

They Cried on the Trail

Chapter 6

By Carolyn Estes

John and Sally knew they needed to catch up with the tribe. They finished the rabbit meat for breakfast and set out on the trail.

John decided to run ahead to look for the wagons again.

“Remember, Sally, I will wave my blanket up and down if I can see them from the tall hill,” John said.

Hours passed as the young Tsalagi (Cherokees) made their way west. In the mid-afternoon, John reached the top of the hill. He couldn’t see the wagons ahead, but did see a running stream below.

He knew Sally would be watching. He wrapped his blanket around his shoulders and started down the hill.

Sally eventually caught up to John. He was standing by the stream cleaning the bark from a sturdy stick. He took his blanket from around his shoulders and pulled a thread. Sally watched as he tied his knife to the stick.

“I saw some fish in the stream. Since it is cold they won’t move fast and I might be able to get us one for dinner,” he said.

Sally looked around the trees for fallen sticks to make a fire. Both were successful. They enjoyed a warm meal before wrapping themselves in their blankets for the night.

Many moons passed while the pair of Cherokee friends continued on the trail. One evening right before sundown John reached the top of a tall hill. He saw what he had been searching for. The wagons and long line of Cherokees were just ahead.

John turned quickly and waved his blanket up and down to signal Sally. She broke into a run and joined him at the top of the hill.

The pair made their way down into the evening camp. The other Cherokees welcomed them to the fire and gave them a little food.



“Osiyo—Hello! You and your sister are welcome to stay with us until we reach the new land,” the oldest member of the group said. “The guides told us it would be soon.”

“Wado—thank you!” said John. “She is not my sister, she is my friend.”

“My family found her beside the trail all alone. She stayed with us,” John explained. “My mother died and my father became very sick. We stayed behind to take care of him until he died. No other wagons came.”

Sally joined the young women. They found her a spot to lie down by the fire. John moved to be with the men.

About the story

This is an eight-chapter fiction story about two Indian children. It is based on the history of the Trail of Tears. The names of the children are made up. The story is not based on any real family. Watch for another chapter in next week’s newspaper.