manhunt was being erased. The TV announcer was speaking "live" from the Federal Courthouse, reporting the bad guys who had robbed the Casino on the Southern Ute Reservation about the time Chee was leaving Fairbanks, were now "probably several hundred miles away."

In other words, safely out of Shiprock's Four Corners territory and too far away to be his problem.

The theory of the crime the FBI had hung on this robbery, as the handsome young TV employee was now reporting on the 17-inch screen in Chee's trailer, went like this: "Sources involved in the hunt said the three bandits had stolen a small single-engine aircraft from a ranch north of Montezuma Creek, Utah. Efforts to trace the plane are underway and the FBI asked anyone who might have seen the plane yesterday or this morning to call the FBI."

Chee sampled the stew, sipped coffee and listened to the announcer describe the plane—an elderly dark blue single-engine high wing monoplane—a type used by the U.S. Army for scouting and artillery spotting in Korea and the early years of the Viet Nam war. The sources quoted suggested the robbers had taken the aircraft from the rancher's hangar and used it to flee the area.

That sounded good to Chee. The farther the better. Canada would be fine, or Mexico. Anywhere but the Four Corners. In the spring of 1998 he'd been involved in an exhausting, frustrating FBI-directed manhunt for two cop-killers. At its chaotic worst, officers from more than twenty federal, state, county and reservation agencies had floundered around for weeks in that one with no arrests made before the Federals decided to call it off by declaring the sus-

pects "probably dead." It wasn't an experience Chee wanted to repeat.

The little hatch Chee had cut into the bottom of the trailer door clattered behind him on its rubber hinges, which meant his cat was making an unusually early visit. That told Chee that a coyote was close enough to make Cat nervous or a visitor was coming. Chee listened. Over the sound of the television, now selling a cell telephone service, he heard wheels on the dirt track which connected his home under the San Juan River cottonwoods to the Shiprock-Cortez highway above.

Who would it be? Maybe Cowboy Dashee, but this wasn't Cowboy's usual day off from his deputy sheriff's job.

Chee swallowed another bite of stew, went to the door and pulled back the curtain. A fairly new Ford I50 pickup rolled to a stop under the nearest tree.

Officer Bernadette Manuelito was sitting in it, staring straight ahead. Waiting, Navajo fashion, for him to recognize her arrival.

Chee sighed. He was not ready for Bernie. Bernie represented something he'd have to deal with sooner or later but he preferred later. The gossip in the small world of cops had it that Bernie had a crush on him. Probably true, but not something he wanted to think about now.

He'd wanted some time. Time to adjust to the joy of being demoted from acting lieutenant back to sergeant. Time to get over the numbness of knowing he'd finally burned the bridge that had on its other end Janet Pete, seductive, smart, chic, sweet and treacherous. He wasn't ready for another problem. But he opened the door.

Officer Manuelito seemed to be off duty. She climbed out of her truck wearing jeans, boots, a red shirt and a Cleveland Indians baseball cap and looking small, pretty and slightly untidy, just as he remembered her. But somber. Even her smile had a sad edge to it. Instead of the joke he had ready for her, Chee simply invited her in, gestured to his chair beside the table. He sat on the edge of his cot and



**Now was the moment his Navajo grandmother called the "deep dark time."**







waited.

"Welcome back to Shiprock," Bernie said.

"Happy to escape from Tuba," Chee said. "How's your mother?"

"About the same," Bernie said. Last winter, her mother's drift into the dark mists of Alzheimer's disease won Officer Manuelito a transfer back to Shiprock where she could better care for her. Chee's was a late summer transfer, caused by his reversion from acting lieutenant to sergeant. The Tuba City section didn't need another sergeant. Shiprock did.

"Terrible disease," Chee said.

Bernie nodded. Glanced at him. Looked away.

"I heard you went up to Alaska," Bernie said. "How was it?"

"Impressive. Took the cruise up the coast." He waited. Bernie hadn't made this call to hear about his vacation.

"I don't know how to do this," she said, giving him a sidelong glance.

"Do what?" Chee said.

"You don't have anything to do with that Casino thing, do you?"

Chee felt trouble coming. "No," he said.

"Anyway, I need some advice."

"I'd say just run yourself in. Return the money. Make a full confession and..."

Chee stopped there, wishing he'd kept his mouth shut. Bernie was looking at him now and her expression said this was not the time for half-baked humor.

"Do you know Teddy Bai?"

"Bai? Is that the rent-a-cop wounded in the Casino robbery?"

"Teddy's a Montezuma County deputy sheriff," Bernie said, rather stiffly. "That was just a part-time temporary job with casino security. He was just trying to make some extra money."

"I wasn't—" Chee began and stopped. Less said the better until he knew what this was all about. So he said: "I don't

know him." And waited.

"He's in the hospital at Farmington," Bernie said. "In intensive care. Shot three times. Once through a lung. Once through the stomach. Once through the right shoulder."

Clearly Bernie knew Bai pretty well. All he knew about this case personally was what he'd read in the papers and he hadn't seen any of these details reported. He said: "Well, that San Juan Medical Center there has a good reputation. I'd think he'd be getting—"

"They think he was involved in the robbery," Bernie said. "I mean the FBI thinks so. They have a guard outside his room."

Chee said: "Oh?" And waited again. If Bernie knew why they thought that she'd tell him. What he'd read, and what he'd heard, was that the bandits had killed the Casino security boss and critically wounded a guard. Then during their escape, they'd shot at an Arizona Highway Patrolman who had flagged them for speeding.

Bernie looked close to tears. "It doesn't make any sense," she said.

