

A KNIFE IN THE MIND: The Tragedy Of MAKONA Shaman Of Kawdor**BY Craig Strete**

CHAPTER ONE

She had the soft pale skin of a cave lizard that never sees the sun.

Her eye saw not the high desert, but into the great heart of the lost places. Her chant rose into the air like a thrown spear.

She rode the clouds in a wave of ghostfire. Heat lightning was her breath, flame was her life. Her words were a dance in the fire of time.

"Beings! Arise! Come to me from the time of the ancients. Let us bonded be, three unkindly killing Kachina's! I summon you to me."

Her chant rose higher in the burned air where she lived.

"I feel within a most wondrous spell. A blight! A plague! Come weave the rainbow skin of snakes into a human catching net! Intrigue with me!" It was no human tongue that moved here.

A lightning bolt clove the sky and hurled its fiery arrow into the flat land of the mesas and in the spot where it struck, a shadowy blue being arose.

It was Sky Thunder Kachina.

Her voice rang above the mesas, "Who dares call Sky Thunder Kachina from her high nest of human bones! I am set loose upon this land, with thunder in my mouth and lightning in my hand!"

A dark cloud rode down toward the earth, following the jagged path of the lightning. It roiled across the surface of the mesa with a hideous roar of wind and night. A black hued thing rose

where the wind touched down.

It was Black Wind Kachina.

"What voice awoke Black Wind Kachina? Am I called alive to tear souls out with my ice edged breath? I am set loose upon this land, with winter in my mouth, and the cold of death in my hand!"

"I see a sister of the elements," said Sky Thunder Kachina. "Who invokes us? The heavens and earth are our heart, the rising sun is our mouth. Who calls us, who names us the terrible sisters, and in the naming, captures us on this wind?"

A ball of ghostfire, rode the edges of the sky, dipped down, crashed into the earth, a fiery meteor burning the night sky. In the searing heat of its blast, from the heart of red hot flame, a red thing arose and joined its sisters. It was Fire Kachina. "I called us here. It was I who lit the funeral pyre that awakened the Kachina of Fire! I am the great killing heat of the world! We are all set loose upon the land, with a human being in our mouth, his life in our hand."

"What man?" asked Black Wind.

"Makona, he who has the rain of prophecy scattering his human seeds, Makona who is but a man but dreams to scale the sky," said Fire Kachina. "to a height only spirits are destined to reach."

"Is he among us? I see him not!" said Black Wind.

"He is ever visible. The smoke of Makona's fires do not rise up straight to the heavens but are thrown upon the ground and chased by all the winds," answered Fire Kachina.

Sky Thunder looked with her all seeing eyes. "I see that man. He is in that place where he makes his dwellings, where his name has gone far and he thinks it will not die. He is in that place where he wants to enthrone himself, and make himself absolute master of the land. But the land

can not belong to him. It came from us as certainly as the grass."

"But," cautioned Sky Thunder. "Makona's heart is not turned in our direction. His ears are not open to our words. He takes the first steps on a journey that does not bring him to us." Her eyes saw more and she spoke of what she alone could see.

"But wait! He heads one way but good and evil can not live in the same heart. I see him! He is turned around and comes to us! Makona carries his life on his fingernails."

Sky Thunder Kachina spoke and sparks danced upon her tongue. "Where can Makona go that we will not follow him. Where can he make his home that we will not find it? When we walk in all worlds, and have dark dominion?"

"We go back into the dark heart of our strength and magic, and await his coming. In which world shall we three meet again, in sky thunder, lightning or in rain?" asked Fire Kachina.

Black Wind Kachina roiled the dust at her feet when she spoke. "In rain world, to wash the blood away and then commotion done to meet our prey, the man men call Makona!"

Sky Thunder Kachina glowed like a banked fire. Her mouth formed the hideous words. "And when is all this darkness to be done? When, my sisters, when?"

Burning bright, Fire Kachina said, "In the time when the sun walks upon the ground, in deepest night. My bones are so woven to that, I but ache to burn."

The day became night as they so darkly wished it.

Sky Thunder Kachina studied the vast vault of night above her and proclaimed, "We are called from rain world. Hear you not the voice, nightwalkers? I go, Bonepicker!"

Black Wind Kachina danced with dark obedience, exhorting, "The eater of light calls! We are asked to look at the night and see things!"

Fire Kachina cried tears of consenting fire, "Such things we see! Evils of nature of every kind

that come screaming not from diseased wombs but from the fevered mind!"

Sky Thunder Kachina paused for her mind was forever a storm. "Sisters it is set in lasting stone, yet I doubt. What is this man, this pretender Makona that we should seize upon him?"

Fire Kachina shook her head like a animal worrying her prey. "He is such a man and not so much a man. He dares much and has learned little."

"Is what must happen something Makona has earned?" asked Black Wind Kachina.

"Strives for. Yearns for. Was born to do. Oh the dark seed was planted early! Such as Makona is, so shall he be promised much or undone!" cried Fire Kachina. "Hang upon my word dark sisters, as I have burned so shall he burn! But come, day is gone. Night gathers its hunting teeth. Our names go into the human world! We are the Kachinas of Black Wind, Sky Thunder and Fire! We are fled!

Chant echoing, voices hideous in its unearthly clamor, the words came as if spoken by one throat with three tongues. "Makona's light is black and black is light. We chant a medicine circle web of his day and night."

CHAPTER TWO

Sky He Sees the Great Chief of the Pueblos sat uneasy under the crowded skies. His heart was greatly troubled and the weight of his people seemed to bend him in the wind. His council gathered about him, to offer comfort or advice but he scarce glanced at them. The great battle had been fought, it's outcome uncertain and now about him began to gather the remnants of that great human storm.

"Where are my war chiefs?" The question hung in the air like a knife. No answer came back

to him. Sky He Sees's heart sank. He rose to his full height and strode with purposeful steps through his vast war camp in the Southwestern desert. He saw comfort in no face.

"I do not like this quietness, this storm that traveled in a path unknown to me," His warrior council was silent around him, as if afraid of his anger. No one wished to be first to be the bearer of bad news.

There was a disturbance at the Western end of the war camp and Sky He Sees turned and moved in that direction. He saw his oldest son Falcon, a great warrior in his own right and leader of a proud and mighty clan. Next to him stood his younger son, stouthearted Diving Bird, himself battle-proved and like Falcon, a son who served Great Chief Sky He Sees well. A young boy lay between them, young in years but yet a warrior blood-soaked and dying.

From other parts of the camp a steady stream of warriors of no rank began gathering at Sky He Sees's back. The whole camp was up and moving, as if this was the moment they all awaited.

Great Chief Sky He Sees took his place before them. His voice challenged them, "Who lies before me? My sorrow would know his name? Can he speak as well as his wounds speak, of the battle between our Pueblo and our ancient enemies?"

There was harsh condemnation in eyes and voice when Sky He Sees's first born son Falcon spoke. "Father if treason is a name, it is his in this world. Here lies a boy coward who fled the battle! A would be man of our Pueblo who brings shame on war chief Makona by his flight!"

Falcon bent and seized the dying boy's shoulder roughly and shook him savagely. He raged, "Rouse yourself. My father, Great Chief Sky He Sees asks your knowledge of the battle."

Sky He Sees asked solemnly. "What did you see that made your legs dominant over your heart?"

The dying boy opened his eyes, blood on his lips. "I die. Have mercy. I beg you!"

"I have none for a coward," said Sky He Sees with utmost contempt. "Speak of the battle. You have no other use to us."

The dying boy warrior sobbed. "There is an arrow in my back, Have pity, pluck it out!"

Falcon lifted the boy's head by his hair. "My father would sooner put another arrow in it! Talk coward! We would know which way the wind?"

A trace of anger passed across the wounded boy's face and he spoke, "Doubtful in outcome, the battle stood."

"Yes. We know that. Go on. You've said nothing of worth yet," chided Falcon. "Give us all you words, if truthful. You owe much to pay back all you've betrayed."

The young warrior licked his lips and looked at the faces hovering over him. He saw no pity there. He summoned his strength and spoke. "Each tribe was like two exhausted swimmers, holding to each other in panic and making the river deeper in their desperation to swim it."

"Who is it you say drowned then, us or our enemies?"

"We were the ones upon whom the water closed over our heads."

"How did it come to pass?" asked Sky He Sees, looking sorely troubled.

"The merciless Mag-Way-Ya, Great Chief of our ancient enemies, born to an evil that swarms around him, from the Pueblos of the West was unsuspectedly reinforced with warriors, some untested in battle but many more by experience blooded."

Great Chief Sky He Sees seemed full of sorrow, but for what he mourned, it was not clear. He regarded the fallen boy who had failed him and Makona. His voice was almost a gentle reproach. "For what reason did you flee?"

The boy licked his lips and spoke, "I saw the battle lost and my life lost if my eyes saw true."

"To fear for one's own pitiful life is too small a thing to spur flight!" said Falcon with

contempt. "Was that all that pricked you into treachery?"

"My spirit seemed to leave me, and I followed it away. Perhaps I never had hands shaped for battle hate." The dying boy turned and looked entreatingly at Sky He Sees. "Great Chief is there mercy for one who could not bring himself to kill? I have no defense for myself."

"If there were such a world where all gentle spirits lived and hate found no door to the human house, then you would have my hand for you and not against you. Only the spirits know of such a world," Sky He Sees seemed disheartened. "It is not my place to punish you. It is Makona that owns your treachery."

Falcon shook his head ruefully. "Makona is too sudden in his justice. Better to let him bleed slowly, and in full sun heat, die slow and mean."

Sky He Sees's anger flashed like a knife. "This was a human being! A boy who could not be a man. If you would in some far day hope to be Great Chief, then Falcon remember that all men fail. Even Great Chiefs. To hate them for it, is a child's meanness."

Falcon protested, "He has done us a great wrong! He should die a mean death!"

"Hate the failing, not the man or the boy," said Great Chief Sky He Sees with the patience of a father whose will was being tested.

The dying boy raised his hand beseechingly, "Help me Great Chief!"

"I can not," said Sky He Sees with finality. "Even broken to pieces as you are, I give you back to Makona. You are his shame, and he carries the right to punish you for bringing it on his house."

The dying boy closed his eyes. Falcon let go of his hair suddenly and he flopped back against the sand like a man with a broken neck. He seemed that he had died then, but his eyes opened, full of pain, but still alive. He spoke as if each word cost him, "I understand. But if my wounds

sing death songs, I may not live to see his justice. I pray that it is so."

Sky He Sees looked off into the distance, seeing things that might be horrors. His concern for the nation was a great ache. "Makona has strengths above this world. His justice may go beyond death. But what of the battle? Is it lost as our coward has said?" This last he directed to Falcon.

Falcon looked sore troubled but not downcast. His hands trembled when he answered his father. "It is true that the spirits seem to smile on Mag-Way-Ya. The first tides of battle follow the wind his arrows ride. Our defeat seems painted on the sands. This I have seen myself and know in my mind to be true."

The dying boy at their feet shifted in the sand, trying to move so that the arrow in his back did not so constantly prick him. He managed to turn half way round on his side. Blood dripped from the shaft of the arrow. He spoke again although now he had not the strength to raise his head, to meet their eyes with his own. "I know more. I know what came upon us from where the black wind blows and the doom of inhuman thunder breaks! Give me but a taste of water, and I will tell all I know... while I still breathe."

