

He then called his sons, and a small group of his family together:

*My sons, you must keep a vigil. Watch from the peaks for the paleface movements. I will take only the old grandmothers and those with child with me to the paleface camp. I will go back alone in the morning. Hakan and Elsu, you must follow me and lead the rest of the group down to the camp after I have gone, so prepare provisions and help those infirm or old with the journey. You will also be my ears and eyes when I cannot hear or see. Helaku, follow but do not be seen. Helaku, Dichali, Kaga, your squaws and young children must travel with the group. You will be needed for war. They will be safe with me. We will be with you again when the Great Spirit decides.*



In the ghost dawn of the next day, Tenaya returned to the camp as first shadows were beginning to surface, stepping from a fringe of milky mist. Again, he waited in frosted silence.

He was called to Savage and seemingly surrendered:

*My people are coming. We come in peace to accept your offerings. The snows are deep. It will take time for men, squaws and children, with all their heavy baggage, to climb mountain paths through this deep snow.*

This seemed reasonable to Savage, but he remained wary of this old Chief. Whilst he was a white man, Savage also thought like an Indian, understood their ways, their thinking, as well as their language.

When nobody arrived the next day, the Major became suspicious and guessed that Tenaya was stalling for time. After two days, he decided to march in search of the tribe. He detailed a guard for the prisoners and, taking Tenaya as a guide, took fifty-seven men to trace the Yosemitees.

They headed east of Bishop's Camp, following a trail from Wawona, a maelstrom of monstrous flakes of snow tumbling about them, snaking slowly, winding along bitter white tracks, their pallid faces stiffed by racking cold.

In mid-afternoon, they met seventy-two Yosemitees heading out of a clump of waving trees, in a scattered, bedraggled line: old squaws, young squaws with papooses on their backs, children, some young boys and girls, including the squaws of Tenaya's sons and their children. Amongst them his favourite grandchild, Totuya. But only two braves. They were stooped with cold, clothes clumped with ice and snow.

Major Savage, face pulped scarlet, snapped at Tenaya:

*Old Chief, where are the rest of your tribe?*

Tenaya, palms spread wide, gestured:

*This is all that is left of my tribe. The rest have fled to Tuolumne and Teniega Bah.*

Major Savage, his lips curling and quivering in anger, protested:

*These are only a few of your people. Your tribe is large. They are still in the mountains. I am going to search for your people who have not come with you. They will come with me if I find them.*

Tenaya, scratching his head bashfully, seemed to apologise:

*This is all my people that are willing to go with me to the plains. Many that have been with me are from other tribes. They have taken squaws from my tribe and now they all have gone back with their squaws and children to Tuolumne and to the Paiutes at Teniega Bah. This is where they are from and have gone back there. Some others are sick and not able to come just now. They will come in the future. Soon.*

Although that portion of Tenaya's story was true, Savage remained unconvinced and was sure that Tenaya was lying. After careful consideration, he decided to continue the search, quickly responding:

*Old Chief, you are not telling me the truth. Your people could not cross the mountains in such deep snow. Nor can they cross the divide to reach Tuolumne. I know your tribe is still in villages or hiding near their villages.*

*You will return to the camp with these people. I will take one of your young men with me. There are but few of your people here. Your tribe is large. I am going to your villages to find people who have not come with you. I will find them and make them come with me.*

Savage then selected Hakan to accompany him. Hakan was the grandson of Puaxat. With embarrassed, boyish face, he shuffled sideways, as Tenaya desperately protested:

*You will not find any of my people. I do not know where they are. My tribe is small - not large, as you have said. Kucadikadi and Paiutes are all gone.*

*If they go to the plains and are seen, they will be killed by those with whom they have quarrelled. This is why they have all gone.*

*I have talked with my people and told them I was going to see the White Chiefs sent to make peace. They told me that I was growing old, and it was well that I should go. The young and strong braves can find plenty in the mountains, therefore, why should they go to be yarded like horses? My heart has been sore since that talk, but I am now willing to go with my people who are here, for it is best for my people that I do. I am too old.*

The Major listened to the old Chief for a while. Unable to contain himself any longer, he contemptuously interrupted Tenaya with wild gestures, leaped heavily onto his grey steed and, rocking his saddle impatiently with both hands, turned to his Companies and bellowed:

*Forward march! We will track and hunt down these rebels.*

Savage sent the captured Yosemitees back to Bishop's Camp with a small guard.

The anxious soldiers and scouts mounted their horses, briskly foundered forward, horses' breaths curling a fodder-smelling mist in the frosted air, bodies of men and beast steaming, tracking the Yosemitees' broken trail in the print-splotched snow, seeking, seeking through scanted wilderness, growing colder as the tracks wound up through pines, under a spangled, snow-leaden sky.