# Mud Sawpole Mystery
# Book 4

By

D.M. Rowell
*Koyh Mi O Boy Dah*




This novel may not be used to train AI.
Do not submit any of this novel into any form of AI.

# Prologue

Corn stalks whispered in the Oklahoma early morning breeze. Water beads coated the elongated leaves, sparkling with the rising sun. Tohne, walking the remote back country property line, stopped to take in the view from the top of the rise. He could see most of the hundred acres. A dense feed cornfield covered the majority of acreage leading up to a cross timber forest of gnarled post and blackjack oaks engulfed by thick tangles of brush that ended at a creek dancing in the sunlight. The morning was beautiful.

Tohne released the anger he'd held all night. The land was perfect.

Eyeing the line of timber, he spoke aloud to no one, "It'll take work clearing back some of the brush, but I want to preserve the timber forest." Tohne wanted a touch of wilderness. It was a deterrent to the unwanted.

The creek was a bonus. They had hoped for a water source for function and fun. Sky would be pleased to hear the additional acreage would meet their growing needs. Dollars danced in his mind's eye. A crooked smile formed.

Tohne's focus shifted to across the creek's high bank. A section had crumbled recently. Where the steep bank had slid away, something yellow-whitish gleamed. He squinted; the object was too far away to make out what it was—but it shouldn't be there.

Taking note of landmarks, Tohne went down the hill, sighted and strode toward the creek cutting through a corner of the dense cornfield that extended to its bank. Tohne walked slow and careful with his hands held high and in front of him to fend off the raggedly-sharp corn leaves. Their whip thin slices were like a series of sharp papercuts. He'd suffered too many cuts to count from his and Sky's foolhardy adventures raiding cornfields as kids.

Tohne stopped to get his bearing. It was easy to get lost in this cornfield; it was planted more like a barrier than feed crop. The stalks towered over his six-foot frame and grew extremely close together; no rows separated the lines of stalks. A Combine would have a hard time harvesting the field.

Tohne listened to the gentle murmurs from the creek in the near distance. His older sister, Mud came to mind. If she was here, Mud would tell him that the creek was talking—if he would listen. Tohne cocked his head and did just that, then laughed aloud. Mud was right, the creek was talking—telling him what direction to head.

As he shifted toward the babbling water, Tohne smiled thinking of his sister. Though they were all enrolled citizens of the Kiowa Nation, it had always been Mud that had taken their heritage seriously; listening to the old ones, collecting Kiowa stories of history and early legends that she shared with him and Sky at bedtime. Mud brought the Kiowa to life. Tohne loved her storytelling.

Especially the early legends of the Half Boys that he and his identical twin, Sky, were named for. The two Sacred Beings sacrificed themselves for the Kiowa People. In the end one returned to the sky and the other to water. His name Tohne, pronounced like “Tone” but with the hard “n” sound softened by the h, was also the Kiowa word for water. Most in the Tribe never picked up on the relevance of their names. Mud said that was a sad commentary on the Kiowa Nation.

He climbed to the top of the creek bank relishing being free of the punishing cornstalks. Tohne gave the rolling acres of corn a lengthy once over. The section he had just emerged from, ending closest to the creek seemed to have a color shift toward its deep center. He considered the strange looking stalks before turning to look for what had caught his attention earlier. Tohne was

still too far from the object protruding from the opposite bank to understand what it was. It looked like an accusatory finger, but was most likely a broken pipe from someone tapping into the water source. Definitely shouldn't be there.

Tohne slid down the bank, his boot heels leaving grooves in the damp red dirt as he went. A colorful sparkle caught his eye. He bent and picked up a yellow glass bead, only then noticing a few other glass beads scattered in the area. The recent thunderstorm must have washed the beads out of an old burial spot. Mud had insisted it was bad medicine to keep found beads of our ancestors. Tohne gathered the few beads he spotted and climbed back to the top of the bank. He faced north finding a spot that felt right. He poked a hole in the red clay and placed the handful of loose beads in. Tohne muttered a prayer and covered the beads with dirt, patted the ground flat and covered with a pile of smell rocks—returning the beads to the spirits they belonged with. Tohne wasn't superstitious, but wasn't taking any chances. He and Sky had plans, big plans.

Satisfied that he had appeased any bad spirits, Tohne pulled his sweat-soaked shirt away from his back letting a slight cooling breeze in. Though the sun had only been up an hour, the day was already heated and humid. Sweat ran into his eyes, burning and blurring his vision. Tohne removed his red OU cap, ran his hand through his sweat rimmed thick hair. Maybe Sky was right and he should cut his shoulder-length black hair. It would be a heck of a lot cooler, not to mention his twin, Sky looked pretty good in a fade.

Hearing the call of the creek, Tohne moved to the rocky beach. He reached the water's edge, dipped his sweat drenched cap in, filled it and dumped the cold water over his head. Tohne shivered with chilled delight. He had always enjoyed the feel of water, especially alive water. That's how Tohne thought of moving water in creeks, lakes, rivers and oceans. He reasoned that if it could talk, it must be alive.

Tohne, shook his long hair like a dog shaking water from his fur. It was then he noticed the silence. There were no early birds singing, no squirrels scrambling, or even insects chittering, the area was barren of life sounds. The land was remote and quiet. Perfect for their needs.

Tohne looked across the creek to the bank beyond. The property line ended a couple hundred feet on the other side of the creek where it backed into the north-western boundary of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge marked by a ten-foot-high wire fence topped with spirals of barb wire.

Farther downstream was the creek's bank with the crumbled edge. Tohne walked downstream. He stopped at the creek's edge, squinting through the bright sunlight toward the bank across the creek. Tohne's imagination pictured a skeletal hand. The yellowed bones of the dead reaching from the bank beyond, pointing at him.

Rocks clicked behind him. Tohne turned toward the sound. Too late, he realized the earlier silence had spoken volumes—if he had only listened.

A baseball bat size branch bore down on him—all went black.

Tohne collapsed into the water he was named for.