

Katie did not feel the cold as she turned and ran to the lodge. Her heart jumped into her throat at the sound of a familiar deep voice bidding her to enter when she scratched at the flap. Flinging the hide aside, she rushed inside, and stopped. For an endless moment all she could do was look at him, feeding her starved heart with the sight of him.

Black Moon looked up from the bowstring he was waxing, an expression of disbelief on his face. A paralyzing silence filled the lodge as they looked at one another. After what seemed like an eternity, he laid the bow aside and rose. The fire glowed on the expanse of his bare chest, flickering around the edges of the scar on his chest just beneath his right shoulder, and illuminating the length of each muscular thigh.

Katie could scarcely breathe. She was seized by a wild yearning to touch him, to run her hands over the familiar flesh and twine her fingers in his long, dark hair, but all she could do was stand there and breathe in the essence of him from across the fire. She dared not move, for if this was a dream, she never wanted to awaken.

At last the figure she ached for moved. He took a step toward her. There was a half-smile on his handsome face.

And then, a movement from a corner of the lodge caught her attention. A young woman was sitting in the corner with Black Moon's shirt in her lap. She came to stand beside him, placing a possessive hand on his arm.

The blood drained from Katie's face as sudden comprehension split her brain. Black Moon was living with another woman. Anguish ripped through her, and the joy that flooded her being upon seeing him vanished like smoke from a dying fire.

He came forward, standing so close she could see the tiny lines etched around the corners of his eyes. Reaching out, he caught her hand in his.

"Katie."

The sound of her name forced a tortured groan from her. Tearing her hand away, she took a step backwards. Shaking with sorrow, fury, grief and betrayal all at once, there was nothing to do but leave as quickly as she could. Stumbling to the entrance, she jerked the flap aside and ran out.

His voice carried out into the frozen air behind her. "Katie! Do not run away from me!"

She ran to her pony and jumped astride its back. With a savage kick, she took off at a gallop, not knowing where she was running to, only what she was running from.