



Reader's Guide — *Return to Dead Horse Canyon: Grandfather Spirits*

Book 2 — Thematic Exploration

✦✦ 1. Courage, Determination, Action

- Committed to fulfilling Bryan's final request, Sara releases the data that confirms extensive government corruption.
 - Even when it's clear her life is in danger she continues to pursue her goals.
 - **Discussion Prompts:**
 - How does Sara's courage evolve as the story progresses?
 - What moments best illustrate her resilience?
 - How does her family's support contribute to her relentless determination to expose the truth?
 - How did Bryan stand behind her, even in death?
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🌀 2. Financial, Physical, and Spiritual Survival

- Working for Lone Star Operations (LSO) presents Charlie with an uncomfortable dilemma. He's using his education and earning a good living, but is he exploiting his connection with the Earth?
 - Honoring his ancestral traditions through various practices and ceremonies fails to bring confirmation from *Maheo* that what he's doing is right.
 - **Discussion Prompts:**
 - When does he realize (if ever) that working for LSO was a means to an end, *i.e.* his physical and spiritual transformation?
 - Did naming the borehole after Badger facilitate the blowout?
 - Why did Charlie remain in Colorado for so long instead of returning to Montana?
 - How did his friendship with Bryan set him on the path to his destiny?
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🔪 3. Consequences and Strength Building

- Newton's 3rd Law of motion states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. This applies to more than physics. Our actions in all realms--physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual--also have reactions. Like resistance exercises, they build strength--if handled correctly. Consider the consequences faced by the following characters and whether the lesson was learned.
 - **Discussion Prompts:**
 - Sara upon exposing Bryan's findings.
 - Charlie ignoring Eaglefeathers' teachings.
 - Johannsen for bad judgment.
 - Will and Mike connecting the condo units.
 - Were there any positive consequences?
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👹 4. Faith, Beliefs, and Expectations

- The President declares PURF "legal" and Constitutional.
 - Sara believes the facility is morally wrong and that most people will agree.
 - Will agrees with Sara, but would prefer she not pursue exposing it.
 - Charlie's culture embraces information from animal messengers, visions, and connecting with the Grandfather Spirits.
 - **Discussion Prompts:**
 - Consider the differences between faith, belief, and expectation.
 - What resulted from each person's belief system as noted above?
 - Do Indigenous people have an advantage over more "civilized" people?
 - Is anything higher than the rule of law?
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🛡️ 5. Heroes, Villains, and Antiheroes

- Who do you consider the heroes of this story? Anyone besides Charlie and Sara?
 - Consider the antagonists in the story, *e.g.* Bernie Keller, Eddie Johannsen, Bob and Gerald Bentley. Were they all evil to the core? Or just trying to survive? What indications were there that in many ways they were "normal" humans operating under a set of self-imposed circumstances?
 - Were any characters a mixture of the two?
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★ 6. The Stars as Witness and Guide

- "The Curse of Dead Horse Canyon" had more direct references to the stars, particularly the reference to Canopus, the pathfinder star. Guidance in this novel is slightly different, including Patrice's readings and Charlie's visions, dreams, and other impressions.
 - Are Patrice's methods of interpreting the influence of the planets and their location with respect to a person's birth chart really that different from Charlie's? Or just another way to read the energy emanating from the heavens?
 - **Discussion Prompts:**
 - What did the scene with Charlie and Sara stargazing symbolize for you?
 - Is there an advantage to knowing the cosmic plan for your life?
 - Have you ever paid attention to signs or messages?
 - Do you believe such things are coincidences or come from a higher power?
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🎵 Suggested Playlist

Music to accompany the novel's themes:

- Garth Brooks -- *Friends in Low Places*
 - Huey Lewis and the News -- *Workin' For a Livin'*
 - John Denver -- *Country Road*
 - R. Carlos Nakai -- *Ancestral Home*
 - Radiohead -- *Karma Police*
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★ Trivia & Insights

1. Products Related to the Oil Industry

- **Petroleum Products:** Crude oil is refined into a wide variety of products, including gasoline, diesel, jet fuel, heating oil, lubricants, and asphalt. These are staples in transportation and construction industries.
- **Plastics:** Many everyday plastic items, from bottles to packaging, are made from petrochemicals, which are derived from oil.
- **Synthetic Fibers:** Materials like polyester and nylon are made using oil-based chemicals.
- **Pharmaceuticals:** Some pharmaceutical products, including certain drugs and even aspirin, rely on petrochemicals.
- **Cosmetics:** Many cosmetics products, such as lipsticks and foundations, are made from petroleum derivatives.

2. Quid Pro Quo Meaning and Examples

- **Definition:** *Quid pro quo* is a Latin term meaning "something for something." It refers to an exchange where one thing is given in return for something else.
- **Examples:**
 - **Political:** A government official offers a contract to a business in exchange for campaign donations.
 - **Workplace:** A manager promises a promotion in exchange for favorable treatment or results.
 - **Legal:** In contracts, services or goods may be exchanged for compensation or other agreed-upon terms.

3. Hyperbaric Therapies

- **What It Is:** Hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) involves breathing pure oxygen in a pressurized room or chamber. It's typically used to treat conditions where oxygen supply to tissues is compromised, such as carbon monoxide poisoning, chronic wounds, and some infections.
- **Therapeutic Benefits:**
 - Helps wounds heal by promoting oxygen-rich blood flow to tissues.
 - Reduces inflammation and can help with brain injuries or strokes.
 - Used in divers for decompression sickness.
- **Research:** Ongoing studies are investigating its use in treating conditions like autism, cerebral palsy, and even anti-aging.

4. Pathway to Enlightenment Often Triggered by Accident or Serious Injury

- **Spiritual Perspective:** Enlightenment, in many traditions like Buddhism, can occur unexpectedly or after a traumatic experience. An accident or injury might lead someone to a profound shift in perception.
- **Examples in History:**
 - **Eckhart Tolle:** Experienced a life-changing spiritual awakening after a period of depression and an "accident" of sorts—his sudden realization of the present moment.
 - **Buddhism:** Stories of individuals achieving enlightenment through meditation after traumatic events.
- **Modern Insights:** Psychological studies suggest that individuals often experience profound shifts in worldview or consciousness after life-threatening events or deep personal crises. These "wake-up calls" can lead to greater self-awareness, altered priorities, and a deeper understanding of life's impermanence.