BEACON PRESS Boston, Massachusetts www.beacon.org

Beacon Press books are published under the auspices of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

@ 1996 by Percival Everett First Beacon Press edition published in 2003 Published by Beacon Press in 2024

All rights reserved Printed in the United States of America

27 26 25 24 8765432

This book is printed on acid-free paper that meets the uncoated paper ANSI/NISO specifications for permanence as revised in 1992.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Everett, Percival L. Watershed / Percival Everett .- 1st Beacon Press ed. p. cm. ISBN 0-8070-1627-5 (acid-free paper)

I. Indians of North America-Treaties-Fiction. 2. African American men-Fiction. 3. Water rights-Fiction. 4. Hydrologists-Fiction. 5. Colorado-Fiction. I. Title. PS3555.V34W36 2003 813'.54 dc21 2003003619

2 PERCIVAL EVERETT

against each other in this cold room. The hard look he had worn just hours ago has faded and, although his blue eyes show no fear, the continual licking of his lips betrays him. His partner, a shorter, wider man, is face down on the ground outside; his blood and last heat having melted the snow beneath him. He lies dead between two dead Indians, brothers, twins.

That I should feel put out or annoyed or even dismayed at hav­ ing to tell this story is absurd since I do want the story told and since I am the only one who can properly and accurately repro­ duce it. There is no one else in whom I place sufficient trust to attempt a fair representation of the events­ not that the events related would be anything less than factual, but that those chosen for exhibition would not cover the canvas with the stain or under­ painting of truth­ and of course truth necessarily exists only as perception and its subsequent recitation alters it. But I can tell it, my own incriminations aside.

The insignificant point of light on the ceiling seemed to dilate as I watched, and I wondered how it was that the perforation would not let in enough light to illuminate even a section of the poorly lit room, but could allow in enough water to ruin the entire house; how it had to be in some way dark to see the distending prick, but water would always find me in there. I slapped myself for pondering like an idiot and did the only thing that made any sense: I grabbed my vest, the box of flies I'd tied the previous night, and my sixty-year-old Wright and McGill bamboo rod that no one could believe I actually got wet, much less used, and went fishing.

. . .