

Characters in *There There*, by Tommy Orange

Main characters numbered in the order of first appearance as chapter titles

Minor plot spoilers below; ending spoiler in box at end

1. Tony Loneman: 21, affected by fetal alcohol syndrome ("the Drome"), lives with his beloved grandmother, Maxine. His mother is in jail and his father doesn't know he exists. Stumbled into selling drugs for Octavio.

Maxine: Tony's grandmother and guardian, provides emotional support to him.

2. Dene Oxendene: is interviewed for and receives a grant for a film project inherited from his uncle, Lucas, documenting Native life in Oakland. [The big, unmet need to document the lives of urban Indians was a major motivation for Tommy Orange to write this novel.] Attends the Big Oakland Powwow, setting up a storytelling booth.

Lucas: Dene's uncle, gives Dene the film project and his film equipment before dying of alcohol poisoning.

Norma: Dene's mother.

Rob: a white guy competing for the same grant as Dene, brings up the Gertrude Stein quote (and the novel's title)

3. Opal Viola Victoria Bear Shield: with her half-sister, Jacquie, raised by their mom in Oakland. In the 1970s, their mom brought them to join the Native occupation of Alcatraz. The movement failed, and the three left the island and moved in with Ronald, a relative in Oakland. Works as a letter carrier and is raising her three grand-nephews (Orvil, Lony, and Looter) in Oakland.

Vicky: Jacquie and Opal's mother. She is a hard-drinking woman who brings the girls to Alcatraz. Afterwards, develops cancer, refuses western medicine, and dies.

Ronald: Vicky's adoptive brother (p. 58), with whom Opal and Jacquie live for a time after their Vicky's death.

Rocky: Harvey's brother, whom Opal meets and befriends while living on Alcatraz.

Jamie Red Feather: Jacquie's second daughter, a heroin addict who commits suicide while her boys are still young.

4. Edwin Black: 30, suffers from obesity and constipation, got his Master's in Native American Literature and wanted to be a writer, but remains unemployed and lives with his mother. His mother is white and has not raised him in contact with his Native father, Harvey, so prior to contacting him on Facebook, Edwin has no particular sense of his Native identity. Starts a job at the Indian Center, where he meets Blue, on whom he has a crush. Edwin and Blue lead the Powwow planning and in charge of the prize money.

Karen: Edwin's mother (by Harvey) and Bill Davis' girlfriend.

5. Bill Davis: a Lakota, dating Karen, Edwin's mom. Bill and Edwin dislike each other greatly. Bill works janitorial at the Coliseum for Oakland Athletics. He's a Vietnam vet and came back a drug addict, later serving time in prison.

Harvey (see below)

6. Calvin Johnson: a young Native man who owes Octavio money after it was stolen from him in the parking lot on the way to an earlier powwow. He made a joke about stealing the prize money from the Big Oakland Powwow, which Octavio took seriously. His mother is bipolar.

Maggie: Calvin's sister, with whom he's currently living.

Sonny: Calvin's young niece.

Charles: Calvin's brother, has gotten in over his head in the drug trade and must now help Octavio come up with a large sum of money.

Carlos: Charles's friend, also in Octavio's robbery plot. The two boys are sometimes together called "Charlos."

7. Jacquie Red Feather: Opal's half-sister. As a teenager on Alcatraz, Jacquie was raped by another Native teenager, Harvey, and became pregnant with Blue. As an adult in Albuquerque, Jacquie struggles with alcoholism but is staying sober and works a steady job as a substance abuse counselor. Her second daughter, Jamie, committed suicide and left behind three young boys, Orvil, Lony, and Looter. For most of their life, Jacquie has been unable to have a relationship with the boys, so her stepsister, Opal, takes care of them. Jacquie comes back to Oakland and attends the Powwow to meet her three grandsons.

Jamie: Jacquie Red Feather's deceased daughter, an addict who committed suicide many years ago. Jamie was the mother of Orvil, Lony, and Looter, and gave them their distinctively spelled names.

8. Orvil Red Feather: Jacquie's grandson and Opal's great-nephew. He loves to dance in regalia to the powwow drums, where he feels like he belongs. He pulls mysterious spider legs out of his leg. Attends the Big Oakland Powwow to dance in full regalia.

Lony (rhymes with "pony") **Red Feather:** one of the three Red Feather brothers, along with Orvil and Looter.

Looter Red Feather: one of the three Red Feather brothers, along with Orvil and Lony.

Harvey: as a teenager, brought by his father to the Alcatraz occupation. There, Harvey drunkenly raped Jacquie, fathering Blue. Later in life, he has a one-night stand with Karen and fathers Edwin. He becomes sober and leads Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. At an AA meeting in Albuquerque, by chance he meets Jacquie again and convinces her to come back with him for the Big Oakland Powwow. At the Powwow, he reunites with his son, Edwin.

9. Octavio Gomez: the mastermind behind the plan to rob the Big Oakland Powwow. Runs a drug ring in Oakland that Tony and Calvin have both been involved in. A large, threatening, but sometimes affectionate character.

Sixto: Octavio's uncle, who is responsible for the deaths of Octavio's mother, Sylvia, and brother when all three of them are in a car accident that only he survives.

Fina (Josefina): Octavio's grandmother. She is a kind and caring half-Native woman who believes in the power of nontraditional medicine and ritual.

Manny: one of Octavio's cousins. He injures his father in a fight after witnessing his abuse of his mother, after which his father is kicked out of the home; dies from a bullet wound over a drug theft in their front yard.

10. Daniel Gonzalez: Manny's younger brother, writes to Manny's old Gmail account to keep his memory alive. Gets involved in an online community where he learns to code; gets a 3D printer and successfully makes several guns [semiautomatic even, which seems unlikely for a 3D newbie]. Also bought and flies a drone into the Coliseum.

11. Blue (formerly "Crystal"): The child of Jacquie Red Feather and Harvey, after he raped her on Alcatraz. Adopted at birth by a wealthy white family in Moraga, grew up knowing she was Native American. Married Paul but left him when he became abusive. Returned to Oakland, where Edwin became her intern. They organize the Big Oakland Powwow.

Paul: Blue's abusive ex-husband. He was her boss in Oklahoma and they got married through the Native American Church. He turned violent after his father died. Blue narrowly escapes him and takes a bus to Oakland.

Geraldine - One of Blue's friends in Oklahoma, helps her get to the bus station.

Hector - Geraldine's brother and one of Paul's friends, in the military.

12. Thomas Frank: a young man who works as a janitor at the Indian Center. Struggles with alcoholism and is fired from his job shortly before the Big Oakland Powwow. Is a talented drummer and is asked to join the drum circle at the powwow. Parents are divorced; mother white and Pentecostal, father is Indian. Sisters are Delonna and Christine. Is inspired by the artist James Hampton.

Bobby Big Medicine - The kindly leader of a Native drumming group in Oakland, more or less the only wholly-positive adult male figure in the novel.

ENDING SPOILERS

The robbery plotters: Octavio, Calvin, Tony (in regalia), Charles, Carlos; Daniel (offsite with drone; oddly, we don't get his drone-view narration of the shootout and his drone attacking Carlos)--the armorer, becomes the only survivor

Charles double crosses and sticks up Octavio (who has the \$); Octavio shoots Charles, who shoots back. Carlos also shoots Octavio. Carlos hit by drone. Carlos shot by ? Calvin shoots ? and is shot by ?. Tony shot by Charles. Tony tackles and shoots Charles with Charles' gun.

Other GSW victims: Dene, Orvil, Thomas, Bill, Edwin, probably others; at least 10 victims total, not clear who lives and who dies