Sky He Sees signaled with his hand and a warrior came forward with a ladle of water and put it to the boy's lips. The wounded one drank greedily. From the flush of color in his face, it seemed to revive him a bit. He lifted his head until he could see Great Chief Sky He Sees's face. In a voice scarce above a whisper, the boy said. "From the fire where comfort should come, disaster burns our Pueblo! Listen Great Chief! Our bravest warriors, carrying the heart of the Pueblo, met Mag-Way-Ya's untested warriors and killed many and put to flight the rest. Our warriors hard pursued them until their breath was gone."

Sky He Sees bent down to more clearly hear the words.

"Then Mag-Way-Ya closed the trap around us with seasoned men twice our

number and began a new attack," The man paused to take a rasping breath before he went on. "It was then I fled, for all seemed lost."

Sky He Sees touched the boy's arm compassionately. "Death will cleanse you of this," He turned his head and stared at Falcon. He addressed his son, "How did my war leaders Makona and Builds Fire take this? Did the fear seize them as it has taken hold of this coward's throat?"

Falcon shook his head, "If eagles fear rabbits, then fear was in them. To say the truth, for every blow given, they gave back two. This much is known and reported back to us but how they prevailed or fell, we know not. Only that men say they fought like men who could not die. They birthed a river of blood and washed themselves in it."

Great Chief Sky He Sees suffered the pangs of death itself as he shaped the unpromising words. "I see the ruin. Our enemy, twice our number, entered combat on a fresh first wind while we were made to fight on our second. Even bravery can not prevail, when so surprised."

With almost grudging recognition, Falcon said, "Cast fear aside Sky He Sees."

"Why should I when this man has all omens for our ruin?"

"Because I have heard rumors as compelling as this man's doubts. More sure and swift and better to ear and heart."

"Tell me the rumors."

"As black as the world looked for our nation, they say there rose out of certain ruin, brave Makona. He flew against what the stars spun for us. With his brandished spear, he carved out his name on the faces of our enemy. Warriors that thought themselves defeated, stood again to follow him. Makona was a fire that sent the dead up to the sky like smoke."

"Is it true?" Sky He Sees's voice was full of hope and wonder.

Falcon chose his words carefully. "Makona was said to be like the heart of courage itself.

With such spirit, might not Makona have won out over our enemies?"

Sky He Sees exulted. "A fire hearted man! Such men are few that walk this earth!"

Falcon spoke again with almost unbecoming reluctance. As if he wished the words he used to speak of another, were words he could say of himself. "Makona had his day. A day like no other. So it was told to me. But by your command I was not there to witness it. I stood guard in the hills of the West against an attack that came so weak I soon vanquished it. For it was but a feint to draw our strength away. I was shown little more than the feathers of the arrow but Makona was sent the shaft."

"Still I am proud of your day in the battle. You killed all you met and kept your head about you. You have done much to please me my son," Sky He Sees's voice carried strong felt pride.

"Understand father, I was not there to see it but I have it in the words of others," cautioned Falcon. "Rumors are not certainties."

"Only rumors?"

"More truthful than that. But not the final word. Such as would come from Makona himself but I take it to be true."

"My son, what say they of Makona?" Sky He Sees's eagerness to know was immense.

Falcon spoke, "It is difficult to imagine a man could stand so large in this world and still be in his skin. Makona walked across the mountain tops and turned the battle against Mag-Way-Ya."

"To withstand would be enough to make my heart glad. But to prevail would make it soar. Dare I hope for that much?" asked Sky He Sees.

"Perhaps as much for they say Makona tore into Mag-Way-Ya and impaled his bone head on his spear!"

"But is the battle completely won?"

"For that I have no answer. But Mag-Way-Ya is dead. The head of the snake is cut off. Does not the body die with it?" offered Falcon.

Sky He Sees's joy seemed to seize the world around him. "We have not seen such a man in this world since the Legend Days! Makona has the heart of the First Ancestor!"

The war camp burst into a tumult of shouting and uproar, sparked by Falcon's words that the enemy leader had met his death at Makona's hands. A great tidal wave of sound swept across the blazing desert like a flash flood, sudden and terrible.

The great noise roused the dying boy whose wounds had put him in a near faint. His lips were cracked, his piteous voice an effort, "I am dying. My wounds cry for help!"

Sky He Sees regarded him without rancor. "No. They cry out for justice. You are beyond help. By my order, send him, alive or dead, to await Makona's justice."

Diving Bird and another warrior seized hold of the dying boy and gently lifted him off the ground. A woman came forth with two long poles with woven deerskin stretched between them. Two well-muscled warriors from Makona's clan came forward and took hold of the poles as Diving Bird and the man who held the dying boy warrior's feet, gently shifted him onto the makeshift litter.

"Carry him gently to Makona's reckoning. He will find no kindness at his destination," said Great Chief Sky He Sees.

As they began to walk away with the dying warrior, Falcon spat softly in the dust.

"You would rather see him dead now by our hand?" asked Sky He Sees.

"You know I would and gladly lend the hand!" said Falcon with thwarted anger.

"Bringing death is no gift. This burden's weight belongs to Makona. It is not an answer for what is wrong with the world. We forever chase our destiny, to bring the world in accord with

what we hope or dream for, but it runs ever ahead of us. We catch the cure but not the disease."

"The words of the Great Chief confuse me," said Falcon sullenly. "I know not what I have done to earn your disapproval."

Sky He Sees lifted his arms, and the crowd of warriors around him fell silent. In a voice loud enough to carry through the camp, Great Chief Sky He Sees announced.

"Word is brought to me! Great Chief Mag-Way-Ya, who held his spear to the heart of our nation, IS DEAD! Killed at the hands of our beloved Makona!"

A surging tidal wave of triumph and celebration roared from every warrior's throat. The warcamp writhed in heart bursting tumult and frenzied joy.

Sky He Sees did not surrender to the feelings that moved through his people. He knew things that were beyond their immediate understanding. He did not begrudge them this moment of high exultation in triumphing over an enemy. This glorious riot of feeling was right and just but what moved them to cheer, moved him almost to weep.

Great Chief Sky He Sees turned to the cheering mobs of people that surrounded him. He raised his arms. The people seeing him, fell silent as if something had stolen their tongues.

"The battle promises to be won! If it is true, and it is our utmost wish, then I beg you all, think of the dead," said Great Chief Sky He Sees like a gentle father of the nation. "Seek restful shade. Prepare to mourn and grieve. Our children will have lost some of their fathers."

The people silently filed away. Great Chief Sky He Sees turned his back on them. His eyes saw the angry eyes of Falcon. Falcon still bridled under the lash of his father's harsh reproach.

"You say my words confuse you Falcon? Good! My reckless young bear, it is my purpose to confuse you," said Sky He Sees.

"Why?"

"You can not be a Great Chief until you are ready to admit there are things in the world you do not understand and may never understand," said Sky He Sees. "It is a lesson I myself have learned all too well."

Falcon nodded. He gave no sign that this wisdom was appreciated.

A small boy approached and stood uncertainly in front of Sky He Sees.

Sky He Sees smiled reassuringly, "What news from my keen eyed watcher in the rocks above?"

"A runner crosses the desert, making for our camp," said the boy, shy in the presence of the Great Chief. "He is in a great hurry."

"He comes from which direction?" asked Sky He Sees.

"From the camp of Makona. He bears on his back the clan robe of Makona."

"Good. You have done well," said Sky He Sees. "Does he run like a man being chased by something?"

"My eyes can't see that," said the boy quietly. "He comes. Ask him yourself."

A hurtling figure broke through the outer edge of the camp and bore down on them. The man whose name was Lonewolf ran with everything he had in him, legs flashing, arms pumping, eyes wild with the effort. He had a look of madness to his face. He seemed haunted, shadows lurking in his eyes that seemed to cover him in a funeral blanket of hideous hue.

Did it spring from the well of pain his body tapped in the run or because he had seen things better left unseen. There was a great curiosity in Sky He Sees and Falcon to know.

Lonewolf slowed to a walk in the presence of the Great Chief. The change in stride made him stumble and almost fall. His legs seemed to tremble. His sides heaved, his breath was ragged and his body was soaked with sweat and dried blood. Lonewolf had a small cut from the top of his

forehead down to his left eye. It had scabbed over but the force of his great exertion had made it bleed again.

"I--Lonewolf-- come from the camp of Makona!" gasped the runner, barely able to get out the words.

Falcon recoiled. Lonewolf was a clan brother and a friend of his youth with a face he knew as well as his own. Yet now there was a passing strangeness to his features that made him seem unlike himself.

Sky He Sees said with a teasing smile, "The last time I saw one of my messengers run like that, he was trying to outrun an arrow."

"Did he succeed?" gasped Lonewolf, bending over to make breathing easier.

"He would have if he could run like you," said Sky He Sees. He motioned to have water brought to Lonewolf.

"What moves you to me? Fear?" said Sky He Sees, commanding an answer.

"Not fear but great news! Makona has sent me to bring word."

Falcon stared at the pain wracked body of Lonewolf with great alarm. "Lonewolf! What strangeness travels in your eyes? You seem changed by unspoken things, moved and harried by all you carry inside you."

Lonewolf tried to stand up and control his breathing. He gave the ritual greeting of messengers. "Great Spirit live within the Chief!"

Sky He Sees regarded him kindly. "Sit in my presence. Rest and speak."

So tired was Lonewolf, that he did not argue though it was not proper to sit in Great Chief Sky He Sees's presence. He sank to the ground gratefully.

"Where do you come from?" asked Sky He Sees.

"From the final battle, where our enemies' spears impaled the sky and rained death on our people."

"With hearts of curious fire, we await the news you bring," said Sky He Sees. "Speak when you find the breath."

Lonewolf tried to compose himself, to still his heaving chest. "Mag-Way-Ya with overwhelming numbers, met us in battle. Fighting at his side was the disloyal traitor, A-wis, Shaman of Kawdor who has turned against his own Pueblo."

Sky He Sees exclaimed, "Treachery is all around us!"

Falcon could not contain himself. "But how did it go? We die for an answer?"

Taking a deep breath, Lonewolf began, "The thunder of war shook the four directions. So great was the battle, the Kachinas of the natural world seemed to burn in the sky. We met the enemy, spear thrust for spear thrust, blood for blood. Now the end has come. Was it the bravery of Builds Fire and Makona or the spirits of war smiling on us with their favor, that made our medicine stronger? All these things I do not know, but victory came to us!"

Sky He Sees spread his arms in an embrace that seemed to touch the whole world. "The heart of Sky He Sees soars with great happiness!"

Falcon asked, "And what of our enemy Mag-Way-Ya? How is he gone from the world he had hoped to rule?"

"Mag-Way-Ya has taken his name out of the world. His son holds his father's bones and begs for peace. And so completely have we won, that we will not allow burial of his men until his people pay, at The Pueblo of Dead Ancestors, ten thousand belts of wampum to the kin of our dead clan brothers. Makona has proclaimed it."

Sky He Sees proclaimed, "The nation rise on new wings! And what of the Shaman of

Kawdor, whose knife is in the back of the nation! Does he live?"

Lonewolf nodded, "He lives."

Sky He Sees shook a fist at the sky, "No more! His betrayal will die with him! Go pronounce the Shaman of Kawdor's immediate death and with his former clan sign so name Makona."

"Is the Shaman of Kawdor free? Has he escaped to the camps of our enemies?"

Lonewolf smiled, "He lives but was taken wounded in battle. Women guard him who have lost husbands in the battle. They are not overkind to him in their care."

"Take him to the heart of the great desert where even the wind dies. If he had the vision for it, he would pluck out his eyes so he would not see death come. To so advise him is the only mercy I can show."

"What shall be the manner of his death?" asked Falcon. "He who was once a great hearted man, beloved by many."

