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Title: [Path of the Half Moon](#)

Author(s): [Vince Bailey](#)

Genre(s): [Historical Fantasy](#), [Paranormal & Urban](#), [Supernatural](#), [Thriller/Suspense](#)

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After being charged with burglary and attempted arson, fifteen-year-old African American boxer, Curtis Jefferson, has been sent to Fort Grant, a juvenile detention area in Arizona. All of the creepy stories and whispered warnings about the former US military outpost used by the US cavalry to eliminate the Apache a hundred years ago pale in comparison to the truth Curtis finds there. Curtis faces racism from both inmates and guards, to make matters worse, he is also very aware of the presence of something not of this world. He quickly discovers (though he doesn't want to admit it) that he is sentient to the fort's bloody past atrocities. As the site where Pinal and Aravaipa Apaches were slaughtered, the fort seems to be a crossroads

where past and present meet. From mournful coyotes to hundreds of circling vultures, Curtis can't escape the strange visions and events inside and outside the fort. When he attracts the unwanted attention of Harvey Huish, an inmate with unusual abilities, Curtis creates a powerful enemy bent on revenge and humiliation.

A major theme of the novel is the power of language. It appears in numerous aspects of the plot from the Apache cursing the white man's cunning use of his complicated and deceitful tongue to Randy's appreciation of Howard Cosell's elevated vocabulary. The frame-story technique within the novel establishes the concept of storytelling and the influence of words. Curtis's story is narrated by Vince, Curtis's new friend, who relays it to the reader at the same time Curtis is telling him. As a natural-born storyteller, Curtis is the storyteller in town, and Vince sees the story as a treasure, a jewel, that Curtis has seen fit to share with him and thus sees himself as somehow honored in receiving the tale. Vince values the story as more than just words; it makes him more significant for having heard it. Though the story is unbelievable at times, Curtis does what all great storytellers do—he creates a suspension of disbelief, granting the listener the right to believe, to feel that “[a]ll things are possible,” an idea repeatedly given by various characters within the story. Through the telling, Curtis finds solace in giving his outlandish tale an authentic voice.

The theme of language also appears later in the character of Will Farnsworth, Harvey's tortured attorney. As the newest and most talented attorney in the firm that represents the Huish family, Will has been given the unachievable task of pacifying Harvey during his imprisonment at Fort Grant. Like many lawyers, Will uses words in “purposed profusion,” trying unsuccessfully to befriend Harvey and later intimidating him with language. He attempts to use his words as weapons, rather than tools for communication, a failure which leads to his enslavement to the abhorrent Harvey.

Another aspect of the novel is the blurring of time. The sinister fort itself is one part of this theme because it seems to exist in two time periods, its tragic past and its purposeful present. Curtis repeatedly sees images of days past that cross into his present-day 1960s. In fact, his first day at the fort, he witnesses a hanging from the Indian uprising days. Later, Curtis crosses this boundary himself and crosses paths with a murdered Apache boy. The Headmaster, Roy Whitcomb, known by all as the Lieutenant, never leaves the fort but is stuck it seems within Fort Grant's time loop, effectively becoming “the man in the maze,” the Pima tribal emblem. He is forever trapped within the maze's limitations and obstacles, unable to make the right choices and find his way into the next

plane, the gift of a better existence. The very retelling of Curtis's story symbolizes this blurring of time as well. During the entire story, Vince's watch remains fixed when Curtis begins his tale, time seemingly suspended along with his disbelief.

*Path of the Half Moon* won First Place in the CIBA 2018 Paranormal Awards for supernatural novels.

