

The Way to Rainy Mountain  
N. Scott Momaday

Drawings by A. Momaday

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Introduction to this book first appeared in *The Reporter* for January 26, 1967. In slightly different form, it was incorporated in the text of my novel *House Made of Dawn*, published by Harper & Row in 1968.

I wish also to acknowledge my own book, *The Journey of Tai-ma*, which is in a special sense the archetype of the present volume. The earlier work was produced in collaboration with D. E. Carlsen and Bruce S. McCurdy at the University of California, Santa Barbara, in a fine edition limited to 100 hand-painted copies.

Finally I should like here to thank those of my kinsmen who willingly recounted to me the tribal history and literature which informs the book.

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INTRODUCTION

A SINGLE KNOLL rises out of the plain in Oklahoma, north and west of the Wichita Range. For my people, the Kiowas, it is an old landmark, and they gave it the name Rainy Mountain. The hardest weather in the world is there. Winter brings blizzards, hot tornadic winds arise in the spring, and in summer the prairie is an anvil's edge. The grass turns brittle and brown, and it cracks beneath your feet. There are green belts along the rivers and creeks, linear groves of hickory and pecan, willow and witch hazel. At a distance in July or August the steaming foliage seems almost to writhe in fire. Great green and yellow grasshoppers are everywhere in the tall grass, popping up like corn to sting the flesh, and tortoises crawl about on the red earth, going nowhere in the plenty of time. Loneliness is an aspect of the land. All things in the plain are isolated; there is no confusion of objects in the eye, but *one* hill or *one* tree or *one* man. To look upon that landscape in the early morning, with the sun at your back, is to lose the sense of proportion. Your imagination comes to life, and this, you think, is where Creation was begun.

I returned to Rainy Mountain in July. My grandmother had died in the spring, and I wanted to be at her grave. She had lived to be very old and at last infirm. Her only living daughter was with her when she died, and I was told that in death her face was that of a child.