"The greater the treachery then. It troubles me so, I wish not to know the manner. I leave it to your devising."

Falcon said, "I will see that it is long and slow and without honor. If he thirsts, I give him his own blood to drink! If he hungers, I offer him his own flesh!"

Sky He Sees turned his eyes away. "I once held my hand out to him and gave him my kindly love. The Shaman of Kawdor was my clan brother."

"And he held out to you a knife with which to cut our children's throats," said Falcon with anger.

"When I was young, I had such fire Falcon. But it burned me as it will burn you. Remember the faces of your children then if that is what drives your hand. Kill him kindly if you can. Kill him, that is all I ask. Let your own dark heart command the manner of it."

Falcon began to move away from Sky He Sees. "I will see it done."

"Makona must know at once of his new honors. I must look on his face," further commanded Great Chief Sky He Sees.

Lonewolf rose to his feet, eyeing the distances he had traveled. "I'll take the word to him."

Sky He Sees proclaimed, "Let he who was Shaman of Kawdor say with his last breath Sky He Sees is a man-eating bird."

"One is risen and one has fallen. Nature seeks a balance," said Falcon.

"All that he had, Makona has, the first of many things I owe him," said the Great Chief.

"But is what you give what Makona wants?" wondered Falcon as he made ready to leave.

"A man who has done so much for the nation should never be doubted!" said Sky He Sees.

"Or always," muttered Falcon under his breath for there was a touch of envy in him at the new ascendancy of Makona.

CHAPTER THREE

Blood drenched the sands. Flies crawled across the faces of the dead. The wind seemed to echo the screams of the dying. Three dark figures fell from the sky and then walked through the land.

Sky Thunder Kachina looked upon the scene of death with joy. "What joy it is to walk mid these sacks of dusty meat sprawled bonelessly all about, and leaking their lives into pitiless sand!" She turned to look at Black Wind. "Where have you been Black Wind Kachina? Where there is so much blood spilt by men at rage, I would think you'd be here, opened mouth to drink it in?"

Black Wind Kachina wrapped her dark robes about her and said, "Killing lizards."

Fire Kachina exhaled smoke, "Sister Sky Kachina, where do you come from?"

Sky Thunder Kachina shrieked with delight. Her yellow teeth flashed as she said, "A gourd dancer's two-hearted woman had pinion nuts in her lap and tasted and tasted and tasted. 'Give me,' I asked. 'Be gone, Spirit Dweller,' the woman of Makona cried. Her husband had gone to trade his name with a distant Pueblo for war's sake but I in a sandstorm would sooner sail. And in the form of a tail-less snake, I do, I do and I do."

Black Wind Kachina stroked the side of her face with her claws. "Oh my pretty ones, I'll give you a dark rainless wind as cold as an ambitious woman's heart."

Sky Thunder Kachina embraced her sister, "You are killing kind."

Fire Kachina held out her arms, bestowing a blessing. "And I another, give you a windless rain, the river from a dark woman's eyes."

Sky Thunder Kachina said, "I myself hold all Makona's other elements. Ruin, fire and rain. The very Pueblos that he knows. All the mercy that his marriage shows. On the wind-tellers hand, I'll drain him dry as desert noon. Sleep shall neither night nor day hang upon his eyelid. Makona shall you live a man accursed? And travel a weary week, nine times nine. Shall you dwindle, shriek and pine? Though your pathless way cannot be lost yet it shall be sandstorm-tossed."

She offered them her hand clenched around some object hard for the eye to make out.

"Look what I have!"

Black Wind Kachina clapped her hands with glee, "Show me! Show me!"

Sky Thunder Kachina boasted, "Here I have a bloody traveler's thumb bent as Pueblo-ward he

did come! They will say of Makona, his country is small in all directions!"

The sound of war drums came from the distance.

Fire Kachina hissed, "War's breath in a drum! Our conquest, Makona does come."

Sky Thunder Kachina chanted. "We live nowhere, materialize everywhere, riotously despoil and vanish in smoke and air but ever, ever catch our human prey, unaware."

The dark sisters stood hand in hand, awaiting Makona, the hoped for traveler. As one they whispered like a hideous wind sloughing over the battleground. "The wayward Kachinas, hand in hand, swift travelers of a desert changed once sea, thus do go about, three times three. Three times to yours and three times to ours, and three again, to make up nine. In lying peace, our evils in our omens align and darkly cast our prophecies design."

CHAPTER FOUR

Makona marched over the dark and bloody ground of his great triumph. Makona's broad shoulders were a fortune in war strength, a promise that he could move a spear with surpassing effect.

Tall and lean, with the swift hunger in his eyes of a grey wolf, Makona seemed a forever-striving spirit in the shape of a man. Darkness and hard edges shaped his face till it seemed rough-hewn from stone. He seemed a man who could live outside nature, did he so conspire.

There was a ferocity in his gleaming white teeth and in his glistening black eyes. Men forever saw great things in him and they could see just those shadings and hints of promise now as he stood unbowed on the field of battle. There was a fire kindled in Makona so bright, it had the effect of darkness.

Builds Fire, a man also carved to battle greatness, with quick hands wise in the use of war's instruments, walked wearily beside him. Their faces were bruised and sullen, as each lived again something that ate at their hearts. The heat of the desert sun blazed down on them, yet they felt cold.

Makona waved for them to stop. "After so much blood and battle, this stillness oppresses me, as if the world were dead."

Builds Fire looked up at the sky. "I feel as though I have killed the world and the world has killed me. At least the dead do not feel as we do."

"And how do we feel, my good Builds Fire?"

"If at a feast, too sore tongued to eat."

"Feasting is for vultures. We have eaten so much we may never have to eat again," said Makona "Yet once our beaks are bloodied, do we not forever want the taste of it again. Good Builds Fire, a sadness follows me in my steps and I can not outrun it."

Builds Fire put his arm on Makona's shoulders. "You must not let it overtake you. The Pueblo has need of you, in the days to come."

"I have no need of me, so weary am I, of myself. But it does no good to dwell on it," Makona shaded his eyes from the sun and looked off into the distance. "How far do they say it is to our war camp?"

Builds Fire looking in another direction exclaimed, "I see travelers from the house of the Sun! Who are those beings that come among us? Have we journeyed to such a state a place where spirits dwell? See how they appear. They have the look of Kachinas, cursed and blessed, dark in their own night, withered and wild, shaped like things that only dream of being human!"

Makona turned and eyed the strange sere figures with awe and alarm. "They are not natural

inhabitants of earth and yet they travel on it. All men know they do not journey among us for human reasons."

Builds Fire whispered, "Should we speak to them? Kachinas should appear to medicine men who hold them holy and know their ways. We are simple warriors, not studied priests with their sacred names on our tongues. Why do they appear to us? We have not deserved this vision!"

"We could move to avoid them but for beings so old they move swift. Our retreat is cut off."

The three Kachinas stood side by side in front of Makona and Builds Fire, blocking their path.

Makona addressed them, "Speak Kachinas, if you can. What are you?"

Sky Thunder Kachina chanted first. "All hail, Makona! Hail to your heart, Shaman of Gami-Mis!"

Black Wind Kachina went on, "All hail, Makona. Hail to your head, Shaman of Kawdor!"

Fire Kachina finished the greeting chant, "All hail the body entire, Makona! You will walk as Great Chief hereafter!"

As if pushed by some unseen force, Makona took a step back. To hear his name from their loathsome lips, seemed to have put a fright on him. He seemed staggered as if by a blow.

Builds Fire moved to intercede for him.

He turned and said to Makona, "Makona, your breath stops in amazement. They seem not outwardly harmful. Why do you fear things that sound so fair?"

"I feel a dark hand on my soul," whispered Makona. "I would wish us some other place."

Builds Fire turned to the Kachinas and spoke to them. "In the name of truth, are you the drip of peyote's sweet poison, or are you the half human forms which outwardly you show? My clan brother you greet with immediate honor. You have given speech to a great prediction of ascendancy and chiefly hope, so much so, Makona seems bound by you in snake-eyed

fascination. But to me Great Kachinas, you do not speak. If you can look into the seeds of time and say which corn grain will grow and which will not, speak then to me, who neither begs nor fears your favors or your hate."

Sky Thunder Kachina in a voice akin to a scream. "ADVANCE!"

Black Wind Kachina in a voice cold as night. "RETREAT!"

Fire Kachina in a voice as clear and sweet as a young woman's. "STAND STILL!"

Sky Thunder Kachina speaking ever so softly, said, "Builds Fire. We see you too. Your voice is in our night. Builds Fire, lesser than Makona and greater."

Black Wind Kachina said, "Not so happy, but happier."

Builds Fire recoiled, now that they fixed their attentions on him. He seemed shocked that the spirits now took note of him. He stepped back beside Makona. Each in his own mind, were troubled by the visions before them.

Fire Kachina pointed one ancient bent finger at Builds Fire. "Builds Fire, you will birth Chiefs, but never be one, so all hail, Makona and Builds Fire!"

Sky Thunder Kachina shrieked with hideous ironic laughter. Her words seemed a mockery, her tone a reproof. "Builds Fire and Makona, all hail!"

As one they turned, and began to move away. Bones seemed to rattle as they moved, the sky darkening in the direction that they walked.

Makona raised a hand as if to hold them to his purpose. He shouted at their retreating backs, "Don't leave with unexplained promises! Incomplete speakers, tell me more! By my father's death, I know I am clan named Shaman of Ga-Mis but how of Kawdor? The Shaman of Kawdor lives, a much weaponed man. For me to be Great Chief, lies beyond imagining. It's no more likely I'll become Shaman of Kawdor. Can you say from which of the four directions comes this

strange intelligence, or why upon this windless desert, you stop our way forward with such prophesied greetings? Speak, I ask your prophesying bones?"

On Makona's last spoken word, thunder crashed and lightning flashed in sky. The three Kachinas vanished in a whirlwind of sand, leaving no mark of their passing.

Builds Fire stared at the spot where they had been with horror. "Unseen by men's eyes, old earth's dark blood flows through caves of ancient mystery. These Kachinas come from those places. Where are they vanished?"

Makona shook his head in wonder. "Into the air. What seemed to be flesh, melted and went like smoke into the wind. Their words have built curious fires in me so hot the world seems ash and smoke all around me!"

Builds Fire passed a hand over his eyes. "Did we see them? Did Three Kachinas appear to us and speak or have we eaten on the insane cactus flower that takes the reason prisoner?"

Makona seemed thoughtful. "Your children shall walk the earth as Chiefs."

Builds Fire demurred. "But for you a much higher dance. Did they not say you shall be Great Chief?"

Makona mused, "And Shaman of Kawdor, did they not make that prophecy?"

"I heard it. But with those beings, who is to say what is prophecy and what is a killer's caress?" said Builds Fire somberly. "We should be wary."

Makona heard footsteps behind him. He whirled around, hand reaching for his spear. He shouted a warning. "Someone comes!"

Lonewolf, winded like a deer whose back has carried a cougar, came staggering up to them.

Lonewolf stood before them, head bent with weariness. He started to speak, but his legs gave out and Lonewolf began to fall.

Makona and Builds Fire seized him and held him up.

"Let us lay you down so that you may rest," said Builds Fire with kindness.

They put Lonewolf gently on the ground. And waited patiently till he had breath enough to speak without gasping.

Lonewolf finally spoke. "I bring word to Makona from Sky He Sees, the Great Chief! I have been entrusted with a speech to honor you."

Makona looked weary. "We are too tired to carry words. They might remind of us all we wish to forget."