"It doesn't seem to. Why would they want to shoot their own man?"

"They think Teddy was the inside man," Bernie said. "They think the robbers shot him because he

knew who they were and they didn't trust him."

Chee nodded. He didn't have to ask Bernie how she knew all this confidential stuff. Even if it wasn't her case, she was a cop and if she really wanted to know she'd know who to talk to. "Sounds pretty weak to me," he said. "Cap Stoner was shot, too. He was the security boss out there. You'd think they'd figure Stoner for the inside man."

He rose, poured a cup of coffee and handed it to Bernie, giving her a little time to think how she wanted to answer that. "Everybody liked Stoner," she said. "All the old timers anyway. And Teddy's been in trouble before," she said. "When he was just a kid. He got arrested for joy riding in



**He was fumbling with his pistol  
when the first bullets struck him.**



somebody else's truck."

"Well it couldn't have been very serious," Chee said. "At least the county was willing to hire him as a deputy."

"It was a juvenile thing," Bernie said.

"Awful weak then. Do they have something else on him?"

"Not really," she said.

He waited. Bernie's expression told him something worse was coming. Or maybe not. Maybe she wouldn't tell him.

She sighed. "People at the casino said he'd been acting strange. They said he was nervous. Instead of watching people inside he kept going out into the parking lot. When his shift was over he stayed around. He told one of the clean-up crew he was waiting to be picked up."

"Okay," Chee said. "I can see it now. I mean them thinking he was waiting for the gang to show up. In case they needed help."

"He wasn't though. He was waiting for someone else."

"No problem then. When he gets well enough to talk, he tells the feds who he was waiting for. They check, confirm it, and there's no reason to hold him," Chee said, thinking there was probably something else.

"I don't think he'll tell," Bernie said.

"Oh. You mean he was waiting for a woman then?" He didn't pursue that. Didn't ask her how she knew all this, or why she hadn't passed it along to the FBI. Didn't ask her why she had come here to tell him about it.

"I don't know what to do," Bernie said.

"Probably nothing," he said. "If you do, they'll want to know how you got this information. Then they'll talk to his wife. Mess up his marriage."

"He's not married."

Chee nodded, thinking there could be all sorts of reasons a guy wouldn't want the world to know about a woman picking him up at four a.m. He just couldn't think of a good one

right away.

"They'll be trying to get him to tell who the robbers were," Bernie said. "They'll come up with some way to hold him until he tells. And he won't know who they are. So I'm afraid they'll find something to charge him with so they can hold him."

"I just got back from Alaska," Chee said, "so I don't know anything about any of this. but I'll bet they got a good idea by now who they're looking for."

Bernie shook her head. "No. I don't think so," she said. "I hear that's a total blank. They were talking at first like it

was some of the right wingers in one of the militia groups. Something political. But now I hear they don't have a clue."

Chee nodded. That would explain why the FBI had been so quick to announce the aircraft business. It took the heat off the area Agent in Charge.

"You're sure you know Bai was waiting for a woman? Do you know who?"

Bernie hesitated. "Yes."

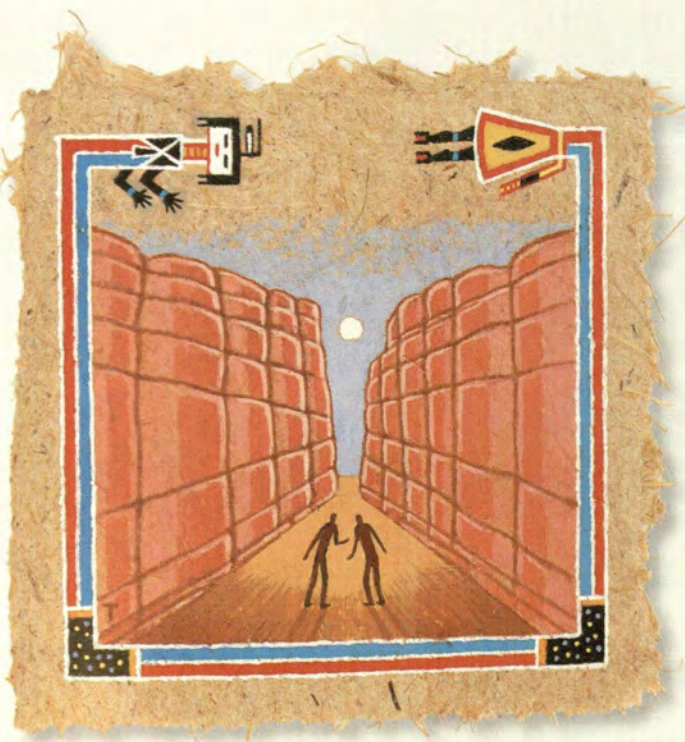
"Could you tell the feds?"

"I guess I could. I will if I have to." She put the coffee cup on the table, untasted. "You know what I was thinking. I was thinking you worked here a long time before they shifted you to Tuba City. You know a lot

of people. With the FBI thinking they already have the inside man they won't be looking for the real inside man. I thought maybe you could find out who really was their helper in the casino. If anybody can."

Now it was Chee's time to hesitate. He sipped his coffee, cold now, and tried to sort out his mixture of reactions to all this. Bernie's confidence in him was flattering, if misguided. Why did the thought that Bernie was having an affair with this rent-a-cop disappoint him? It should be a relief. Instead it gave him an empty, abandoned feeling.

"I'll ask around," Chee said.



**Chee's downright dread was that he'd soon be involved in another FBI-directed back country manhunt.**

