

Path of Totality novel synopsis, Tysa Goodrich

In August of 1978, a wounded Vietnam Veteran—who's half Ojibwe Indian—has just passed his ten-year anniversary since returning from Vietnam. *Demarcation Day* is the day a soldier knows to the core, it's never gonna get any better. While holed up in a Southern Minnesota rest area on his way back to the reclusive hideout shared with four other Vets—and returning from a funeral—**John Goodsky** is mysteriously reunited with a childhood friend by means of a photograph traveling a beam of light and materializing on the front seat of her 1973 Dodge Dart as she heads down the same highway.

Cindy Mitchell (26)—already anxious about being on her first assignment as a photojournalist—sees the image in the photograph and crashes into the same rest area where John sits in his 1966 Chevy Impala. Their tumultuous reunion ensues with a meeting at the cabin where John had been brought to as a 12-yr-old orphan by his *invisible white father*—**Rev. Donald Kilmer**—who has now bequeathed the cabin to John, along with the package he received from Kilmer's lawyer at the cemetery.

The boy in the photograph is John. It is the first of eleven freshly-developed photographs that show up mysteriously inside Cindy's moving car. She and John try to piece together implausible memories from their seven days spent together as childhood best friends, while also coming to terms with who they are now—together as adults. The photographs come from Cindy's long lost camera, the one confiscated by her father in 1962 when he pulled the plug on the Mitchell family vacation after John and Cindy had run away to see **Emery Eden**'s last movie—upon hearing of the Hollywood movie star's death. The camera was never seen again.

Two unlikely women dwelling in a Montana otherworld are developing and teleporting the photographs: **Elizabeth Goodsky** (Beth) is John's Ojibwe mother, who died in 1960. Emery Eden (Emma) is the Hollywood movie star. The women had met in 1949 when Emery traveled by train from LA to Chicago for her first publicity tour. An extraordinary pact was made between them inside a Rockford movie house—that one day, they'd come together again in the land of mountains and tall pines. They kept in touch until Emery became too famous, her celebrityhood invading her personal life. In 1955, Emma mailed Beth one last letter, and with it, all of Beth's letters sent to Emma, plus a personal letter from **Albert Einstein** to Emery Eden.

Jim Bailey, a Paiute Medicine Man from Pyramid Lake, Nevada—where filming took place for Emery's last movie—is the go-between and deliverer of supplies to Beth and Emma's mystical ranch house. Jim's red, 1954 Dodge truck—which played a role in Emery's movie—is the supernatural truck that had whisked Emery's spirit away after her climactic scene. John and Cindy had witnessed the whole ordeal as children on the movie screen inside the Gem Theatre.

One day, beyond the Montana Otherworld's boundary, wild mustangs run through a newly formed vortex which also sucks in a Crow Indian girl named **Faith Medicine Horse**, and a *ghost horse* that Emma already knows—a casualty of a too-close, plane-guided aerial filming of galloping mustangs during the 1960 movie, *Lost in Reno*.

Path of Totality novel synopsis, Tysa Goodrich

Later in the story, other objects are teleported into moving vehicles. A Montana newspaper announcing the upcoming solar eclipse shows up in John's Chevy as he and his friend **Tripp Barkley**—also a Vietnam Veteran—are leaving their hideout for good, trailing Cindy who's driving an old bakery truck with all their belongings back to her Minneapolis apartment. They are coming from a funeral. One of the Vets, **Marty Lock**—John and Tripp's friend—committed suicide. The other two Vets have been arrested and sent to the VA Hospital's psych ward. A Montana postcard, previously sent to Emery Eden from **Marvin Butler**, the Pullman Porter who met Emery on the Super Chief train in 1949—and who later loses a son in Vietnam—materializes inside a VW Bug belonging to **Desi Butler**, Cindy's friend who happens to be Marvin Butler's niece.

The story weaves a tapestry of timelines and characters whose destinies converge during the two-minute-forty-nine-second *Moment of Totality*—the February 26, 1979 solar eclipse under a Montana sky. John has a vision of the future, enters the artist's architectural drawing of the Vietnam Memorial. The dead and missing take their place among the names on The Wall. Tripp and John talk with their deceased friend Marty about the names not on the wall. John sees his mother again in the tunnel of light. Marvin Butler and his wife see their son, brought to them by Emery Eden.

Epilogue: Photograph #12 backtracks to four days before the solar eclipse. A postman retrieves three picture postcards from a collection box. They'd been mailed by Jim the last time he and his red truck appeared in the story. Then, it jumps to June 1990 at the Vietnam-era Veteran Intertribal Powwow in Lame Deer, Montana. Faith and her grandfather, **Henry Red Hawk**, take John and Cindy to the newly reopened doorway of John's mother's sacred world at the edge of Crow land. Under a tarp near a dilapidated ranch house is Jim's red 1954 Dodge truck, its glove compartment containing two journals, and the last photograph from Cindy's camera: Beth and Emma sitting on their porch swing in front of the house, the way it had looked when they resided there.

Path of Totality – the line drawn by the moon's shadow
across the earth's surface during a total solar eclipse.