Lonewolf was adamant. "I must say what I am given to say!"

"But I have no immediate wish to listen."

"You are bound by duty to hear my message." said Lonewolf defensively.

"I suppose it would cause more trouble to mistake you for an enemy and cut your throat than listen to it," said Makona with biting irony. "Say then what Sky He Sees say."

"As thick as pollen on spring winds, witnesses have returned to sing praise of your war valor! Your day of glory in our Pueblo's great defense stands known and honor flows from Sky He Sees, Great Chief, to you, like an untamed river."

Makona grudgingly assented. "Our ancient enemy, Mag-Way-Ya, rides his bones into the wind. I only led the storm, I did not provoke it. Builds Fire and I were only the weapons on which Mag-Way-Ya fell."

Lonewolf said. "Sky He Sees's message includes you both. Builds Fire too he holds in high honor. Sky He Sees knows you both as great-hearted warriors not afraid of the death you carried. So that he can do you honor, you must come with all speed into Sky He See's presence."

Builds Fire look troubled. "I speak for both of us. We are not such as want to be seen by men.

We are not right within our own skins. Later will be a time to sing war boasts and make legends of war deeds, if we deserve any."

Makona added. "Victory may be honey in our mouths but our hearts are gall."

Builds Fire touched his own bloodstained clothes and said. "We need time to wash the blood off body and mind."

Makona nodded his assent. "Even the two of us alone, is too much company. We belong in the desert's forgetting silences, to journey with self-hating sorrow and the aching memory of the faces we lost this day."

Lonewolf was insistent. "You must both come at once to Great Chief Sky He Sees's Pueblo. His order is clear. But for a part reward of greater honors yet to come, I am chosen to tell Makona from him. Hail Makona, Shaman of Kawdor! By that clan sign, the rest of your days you will walk the earth!"

Builds Fire was the first to react.

"What? Have the spirits of the desert spoken truth!"

Makona seemed astounded by this news. "How comes it that you say this is so? For in all my knowing, the Shaman of Kawdor lives. Why do you dress me in a borrowed war shield?"

Lonewolf shook his head as if to clear it. He was weary to the point of sleep. He spoke carefully as if afraid he might forget something important. "He who was Shaman of Kawdor still lives but under heavy judgment for the life he deserves to lose. He fought on Mag-Way- Ya's side, working treacherously towards our Pueblos overthrow. Death-earned treason, witnessed and proved, has overthrown him. He will not live to see a moon rise in the sky."

Makona seemed stunned. He turned and spoke to Builds Fire. "What we have found seems truth become most strange! I am Shaman of Ga-Mis....now...and of Kawdor...but from this

moment as promised is there not to be a dark price for this foreknowing? But still..this ascendancy...with the greatest yet to come!"

Makona reached down and put his hand on Lonewolf's fatigue wracked shoulder. "Lonewolf, we thank you."

"You mean to return with me?"

"When have we ever not been obedient?" said Makona. "We travel straight home to a welcome we can not turn aside. Rest here and come among us when you can journey with ease. It is in my heart to give you things of value when I see you again. Rest my friend."

They left him and had not gone ten steps when sleep overtook Lonewolf.

"His heart near burst. He is done in," suggested Builds Fire, looking back at the still form in the sand.

"My own heart is like to burst. But with a different cause," said Makona and the weariness in his voice matched the weariness in his steps. "Do you have the hope your children will walk as Chiefs when those that gave Shaman of Kawdor to me, promised no less to you?"

Builds Fire fell into step with him as they walked West toward Sky He Sees's Pueblo. Builds Fire seemed reflective. He did not speak immediately. When his answer came, it was tinged with a sorrow and a half fearful ache. "If that prophecy could be trusted all the way, it might yet dress you in the war robes of a Great Chief, besides Shaman of Kawdor. But it's strangely woven and often, to win us to destruction, the Kachina's of darkness tell us twisted truths, win us with words, only to betray us in deepest darkest consequence."

Makona shrugged it off. "You worry too much. Two truths were told as omen to the rising flood of my destiny in name and in blood. They have proven their truth."

Builds Fire cautioned, "If it were not made to look good, we'd not believe it."

Makona did not agree.

"I say this supernatural inviting cannot hold evil! If evil, why does it give me knowledge of success, commencing in a truth?"

"Consider the source. These are not the Kachinas of sun and light and hope. Consider their decayed aspects. Were they not creatures of the burial ground? Who can count on good from such as these?"

Makona denied it with vehemence. "I am Makona, Shaman of Kawdor! Should the horror of what is only a suggested evil whiten my hair? Because it comes from another world should I let my beating heart knock at my ribs in terror? Builds Fire, your spoken fears are nothing but sun blazed imaginings."

"I am never happy to hear the spirits speak however well they wish me," said Builds Fire. "I am more comfortable being told a man's things by a man. Or to share the wisdom a woman has, in word or deed. Things of this world are enough for me."

Makona seemed contemptuous. His voice had a note of scornful pride.

"Evils omened, ambitions denied, murder prophesied, all these are but dreams of fear aflutter only in the mind. I'll not be smothered in superstition and believe that nothing exists but what is not. I am Makona, twice a Shaman by my own honor, and perhaps in that, I am a man other worlds have gifts for."

Builds Fire did not credit it. He spoke as much to himself as to Makona. "Look, how caught in dreaming is Makona!"

Makona turned on him with sudden fury. "No! Not dreaming! For spirits beings have named me Great Chief! Spirit beings may enrobe me without lifting my hand."

"Nothing is done that has not had some doing in it. There is danger if they speak only with

their mouths and not their hearts," warned Builds Fire with genuine concern for Makona in his voice. "You are overtaxed Makona. The war is too much with you. New honor comes upon you like new arrows not made for your bow."

Makona lowered his head. The slump of his shoulders seemed to deem it true. "I have too much in my mind it is true. We are too splattered with angry blood to know our own minds. Let us walk and not think about it. Let us learn to forget."

Makona's steps were leaden and heavy. The coldness that carried them through the desert seems to have vanished. Now they burned under the desert sun and it fell upon them like an oppressive weight.

Builds Fire offered what comfort he could. "As the seasons chase one after the other, killing the old with the beginning of the new, so will time visit us and smooth even the roughest day. Let us conserve our strength. We have a day long journey to make."

If Makona heard him, he gave no sign. They plodded on wearily. The heat of the sun continued its assault. Suddenly Makona jerked to a stop. "There! I see the battle! Mag-Way-Ya awaits!"

"The battle is behind us in another day."

"I see things on the land before us!" cried Makona.

"It is the outer edges of our war camp," said Builds Fire with quiet reason.

"I tell you Mag-Way-Ya waits there for me with....." Makona seemed to lose the thought. His body trembled and a look of sudden horror crossed his face. "Did my warriors follow me? I scarce remember. Did I make the land exquisite with corpses? The ruined ones....the places that now know them will know them no more!" His face went suddenly pale. "I lost a spear, a finely made one. The head of it stuck fast to the ribs ofI see his face...but I know him not...I tried to

pull it out. It was my spear that my dead father made for me!" His voice had sank to a whisper.

"It's not right that my enemy should keep it. His ribs had no earthly use for it."

Makona had slowly turned as he talked and begun walking back in the direction from which he had come. Builds Fire seized him by the arm and stopped him from proceeding. "Take care Makona. You are lost in dark thoughts."

"In a dark day. I am lost in a dark day. So dark my spear can not pierce it!"

"The battle is won. Our enemies are vanquished. It is only a dream that stalks you. You must strengthen yourself. You are faint from the sun and the need of water."

"My head feels feverish," said Makona, touching his forehead. "Yet I am not sure I am freezing to death."

Gently, Builds Fire pulled Makona around until he faced in the right direction. "Lean on me, noble Makona, sudden, harsh death has left its stain upon you. My heart aches to see you taken in this way."

They began to walk again. But Makona did not lean against his friend's shoulders. He walked on his own, squaring his shoulders and facing straight into the sun.

Makona apologized, "It was temporary and the strange feeling that flooded over me is gone."

They began to walk again. Builds Fire shrugged. "It is as much too little to eat and drink as too much upon the mind."

"No. It was madness. It nibbled at the very edge of me."

Builds Fire held his tongue as if he sensed it were a thing better not mentioned for fear it might reoccur.

Makona suddenly pleaded, "Give me your favor and approval Builds Fire. My dull brain is assaulted with things that were best forgotten."

"It is harder to undo in the mind what one has done in the deed. The dead are too recent and you too deeply mourn their untimely decay. Time must work its cure with you."

"War has no ending if I am a man who has to sleep, for it begins again in my night mind."

"But this is day. The sun is a bright beckoning above us. The heat of the desert can burn the darkness out of us," said Builds Fire.

"My friend, your bones are cast in the fire of what brought me into being. I have an absolute reliance on you Builds Fire! I am lost without your hand for me!" said Makona with earnest regard.

"I stand ever at your side. Never doubt it."

Makona's mind was aroil. He lamented. "Is all we are to inherit, evil and death? If we carried it to others, do we carry it home with us?"

"There must be greater rewards!" said Builds Fire. "There is much yet to be revealed."

Makona's weariness was as large as the looming sky above. "We should say no more, think no more when we are so tired with death."

"Into silence we will descend and very gladly."

Makona shook his head sadly, like a man avoiding a kiss. "No fearfully. For we know more than we know."

Builds Fire replied with a gentleness in keeping with his nature. "Visions have touched us, and touching, changed us."

Makona sensed it as a horror. "And we know not how changed. Let's make towards home if it will still have us."

CHAPTER FIVE

The man once known as Shaman of Kawdor was a man who moved through the world with sullen pride.

He knew that someone would come for him. A-wis, Shaman of Kawdor, spawn of the Northern clans, rested uncomfortably on a deerskin in a shallow cave. Silent guards with no words, kind or otherwise, guarded the blanket-draped entrance.

A-wis looked about the dimly lit cave that had been made his prison. There was not much to see. Perhaps it had once been the lair of some animal, a cougar or other mountain predator. Loose animal bones were scattered on the dusty floor.

They had taken his weapons and broken his Shaman's staff. By custom it should have passed from his hands to another, if he were deposed. But it seemed his treachery may have irrevocably stained it with the touch of his profaning hands and so it had been destroyed as A-wis himself soon would be.

He heard the sound of raised voices and turned to stare at the cave entrance. His guards moved away suddenly, abandoning their posts.

The certainty that he was about to die did not concern him, only the manner of it. There were many ways to die. Some pleasant, some so hideous in aspect, that the thought of them, seemed to be a knife scraping his center bones.

There was a stilling of the voices. No one presented themselves at the entrance. He waited but nothing disturbed the silence.

It seemed obvious to A-wis. He was no long guarded. That could mean only one thing.

"Am I to come outside?" No answer came back to him. He took the silence for a yes.

He got up slowly. He was wounded but it was not a wound to worry over.

He hobbled to the entrance, thrust aside the tattered blanket and stepped out into the desert.

At sight of the beings in front of him, he knew with a sudden chill to the heart that it would be worse than anything he could have imagined.

Ten young women stood before him, bows in hand, arrows arrayed in a fan at their feet.

One stepped forward.

"Name yourself," commanded A-wis. "The Shaman of Kawdor orders it."

"I am a daughter of a chief and I give you no name because your tongue speaking it, would dishonor it."

"You should not speak to me in this way!" declared the Shaman of Kawdor haughtily. "I would know your names!"

"I speak words because I can not spit them," she said with anger. "We are young women without rank. We have names but you are better struck down by a rotten tree branch weakened by some storm. Even that death is too good for you."

