

# The Elder's Thoughts

They said I would be changed in my body. I would move through the physical world in a different manner. I would hold myself in a different posture. I would have pains where there was no blood. I would react to sights, sounds, scents, movement and touch in a crazy way, as though I was back in the war.

They said I would be wounded in my thoughts. I would forget how to trust, and think that others were trying to harm me. I would see danger in the kindness and concern of my relatives and others. Most of all, I would not be able to think in a reasonable manner, and it would seem that everyone else was crazy. They told me that it would appear to me that I was alone and lost even in the midst of people, that there was no one else but me.

They warned me that it would be as though my emotions were locked up and that I would be cold in my heart and not remember the ways of caring for others. While I might give soft meat or blankets to the elders or food to the children, I would be unable to feel the goodness of these actions. I would do these things out of habit and not from caring. They predicted that I would be ruled by anger and that I might do harm to others without plan or intention.

They knew my spirit would be wounded. They said I would be lonely and that I would find my comfort in Family, Friends, Elders and Spirits - that I would feel deserted and abandoned by the same. I would be cut off from both the beauty and the pain. My dreams and visions would be dark, frightening and unending. My days and nights would be filled with searching and finding. I would be unable to find connections between the rest of Creation and myself. My isolation would be a way of dealing with my loneliness. That I would look forward to an early death. And, I would need cleansing and healing in all these things.

**Chief Joseph  
Nez Perce Tribe**

**30 September 1877, Bears Paw, Montana, USA**

**(On the eve of the Nez Perce Tribe's 5 day final battle with the U.S. Army)**