



Black Eagle Child: The Facepaint Narratives

Ray Young Bear

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Mixing prose and poetry, ancient traditions and modern sensibilities, this brilliant, profane, and poignant coming-of-age story is a masterpiece of Native American literature

At a Thanksgiving party held in a Bureau of Indian Affairs gymnasium, the elders of the Meskwaki Settlement in central Iowa sip coffee while the teenagers plot their escape. Edgar Bearchild and Ted Facepaint, too broke to join their friends for a night of drinking in a nearby farm town, decide to attend a ceremonial gathering of the Well-Off Man Church, a tribal sect with hallucinogenic practices. After partaking of the congregation's sacred star medicine, Edgar receives a prophetic vision and comes to a newfound understanding of his people's past and present that will ultimately reshape the course of his life.

Set against the backdrop of the tumultuous 1960s, *Black Eagle Child* is the story of Edgar's passage from boyhood to manhood, from his youthful misadventures with Ted, to his year at prestigious liberal arts college in California, to his return to Iowa and success as a poet. Deftly crossing genre boundaries and weaving together a multitude of tones and images—from grief to humor, grape Jell-O to supernatural strobe lights—it is also an unforgettable portrait of what it means to be a Native American in the modern world.

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