"I confess my treachery. I am a traitor who swam a war river of blood and landed on the wrong bank. I thought the Kachinas intended for me to live, for Mag-Way-Ya to prevail. I was mistaken. Let my bones mingle together in the earth where my ancestors lie. I do not beg forgiveness. The wind aimed me in the wrong direction but it was I who chose to move with it."

"It is good to own up to obvious wrong when you are so completely caught at it," said the daughter of the chief with scorn. "Confession buys you nothing. It only paints you honest in your vileness."

"It buys me this. I am a man and men should give me my death! I am sore insulted. Why were you chosen?"

"Come to it gently A-wis, Shaman of no place in man's memory. Perhaps it is a reward for

your greatness," said the chief's daughter with a mocking smile. "Are we not good to look upon? Are you not pleased by our youth and grace?"

"I am pleased by nothing."

"You are nothing."

"Breaking my Shaman's staff does not break the man! I was born to be who I am. I am Shaman of Kawdor unto the death!" There was hauteur in his voice.

"The title goes to another. Even before your death. We are charged to tell you it has gone to Makona, Shaman of Gamis and now Shaman of Kawdor."

"He is not fit to drink my sweat!"

"You speak bold for a man who is almost lifeless meat."

"I will not accept death on these terms! What chance of a noble death do I have at the hands of the likes of you?" sneered A-wis. "Perhaps by gentle reason I can sway you to another death by the hands of others. Perhaps it is my right to demand it!"

"Oh is it mercy he seeks?" cried the daughter of the chief with a bitter laugh. She turned and looked at the faces of the young women behind her. They held their faces still, There was a kind of sweet beauty to them, but their eyes blazed with a terrible light.

"Look them in the eyes, what once was the Shaman of Kawdor! See you any mercy in those eyes!"

He stared at them, seeking something in their faces. Only then did the chill that seized his heart, spread and engulf him.

"Why were we chosen? We are all the same dark heart. All newly married and newly widowed!"

"Wars invoke cost," said the Shaman of Kawdor, turning his eyes away from theirs.

"Easy for a man to say who does not know love. You thought Mag-Way-Ya would prevail. You sided with him against our dead husbands and the children that will never be."

"I weary of this talk," said A-wis. "My appetites are to end it."

"Then be eaten," said the daughter of the chief and she put an arrow in her bow and drew it back."

"Lie down in the dust, so that we may look on your face," she commanded.

A-wis glared at them. "I would sooner stand."

"It does not matter. You will end up there."

"A dog deserves a better death," raged A-wis.

"We are ten pretty women with ten arrows each. One by one, we shall shoot them in you," said the chief's daughter.

"Perhaps that will not be enough to kill me. Perhaps I will have to help you pull back the bowstrings myself. For you look puny to me," said A-wis in his most insulting manner.

"Oh we try not to kill you! See how sweet we women are to you! Each arrow must be aimed so as not to hit a killing part of you. Your legs and arms and loose skin. Your manhood. We stick you and stick you again till you look like a porcupine's poor relation."

"You would not do this!" He recoiled in horror and grievance.

The chief's daughter pulled back the bow and shot an arrow. It hit the fleshy part of his leg above the knee and A-wis fell to the ground. He did not cry out but his face was livid with insult and rage.

As the second woman stepped up and made ready to loose a second arrow, the chief's daughter bent over A-wis with mock solicitude. "See what care we take of you, murderous traitor! Each arrow is tipped with a tiny bird point. So we give you small sharp wounds that will

not bleed as much as war arrows. You will not bleed so soon to death. Such concern for you! Each arrow lovingly sent in flesh not fatal. Is there an end to our love? Oh we ask you for bravery! We promise to beat you awake if you faint."

The second arrow struck in the left arm above his hand. He gasped and clutched his wrist.

"Now this brave final challenge. We offer a tender mercy. If you live without screaming for 99 arrows, I will put the last arrow in your heart. And say ever after of you, a man who once was Shaman of Kawdor, he was foul and hideous and a stench from the grave! But he did know how to die like a man!"

Horror in his eyes, A-wis held up his hand, as if to ward off a certain blow.

A third arrow found its mark, passing almost through his upraised hand.

"Sisters! You go too fast in your ardor," admonished the daughter of the chief, and she stayed the hand of the next bow woman. "Let him have time to savor the kiss of each arrow. Have we not the whole day to express our love?"

And they loved him in their way to sweet climax.

CHAPTER SIX

Great Chief Sky He Sees stood calm in a sea of tumultuous faces. Through out the Pueblo sounded the triumphant rattle of gourds and the pounding rhythms of victory drums. Although the crowds were all touched by grief for those lost in battle, this was also too a time of great exultation. A great enemy who had held his knife to the throat of the nation was vanquished.

Sky He Sees did not join in the celebration. As the people of the Pueblo danced and sang all around him, Sky He Sees seemed to retreat more deeply into himself.

He had the look of a man who was choking on something too big to swallow. A sorrow marked his face. He stood apart from everyone, with the stance of a man who waited for news, and feared it as much as welcomed it.

Falcon made his way through the dancing throngs. He spied Sky He Sees and made straight for him.

Sky He Sees saw him and searched his face but no answer or clue to his thoughts did Sky He Sees find there. Falcon's mien was somber and unrevealing.

He took his son by the hand, comforted by the warmth of Falcon's hand in his own.

Sky He Sees's voice quivered with emotion. "Is A-wis who by birth was Shaman of Kawdor, dead? Are those I've sent to kill him for our honor, returned?"

Falcon squeezed his father's hand reassuringly. "My father be not troubled."

"I do not ask it as your father but as the man who is Sky He Sees, Great Chief of this Pueblo."

Falcon considered his words carefully. Finally he spoke, "Great Chief, they have not yet come back. But I've spoken with one that saw A-wis die, who said he denied nothing and freely confessed his treason."

"How many arrows to kill him?"

"All of them."

"Did A-wis scream? Did he have cowardice that matched his treachery?" Sky He Sees's voice was tender.

Falcon shuddered. "Ten times A-wis fainted. They kicked him and beat him awake. He neither screamed or cried out."

"Did he speak?"

"It is said A-wis protested the insult that denied what he once was. But he begged no earthly

pardon and set forth upon the warrior's path unbowed."

"It is fitting. As I expected, A-wis took the torture as brave as any man who lives. Treachery was his but never cowardice." said the Great Chief.

"Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it. A-wis died as one that had been studied in his death, that knew all the words for each pain torture brought and had already cut his tongue out to show they were not worth speaking of," said Falcon. "He had the bravery we all hope to have when we die."

Sky He Sees seemed like a man beaten down. His shoulders slumped and his face was pale and hurt. He moved uncomfortably, as if every bone in his body ached with some ancient hurt. He let go of his son's hand and looked at the faces of his people in the Pueblo.

"My son, there's no wisdom to find how the mind is constructed in the face of a man."

"You just trusted in the wrong man."

"It is not as simple as deciding day from night. A-wis was a man capable of every goodness in the nature of a human being."

"And was equally capable of every evil."

"But nothing in his life gave any outward sign of it. He was a clanbrother on who I built an absolute trust. I would have held to it forever had it not been betrayed. Life would seem sweeter if faith in him was untouched."

Makona appeared at the outskirts of the Pueblo. He saw Sky He Sees and Falcon and made straight for them. Builds Fire and Lonewolf followed closely behind him.

While they were yet some distance away, Falcon whispered in his father's ear. "Here is the man, Makona. He is the better man, had you rightly favored him instead, would not the world seem to you a kinder place?"

Sky He Sees sighed. "Is it kindness that lurks in a great warrior's heart?"

There was no answer for that.

"Is a man so great in war, as good in the peace?" worried Sky He Sees.

Falcon reasoned. "A Great Chief who doubts one man, can not doubt them all."

"A fool might have said it," said Sky He Sees gloomily.

Falcon turned in surprise. "Father, I did but say back to you, counsel you gave me when I was younger and sore confused in trust of those about me."

Sky He Sees sighed with the heartfelt regrets of a man who had lived too many years. "A fool did say it."

Makona bent before the Great Chief, lowering his head in a token of respect. He was so spent he almost tumbled at Sky He Sees's feet. Builds Fire grabbed his arm and steadied him.

Great Chief Sky He Sees put aside his sadness. He made his face appear glad and his words were sincere. "Worthiest clan brother! All that I owe you even now is heavy on me! You are so far above praise, the swiftest wing of human gratitude can not overtake you."

Makona scarce smiled acknowledgment. "Everything can catch me. I feel a man robbed of sleep for a hundred snows."

Sky He Sees held out his hand. "I have no treasures large enough to reward your warrior's heart. More is owed you than all I can pay."

"I am alive. Or I pretend that I am. It is a reward I pay myself."

Builds Fire moved to speak for Makona who seemed lacking in grace. "He is not himself. The strain of what he has wrought..."

"What words come on my behalf! Yet my mouth does not speak them!" Makona's words stung Builds Fire who bit his lips in anger.

Builds Fire bowed and stepped back. "I misspoke!" He offered in apology.

Sky He Sees was troubled by this disharmony between two men he meant to do honor to.

"Speak for yourself Makona. You have forever earned your place by the fire," said Falcon, striving for peace between the two men.

Makona nodded his head wearily. He fingered his torn and bloodied clothes. "Makona speaks! Oh news! No, he shrieks!" His voice had risen almost to a shout and there was a wild look to his eyes.

He looked around uncertainly as if in a place he did not recognize. Slowly, in the silence his sudden behavior had provoked, he seemed to come to himself. The look of wildness passed from his eyes and his eyes seemed to clear. He stood straighter. He licked his lips and spoke with some care to Sky He Sees.

"There is no reward for one such as I. The loyalty I owe, is every man's who has honor. It pays itself. I am enthroned by my duties to our Pueblo and our ancestors and children yet to be. Not for myself have I fought, and if well fought, all was done for your love and honor, Great Chief. That is all I hope ever to be owed."

"A most becoming speech. Too modest to ask for the world's debt to him. It was a warrior's answer and I like it," said Sky He Sees.

"He needs rest," said Builds Fire protectively.

Sky He Sees nodded his understanding. "Welcome to this place Makona. I have begun to plant you in the soil of this Pueblo and will do a rain dance to make you full of growth."

He motioned for men to come do his bidding. They moved quickly to his side. He spoke to them, commanding, "See that he has a comfortable seat by a warm fire. See that his hunger and his wants are met. Give him the best clothes you can find. And give him quiet and attention to

his every need."

Makona shook his head in denial. "I will rest in my own house and in no other."

Sky He Sees was puzzled by this but chose to ignore it for now. He turned to Builds Fire and spoke, "And Builds Fire, who has done no less deserved a thing, let me embrace you and hold you to my heart."

Builds Fire replied graciously, "If I grow there, the harvest is your own."

The Great Chief embraced them both, weary Makona and steady Builds Fire. "My plentiful joys grow wild in this green season, and seek to hide themselves in drops of crop growing sorrow."

So weary were they both, that it seemed only Sky He Sees's embrace kept them from falling.

Great Chief Sky He Sees proclaimed to all around him, "Sons, clansmen, shamans and you whose places are the nearest to the council fires! I hold those I mean to heap with honor bright! See them in my embrace and remember always they have my favor!"

The Great Chief's eyes rested on Falcon, his son. "But there is another who fought well today. Falcon kept the enemy from our flanks. No enemy lived that went against him. He fought them so bravely that I will establish our clan sign upon my eldest son, Falcon, whom I name hereafter, Carrier of the Dream Wheel."

