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It was more than a mile from the top of the escarpment to the foot of the mountain, and His Spirit Watches had walked most of it at odds with himself. He wanted to go up to look for the boy, who had now been gone for two nights, but he knew it wasn't permitted. His instincts pulled at him, haunting him with images of what could befall the boy up on the mountain, but his abiding sense of tradition and deep respect for the old ways told him to resist.

The sun was almost directly overhead when he reached the trees. He moved into them hesitantly, praying to catch a glimpse of Walks Alone. Then he stopped, as if frozen solid in the August noonday sun. His face contorted in the combination of emotions that overcame him simultaneously: pride, awe, admiration.

From the trees on the incline, Walks Alone descended on obviously weakened legs. In his left hand, he carried the two pointed antlers of a deer. Across his right shoulder lay the head and spotted hide of a bobcat, its eyes staring lifelessly toward the bright sunlight beyond the trees. Dried blood covered the boy's right arm, but it was impossible to tell if it was his or the cat's. Rivulets of fresh blood traced down his left arm, and there was what appeared to be a puncture wound above his left eye. Blood was smeared all over the left side of his face, as if the boy had rubbed the area repeatedly.

His Spirit Watches dropped to one knee as Walks Alone approached, allowing the boy to collapse across his massive left shoulder. Then he stood up, turned toward the river, and ran. He ran as fast as he could.