He pushed the two men in his embrace out of his arms and toward the people of the Pueblo. His hand rested on each of their shoulders in benediction.

"Honor must not invest Falcon only. Omens of favor like stars, shall shine on all deservers!" he proclaimed.

Makona reached up and took Great Chief Sky He Sees's hand and lifted it off his shoulder. He did not do it unkindly or as if the touch had been unwelcome. He seemed more a man who had

found something perched on his shoulder and did not understand how it found its way there.

"If you must honor me, let me return honor to your son in my own house. Let's go to my Pueblo, and feast and bind us further to your son, Falcon, who rises like an eagle to the heights to which Sky He Sees has gone before him," begged Makona with becoming modesty.

"If the sanctity and grace of your own walls makes you whole again, let us go there. You have earned all comforts," said Great Chief Sky He Sees in a conciliatory tone.

"We shall move the feast from our Pueblo to that of Makona. I will make certain we arrive with full hearts and hands that are not empty!" ordered Falcon and men moved to do his bidding. Food that had been carefully set out, was packed in carrying baskets.

"But the celebration will at my choosing, honor not only my son Falcon, but yourself Makona, Shaman of Kawdor, a new bird in flight. And Builds Fire with his own new wings."

"To point it at us alone would be painful. We fought with many who fought well, with faces no longer among us who gave more than we can give. Such praise you offer us is unwieldy. I am not sure even now what we have done to earn it," Makona seemed to struggle with some half remembered thing of night and shadow. "There are dark vaguenesses in my memory. So let there be no joy if it is not used to honor Sky He Sees's lineage."

Makona's face was troubled and uncertain.

"I must be home!" Makona seemed confused and fixed on this one idea as something that could cure all that ailed him. His legs seemed to tremble.

Builds Fire took Makona's arm, supporting him. Makona began to walk away, as if Sky He Sees were someone he did not know and had never met.

Builds Fire muttered an apology, over his shoulder at Sky He Sees. "He is not himself until he sees the gardens and walls of his own Pueblo about him. I myself will walk him straight home

and make Makona's woman, Kalaw, joyful with word of your coming."

Puzzled, Falcon said, "So humble in his path, Makona takes leave of us. It is as if he was embarrassed by our praise. And unwelcomed appreciation made him flee."

Great Chief Sky He Sees shouted after the retreating figures of Makona and Builds Fire. "My new Shaman of Kawdor! May the magic and the power of your new birthright forever serve our Pueblo!"

They stood and watched them moving into the desert.

The two men, bone weary, walked side by side. Suddenly, Makona pushed Builds Fire away from him.

"Did you feel it!" he cried. He stared up into the air. "Who dares touch me! Who assaults me!"

"Makona! Take care!" cried Builds Fire in sudden alarm, aware that watchful eyes were still upon them.

Makona put his finger to his lips, cautioning Builds Fire to silence.

He whispered ever so softly. "Builds Fire! Did you see them all around me? Which one was it? Which of those horrid sisters was it? Speak man, did you see her in smoke and fire and blackness entire? Which one of them laid her icy fingers on my neck?"

"MAKONA!" All Builds Fire's compassion rested in that one heartfelt plea.

"Show no sign that we are so affected!" Makona cast fearful glances in all directions. "Do you not hear the words she whispers to me?" said Makona, keeping his voice pitched low. "No. Don't repeat them. Let them fall only on our ears. Let us walk ahead now. They must suspect nothing."

Falcon watched the two men pass into the distance.

Falcon shook his head. "From his words and deeds, I would say there goes a man whose heart

is the Pueblo."

Great Chief Sky He Sees too watched the two figures vanishing in the desert. "For deeds done so loud in the public ear, Makona is drenched in humility."

"And enemy blood. The man kills as if he had no other purpose in life," mused Falcon. "He seems a man tossed by an uncertain wind."

"Do not misread fatigue as a wavering of purpose," vowed Sky He Sees. "Makona is a full sky of certain valor and in his eagle's climb to the heights of the world I am fed."

Sky He Sees added, "Makona is a feast to me. Let's follow after him but not in haste, for the man needs time to put his battles behind him. That a man so worn would put his own comfort low, ignore his own honor, to see to comfort and care for you Falcon, to esteem you in hearth and home, is a man who gives more than he gets."

"But does he want more than he has?" said Falcon. "He seems to think of himself not at all. His only concern seems to travel ahead to prepare our welcome in his Pueblo. Do you not think it strange he asks nothing for himself? Is he an ambitionless man with no wish for the stars above?"

"I will not hear you venture doubts about Makona. He is a man so far above other men his head should be a star!"

"He seems chased by something," observed Falcon.

"Perhaps greatness," suggested Sky He Sees.

"I would not have said it was that," said Falcon but he offered no further explanation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A coyote howled from atop a distant hill. Makona stopped walking suddenly, transfixed by

the sound. Builds Fire and Makona had gone barely half way in their journey to Makona's Pueblo.

"Mark you not the strangeness of that!" cried Makona.

"It is only a coyote giving voice to the season," replied Builds Fire.

"When have you ever heard one at this hour? Night untold I have heard them sing to the moon, but in full sun? It is an omen I do not like."

"You are too troubled. Everything fills you with a fancy. It is of no concern," Builds Fire stopped walking, half turned and waited for Makona to resume his journey.

"Where is my war spear?" Panic-stricken, Makona searched the ground at his feet. "Whose body has it?"

He dropped down and crawled over the ground. He muttered to himself. "The haft was so blood steeped, it slipped from my nerveless hands!" His hands seized a jagged rock. He held it carefully close to his chest, like a woman holds a child.

Builds Fire came back to take his arm comfortingly. Makona flinched and retreated at a half crawl, as if Builds Fire had made a pass at him with a spear.

"Mag-Way-Ya! We meet!" raged Makona. He sprang up.

Builds Fire still had his hand out to Makona when Makona rushed toward him. The rock in Makona's fists caught him full on the side of the head. So sudden and swift was the blow, that Builds Fire did not even have time to cry out.

He toppled sideways like a man who had lost his bones.

He fell senseless but not dead.

Makona stood triumphantly over the fallen body. "Close your eyes Mag-Way-Ya! Else they be stuffed with dust!"

Makona was in battle, real and unreal. He shouted at the men at his back. "Builds Fire! Follow me! My spear has picked a path to Mag-Way-Ya!"

Makona moved forward to charge the distant hills, brandishing the rock in his hands like a spear. His foot caught on the still body of Builds Fire. Makona reeled and sprawled across him. Makona's unguarded face smashed into the hard desert sand with great force. The blow seemed to shake him awake. The rock lay beneath him, bruising his ribs.

He sat up slowly, shaken and confused, pulled back from a darkness that had seized him.

"Builds Fire? Are you dead? By whose hand? Was it myself that struck the fatal blow?"

Builds Fire groaned and shifted in the sand. Makona rose and stood above the fallen body of Builds Fire.

His eyes saw Builds Fire his battle companion and they saw Mag-Way-Ya with a spear through his heart. And as Makona bent closer, it was the woman old as death who bewitched him with unclean desire in battle's final hour, who lay at his feet.

"I am lost," said Makona. He was beyond the sound of anything less than thunder or any grip less certain than Kachina-woven death. Everything about him was not as it seemed.

By witchery, by the soft hand that caressed his neck, Makona traveled.

He closed his eyes and when he opened them again.

He was in place he had been once before, stalking a war's horror once tasted that forever embraces.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Mag-Way-Ya stood in a deep hollow of sand, encircled by the scallops of the dunes. Not a

site chosen as shelter from wind and sand, but to craftily catch Makona in a death trap. The weary ranks of Makona's hard-pressed warriors would be just a mouthful for Mag-Way-Ya's wolfish brood.

Makona's weary men followed at his back, spent in deed and spirit. Makona caught a glimpse of Mag-Way-Ya's choice of a last stand as he came over the rise. He looked at the character of the landscape before him and smiled the grim ancient smile of a man who knows that he has arrived at the last place he will ever see on earth.

The battle raged on all sides. Makona knew it was lost. He moved toward his own death with an eagerness more desire for sleep and forgetting than courage. Pallid signal fires raged around the rim of the sand depression like the play of lightning across a summer's sky. Shadows and phantoms stalked among his men, dead spirits wailed and burrowed in the sand under the bodies of the dead and dying. The heavy locust whirl of released bowstrings sent piercing arrows into Makona's men like hail from an angry cloud.

Makona strode across the body of one of his fallen men. The dead at his feet cried out to him, invoking ancient grief that promised the coming of onrushing dark.

A dark figure leaped up to meet him, arms outstretched and Makona wearily lifted his spear.

A swift hand pushed the point aside and an arm encircled his neck.

A woman's sweet breath brushed his face. A thin womanly hand touched his cheek in a caress, smearing it with blood.

"You need a sweet to eat, to prick your heart!" The voice was dark with sex and hidden promise.

The voice whispered in his ear. "My pretty one!"

Her hands dug into the flesh of his arms. Makona struggled to break free, as he saw enemies

rushing down upon him. She whispered so sweetly to him. "If you would win my love, give me the skin of Mag-Way-Ya. It would make me such a pretty dress!" Her voice seemed to promise a world of love.

The woman moved until she stood in front of him. She was as fair as a summer night, as soft skinned as a newborn fawn, eyes deep pools of reflecting dark water. "Kiss me. Are not my lips like the welcoming wings of red birds?"

And then she smiled at Makona. And was a thousand thousand years old, with lizard skin the color of dust and decay.

Ancient withered arms embraced him. A kiss from lips not human seared his face. Makona lashed out with his stone bladed knife, aiming for the hideous face of the ancient woman whose arms encircled him.

His blade passed through the ghostly shape. The apparition had vanished as quick as water sucked into the desert sand.

Something dark flashed in Makona. Her ghostly caress, her dark embrace, were like sparks that set the world ablaze.

His eyes flashed, his spear came up and from his throat came the roar of a man who might eat the world.

"AAAAAYEEEEEE!" His voice rode above the sounds of the battle. His warriors turned and gazed upon him. What moved in him, was like lightning that sought them out. Makona's fiery lightning-tipped fingers seemed to reach for their hearts and seized them.

Makona rushed to meet his enemies. An answering roar came from the throats of Makona's warriors and like ants chased by fire, they ran after him, weapons raised, striking and slashing.

Nothing living could stand in their way. All were swept before them. Makona bore down on

Mag-Way-Ya.

Now the savage triumph in Mag-Way-Ya's throat turned to terror. These beings who once stumbled like the dying, were now men of stone who killed with every breath.

Dead and dying warriors fell all around him, until alone Mag-Way-Ya stood like the only tree spared by a great fire.

So thickly did Mag-Way-Ya's warriors lay in death's embrace, they became a bleeding path. Makona had to walk across the bodies of the dead to reach Mag-Way-Ya.

His warriors would have rushed ahead of him but Makona motioned them back.

He faced Mag-Way-Ya alone.

In other distant parts of the desert, the battle still was being fought. But whatever death's last collection reaped, what happened around Makona had already guaranteed the outcome.

The fire that moved in Makona still raged but there was a chilling look in his eyes.

"Stand back warriors. Leave him to me!" cried Makona, standing but a spear thrust away from the enemy chief.

The figure of Mag-Way-Ya seemed to shimmer in the desert sun.

Mag-Way-Ya's taunting words hung in the air. "It sounds like crying and it sounds like rain. No, it is Makona cooing from his cradle!" The voice was not Mag-Way-Ya's. It was a woman's voice and it was not.

Makona's heart lay in half-smothered uncertainty. To slash and kill and end it quick, that was a tide he ached for. But Makona's insides froze.

A soft skinned hand seemed to hold him by the throat.

Mag-Way-Ya laughed and looked up at the sky. "I have always sworn to die before my heart goes soft. Is this is what the world looks like when I leave it?"

"Are you ready to die?" asked Makona, steeling himself for the final moment.

"No. I am ready to live. If one can live with a spear in the heart," said Mag-Way-Ya bitterly. He held something close to his side, hiding it from sight under the deerskin sleeve of his long robe.

"Have you anything to say?" asked Makona, for this was a moment when history and legend are made, to be sung in the Pueblo's from this time on.

"Ask me again when I am dead. I may know more then," Mag-Way-Ya said with a taunting laugh. Mag-Way-Ya spun around, raised his arm and threw a long bladed stone knife.

It spun end to end and passed over Makona's shoulder and stuck in the throat of a warrior at his back.

Mag-Way-Ya shrugged. "A pity you are not taller Makona. Then I would not have missed." Mag-Way-Ya lifted his spear and held it out defensively in front of him like a shield. The point had snapped off and it was scarce half a spear. Mag-Way-Ya seemed to consider his weapon's puniness and suddenly tossed it aside.

Mag-Way-Ya began to sing his death song. The chant rose up into the sky.

Makona lifted his spear. His arms flexed with the beginning of the killing stroke.

Mag-Way-Ya's chant echoed in the air. It was a sweet woman's voice that shaped the words. And the song it sang was of love and not death.

Mag-Way-Ya spread his arms wide as if to embrace Makona's onslaught.

He pulled aside his war robes, exposing his chest.

Makona saw the tender young breasts of a woman. It was not Mag-Way-Ya that stood there before him, but the young woman fair as a fawn, who in battle, enticed him.

Makona half turned to look at the warriors behind him, in expectant wonder that they would

be as amazed as he at the sight. But that slight glance at them, betrayed Makona. He knew in an instant that they did not see what he saw or hear the voice that could not be.

Makona turned back to his task. All though his blood had turned to ice and his muscles to bone, he advanced with raised spear. The woman that was Mag-Way-Ya smiled at him so sweetly. She seemed to favor him with sweet beckoning glances.

So confused in purpose, Makona lunged blindly and his spear would have passed Mag-Way-Ya harmlessly by. There was nothing in Makona that could have made him kill her who seemed to stand in Mag-Way-Ya's place.

But there was something outside himself in that moment.

Mag-Way-Ya, two-handed, seized Makona's spear and thrust it with all-consuming strength into his own heart, like a woman welcoming love's sting.

"No!" wailed Makona, caught by surprise.

The woman thrashed on the end of his spear. The haft slipped out of Makona's hands and the figure, impaled, stumbled toward him. Her beauty was ruined.

As she almost touched him, as her falling body almost collided with his, Makona screamed.

But the body that fell against him, was Mag-Way-Ya.

The weight of his spear-pierced body bore them both to the ground.

They lay face to face, killer and killed.

Mag-Way-Ya whispered with his shuddery last breath, "Our secret Makona. My killing strength, your loving weakness. I take it to my death," Mag-Way-Ya coughed and blood trickled from the corners of his mouth. His last words were so soft only Makona heard it.

"I have seen what you fear."

And then he was dead, with a smile fixed on his face that seemed to defy the world.

Makona felt as if all the dead men in the world were laughing at him.

For a while he did not remember anything after that.

But only wished he could forget all that had gone before.

CHAPTER NINE

Makona turned his face southwestward to follow the swirling wind. Makona wore horror like a weapon sheathed at his side. His hand fingered the hilt of terror itself. Unknown emotions scarred his face till it became a mask he held in front of him. He tried to make his heart a thing of stone but it betrayed him, twisted like an insect singed in a fire. Makona, helpless to stop it, wept inside his heart.

He sat in the dust like a lizard that had been too long without food.

Builds Fire was stirring beside him, like a bear grudgingly awakening at the end of a winter's sleep. He sat up slowly, one hand holding his bruised face. One eye was turning black, and Builds Fire's lips were split and bleeding.

"I did not strike at you Builds Fire," confessed Makona.

"I know. I recognized the blow. It was Mag-Way-Ya you struck. I could see that you could not see me."

"I thought I had killed you," said Makona with remorse. A tear edged the corner of his eye.

"It feels like you have, so much does it hurt me," said Builds Fire with a pained smile.

"I'll make it up to you. Take my knife and cut my hand off."

"Only just the one hand? Should we not measure the size of the crime by the size of the rock?" said Builds Fire with a good humored laugh.

"In that case, cut off my head but leave me my neck," said Makona. "I am full of sorrow at my own wretched mistaking. How do you feel?"

"Virginal in the head, for it is afraid to be touched."

"If I could undo it and do it to myself, I would," said Makona in apology. He looked sincerely sorry.

"I would drop dead but my head hurts too much to withstand the sudden movement," said Builds Fire ruefully. His head throbbed as if someone still beat on it.

Builds Fire held out his hand and Makona helped pull him to his feet.

"We are not even half way to my Pueblo. Can you walk?" asked Makona with tender concern.

"Yes. And fly below the ground," said Builds Fire with a cynical grin. The side of his face was swollen and one eye was half closed and growing blacker.

Builds Fire took a halting step and almost fell. Makona took his arm and steadied him. He led him to a earth-gray boulder and made him sit down on it.

"You will walk no further my friend. We are in the path Great Chief Sky He Sees will take and you will rest here until you are yourself again. They will put you on a travois and bear you to me."

"No. If you let me rest but a moment, I can go on with you."

"Do not even think about it wounded friend. You must tell Sky He Sees of my crime against you. Though you do not hold it against me, it is an ill deed however mistakenly done and you must hold me up to Sky He Sees's accounting."

"No. I fell and my head struck a rock."

"I would not have you lie."

"I do not lie. I fell and it was a rock that wounded me. Though the time of it was backwards, it

is how, ever after I will say it happened."

"And if I deny and confess," insisted Makona.

"I will say you are a good-natured liar, honey-coating my ungainly nature."

"You are a true friend. May the rest of my life be dedicated to undoing this injury to you."

"I am true enough that I would not have you suffer for the excesses of your battle killing heart, which cloud your everyday mind."

Builds Fire made as if to stand but so weak was he in limb and spirit, that he almost toppled over. "My head would go on but my legs travel without me."

"Stay for those who follow soon in our path," said Makona. "So noble are you in nature, perhaps Sky He Sees himself will carry you on his back."

Builds Fire waved farewell as Makona marched off towards his distant Pueblo.

Makona turned to say something newly come to him but when he looked back at Builds Fire he saw one of the hideous woman Kachinas sitting beside Builds Fire on the rock. She had her arms wrapped around him in loathsome embrace and seemed to whisper dark imaginings into his ears.

Makona cried out and rubbed his palms over his eyes. He blinked and shook his head as if trying to drive out a fever. His eyes stared again but the woman was gone.

Builds Fire sat alone on the rock.

Makona turned and walked on. Although it lay like a spear through his own heart, he would deny to himself that he had seen it.

But a sere piercing sound followed Makona as his steps took him deeper into the desert.

It was the harsh, throaty laugh of a woman Kachina.

CHAPTER TEN

Builds Fire was almost asleep in the sun.

His head was bowed in weariness, his eyes closed against the burning sun overhead.

A hand shook him roughly and he started awake in mortal panic.

Two young warriors, shiny with sweat and gray with dust stood before him. Between them, on a heavy strip of woven deerskin, they carried the body of a wounded man. Blood dripped from the deerskin to the ground.

"Makona? Quick! Speak in haste. Where do we find him?" asked the young man in the rear. His breathing was forced, his voice edged with fatigue. His face was painted for war, lightning zigzags slashed his cheeks.

"Ahead. An hour's walk or more on the path to his own Pueblo. There you should find him."

"You are injured. How may we help you?" said the man with lightning on his face.

"Great Chief Sky He Sees follows behind you. I have no need of anything but rest and healing. I am fine until Sky He Sees's arrival," said Builds Fire marveling at the quiet strength in these young warriors, who carried a great weight between them with such ease and grace.

"Who do you carry with such haste to Makona?" asked Builds Fire. His curiosity was invoked.

"No one, who will soon be less," said the warrior with a grim smile.

"That is a puzzling answer."

"He is a man to be punished. Our speed is demanded less he pass any possibility of it's visitation," exclaimed the war painted warrior.

The man in front, whose face was full red with paint, except round his eyes which were

painted smoke black, spoke up. "Builds Fire? Did you see three young women run by you, before our coming? Three women fair as the dawn with the stealth of antelopes? They overtook us and passed without speaking. It was a sight wondrous to behold!" He spoke with a young man's zest for the beauty of women.

Builds Fire shook his head. "I but rested my eyes and resisted sleep. I did not see three young women."

The other warrior shook his head. His boyish eyes held a faint contempt for Builds Fire, as if displeased with the slow, halting nature of his responses. "Did you see three old women, as hideous as a grave? Who crawled cross the ground like vultures dragging their broken wings?"

"I saw no women, young or old. Only the wind went past me and it had no name to it," said Builds Fire with a shudder. He could guess what strange beings these young men had seen. But he kept the knowledge to himself.

The lightning-faced warrior took his hand away from Builds Fire's shoulder. He shifted the burden strapped round his shoulders. He spoke to the man in front.

"We are no longer in this place," he prophesied.

Like a great four legged animal, they began to run.

They went swiftly across the desert, huge muscles making light of the task. Builds Fire felt suddenly old in the face of their vigor. He could not remember when life had ever moved as strongly in himself as it did in these young men.

Builds Fire wondered what meaning their strange burden portended.

He watched them until they disappeared from sight. His mind was troubled and he vowed to stay awake and harry those feelings which assaulted him. But sleep put its dark hand over his face.

Builds Fire fell into a dreamless sleep where night was a world and thought was but a taste of ashes.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Makona wandered alone in the desert but was pursued by things in his own mind. Voices seemed to ride the desert winds all round his head. Denizens of the desert scurried after him in the shadeless sand, like unedged weapons with bites and stings. They stalked him with unappeased, unvoiced appetites.

When he spun about to confront them, these sensed shadow creatures were buried under a great lake that stretched as far as the eye could see. The mirage appeared and then vanished and came again, flourishing in all four directions.

A Gila monster crawled down off a rocky throne and stood in the path before Makona, vivid tongue tasting the wind. Its eyes were like two jewels that burned.

Makona hailed it as friend and foe. "Hail bastard child of Kachinas! What news do you bring me?"

The great lizard settled down on its haunches like a dog that begs its master for a piece of meat.

"Do you know who you confront? Is my name on your lizard tongue? Did the three dark sisters send you to me?" said Makona, half in anger and half in earnest.

The lizard lashed its tail angrily. But remained still, its legs tucked under its body.

"Are you here to point the way? Then explain to me, this name and deed! Falcon! The name. Chosen Carrier of the Dream Wheel! The deed. And that deed is the only path to Great Chief!"

The lizard did not move.

"Have you a potion in the poison sheath of your skin, wise lizard? Do you bring some wisdom boiled and brewed in a dead man's skull and poured out for a drink that tells all to the taste?"

The lizard hissed a voiceless plaint.

"Your mothers, the three Kachinas promised me that I would ascend but Falcon as named is a step on which I must fall down or else overleap it, for in my prophesied way he lies. Am I fed by the Peyote visions of the Three Kachinas or do they feed upon me?"

The lizard bolted as if touched by fire and was gone in an instant.

Makona did not know what to make of it. So quick had the creature left, it was almost as if it too was a phantom, a thing in his mind and not in the world.

Makona looked up at the sun. "Oh traveler, from a house made of dawn, hide your fire! Do not let sunlight see my black and deep desires."

Makona heard the soft thud of running feet, of a man's voice calling out his name. He turned in alarm, eyes wide and seeking enemy pursuit in the north where the sound came from. He saw two men racing headlong toward him with something slung between them. He recognized them as Great Chief Sky He Sees's men.

A woman's voice, neither old or young, called his name. He turned to the west and saw three Kachina women in flowing animal skin robes moving toward him.

Makona felt his heart quicken with desire's sharp-edged asking. Destiny came rushing at him from two directions. His hands clenched and unclenched and he flinched as if each hand had an arrow shot through it. He looked at his hands, at what they had done, and yet had to do and thought of what he most feared and desired. As both hands and eyes conspire to seize the world, each will have its own darkness. My eyes see things yet to be but only my hands can make them

so. When the sandpainting of my destiny has colored the sands of my life, what my hand will do, not my eyes, is all I will see in this world.

Sky He Sees's warriors were first to reach him.

"Makona! We bring you a man to fix your justice upon him," said the lightning painted warrior.

They dropped their burden at Makona's feet with no gentleness. The dying warrior in the deerskin sling groaned and one hand twitched.

"He is a man from my clan. Why is he brought to me in this pitiable state?" said Makona, staring at the face of the dying warrior with recognition. Even as he asked, Makona's eyes strayed to the west and the three Kachinas who made their way slowly to him.

"He swam to Mag-Way-Ya's side of the river. He is once a man of your house but in battle, killed two of your own clansmen. His treachery to our Pueblo is unthinkable, but the knife he has for your name is far greater. Sky He Sees bid us bring him to you that you may have the sweet satisfaction of revenge by your own hand."

"He is dying already. It seems he does not need my help. What could I do but speed up what he is already doing slow," said Makona, staring at the grievous wounds that already marked the dying warrior.

"Great Chief Sky He Sees insists that you have the right and the duty."

"Sky He Sees loves the killing in me. Why to please him, should I not dig up all the recently dead and kill them again so Sky He Sees will smile and smile yet again?"

The tenor of Makona's speech, bordering on sedition as it touched on Sky He Sees, made the young warriors restless and uncomfortable in his presence. Then too there was a wildness to his speech and manner that were tinged with traces of madness.

"We have done what we are instructed to do. If you have no further need of us, we will return to Sky He Sees's Pueblo," said the young warrior with lightning streaks marking his cheeks. There was reproach in his voice. The young man stared at Makona with the arrogance youth ever holds for older men who rule them.

"Go. And bless Sky He Sees for this sweet reminder that killing is so loved in me, it dances forever."

"We will bring him your good wishes," said the man who wore lightning and was not aware that Makona had offered any. Without looking back at him, the young men turned and ran back the way they had come. Makona stared at their retreating backs. He resented their coming almost as much as he dreaded the approach of the three Kachinas who were drawing ever closer.

Makona addressed the dying warrior.

"Can you speak?"

The still breathing body before him did not stir.

"Can you listen? If words have meaning to you, then reach inside yourself and die at the stopping place. Three Kachina's this way come, come they for you or me, I can not say. But your blood is a sweet inviting. You would be better dead and past their inhuman desires."

If the dying warrior heard him, he gave no sign.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Makona marked that it was strange to see how the spirit sisters moved above the ground. Kachinas were more of air and sky but there was a savage grace to their march across the desert. They were like rainbow colored snakes that moved with sinuous ease. He could not say if they

ran or walked or even if their feet touched the ground.

They were almost upon him. And then they were gone.

A seductive voice mocked him. "We are sewn in our skins too pretty for a man to stare at."

Makona whirled about. They who had been plainly in his sight and vanished in an eye blink, stood behind him.

"How did you get behind me?"

"We are ever behind you," said Sky Thunder Kachina. "Feel you not the hot hiss of our constant pursuit?" They came to within arms length of him.

"I would prefer you in front of me. I do not like this trickery," said Makona.

"Ahead. Behind. What does it matter? It is not your face but the back of your mind that is the door open to us," said Sky Thunder Kachina. She smiled sweetly at Makona and reached out one hand towards his face but did not quite touch him. Her hand was like a snake tongue, testing scents on the wind.

Makona recoiled at her nearness. "Why are you come to me again?"

Black Wind Kachina cackled with secret delight. "The wind turns us inside out. We run, legless, fly, wingless. Take heed, breathing not yet breathless Makona. There is no why we answer to."

"We see you Makona!" said Fire Kachina, bending over the body of the dying warrior. She dipped one finger in the blood and brought it to her lips, savoring the taste. "Makona is an open wound not filled with dust."

Black Wind Kachina, "And with our powers, we must blow it shut with his destiny."

"You owe this dying man your vengeance. On his reckoning and yours, we are invited," said Sky Thunder Kachina. Her hand caressed Makona's cheek and he backed away as if he had been

struck.

"What! You welcome not my loving touch?" protested Sky Thunder Kachina with fake surprise.

Makona looked at her in full horror. Her face was harsh ruined by time, wrinkled and soured, dissipated and dreary in every aspect. To hear endearments from those loathsome lips made Makona's skin crawl.

She spoke in her most sex-husked voice. "If that you must refuse, we have other gifts. But you do not know what you give up. I am skilled in sweet love and there are corpses if they could but speak, would earnestly tell you so."

Her taunting laughter echoed loud enough to touch the distant hills.

"You make sport of me," said Makona, offended.

"No. For there's not a bone of fun left in you. What we make of you is something else," said Fire Kachina, sucking her blood tipped finger. Her voice rose with the seriousness of what she had to announce. "Sisters his blood grows cold! His breath fades, his heart ceases! Make haste! Else we lose him in the scheme of our dark heart's devising."

"What are you about?" asked Makona trying to probe their dark desires but there was no answer to that.

Black Wind Kachina rushed to the dying warriors side. She motioned with one withered hand to Makona. "Lend your manly strength to our task. Lift him up, stand him on his feet."

"To what end?"

"Yours," hissed Fire Kachina. "Hurry else we lose him!"

Makona took hold of the dying warrior and helped lift him up. Sky Thunder held him up from the right, while Makona had his left side. Fire Kachina stood behind the dying warrior. Wrapping

one arm round his chest in a circling embrace, she steadied him. With her other hand, she took the dying warrior by the hair and lifted his head up off his chest.

The dying warrior was past all knowledge of what they did to him.

He was like a man without a skeleton, so feeble was the life left in him.

Black Wind Kachina stood in front of the dying warrior. She sucked in air greedily through her pursed lips.

"Hold him sisters! The moment is at hand!" cried Fire Kachina, holding his head in a grim parody of wakeful liveliness.

Black Sky Kachina seized the dying warrior in a feverish embrace and thrust her mouth against the dead warrior's lips. She thrust her tongue into his mouth and expelled her dark breath.

It was as if she had spit fire into him. He thrashed and screamed and lunged out of their grasp. His scream rent the air.

He tried to raise his hands, to ward off something he could not see but something overwhelmed him from within. He put his hands to his neck as if trying to tear loose hands that throttled him.

He gasped and could not breathe.

The grievous wound in his chest began to ooze. The dying warrior arched his back in utmost agony as if lightning passed through him.

He fell to the ground at their feet as if thrown there by some giant's hand. His face was contorted in a mortal agony Makona had never seen on the face of any man.

"He is dead," said Fire Kachina.

"Killed inside and out," said Black Sky Kachina

"Dead! Dead!" chanted Fire Kachina.

"Not dead and dead," said Sky Thunder, lit within by some secret delight. She plunged her hand inside the dying warrior's wound. She pulled out something she hid most carefully in her cupped hand. She crowed triumphantly like an eagle that has snared its prey.

She offered her harvest to Makona, clutched in one proffered bloody fist. "Would you see my pretty pretty? You need but reach out and take it, Makona."

Makona stared at them in terror.

"What have you done?" he said.

"Killed him for cowardice," said Fire Kachina with a wicked smile.

"And unkilld him for your greater glory," said Black Wind Kachina. "Oh he is scorched inside with the hot wind of my breath! As sweet to breath in him as to eat him!"

The body at Makona's feet stirred as if some animal lived under the skin. It flopped over on its side, shuddered and rolled over until the dead warrior's face looked at the sky through sightless eyes. He was dead, Makona believed it to be so, but yet the body moved.

The dead warrior's face was burnt around the edges as if held to a fire. The eyes, closed in death, trembled and then opened. Two eyes as lifeless as stones moved in their sockets. Something powered the dead warrior, something drove his bones and muscles. He raised a hand toward the Kachinas, as if about to make a plea.

"Our gift of revenge to put you farther down life's path," said Sky Thunder Kachina. "A slave with absolute loyalty. A dead warrior that none but you can kill entire."

"Why? Why call this foulness up, this singular horror fit only for the burial grounds? Of what use is the dead to me in life?"

"Learn our lesson Makona. Would not such a being have single-minded purpose? Would not this dead warrior serve you without mortal failings? He does not breathe, tire, thirst, seethe with

human jealousy or plot against you. You would hold his only desire, so he would follow you even if you leapt to the moon."

"Why? I ache to know the shape of this desire. This is too much to think on. My mind is assaulted," Makona's mind seemed to have some wound in it. Shock and outraged sense were at war on his face.

Sky Thunder Kachina kept her bloody hand out to him. "Our desire is only to lift you up higher than a grave, so high you seem not to be in it."

"I am over mystified. My reason totters. I would have you send him away!"

Makona was a man almost in full flight.

The dead warrior began to move. His arms and legs were clumsy, with the newborn weakness of a birth splattered fawn. He stood up, lips moving, eyes beseeching the beings in front of him. No words came from his lips.

"Calm yourself Makona," said Sky Thunder Kachina. "There is no harm in this dead man for you. He is but a tool shaped to fit your hand."

"I did not ask for this," complained Makona.

"Oh but you did, in vaulting ambition," said Fire Kachina.

"In dreams that shook us in our spirit world," said Black Wind Kachina.

"Believe you this Makona, what is in you, has asked for all this," said Sky Thunder Kachina. Her reassuring tone held a note of reasonableness.

"It reeks of inmost depravity," said Makona and he could not bring himself to look at the dead man who stood in front of him.

"Can you refuse our gift, we who offered you first Shaman of Kawdor, then proclaimed you Great Chief. To turn away one gift, is to overturn them all," said Fire Kachina. "Think Makona.

Think! You can not unbecome yourself."

"What would you have me do?" cried Makona, feeling trapped and full of fear.

"Such a little thing," said Sky Wind Kachina.

"But great in outcome," promised Black Wind Kachina.

"Bind this being to you. It can not speak until you speak for it," said Fire Kachina.

"It has no breath till you whisper for it," said Black Wind Kachina.

"It can not carry its heart for you, because it has none till you invoke it," said Sky Thunder Kachina.

Makona looked at the dead warrior.

"Is this the key that unlocks Falcon, who is a door that stands in my way to be Great Chief?"

"Ask yourself? And see if the answer is not already in your dreaming bones," said Fire Kachina.

"Will this killed thing, kill for me?"

"Ask him after you have invoked him," said Sky Thunder Kachina. "How can we say what you will command him to do?"

"I need time to think," said Makona, oppressed by their desires.

"You've had as long as it takes for blood to clot. There is no more time!" raged Sky Thunder Kachina. "What's in my hand cries for an answer!"

"This thing you propose. It inflicts a cruelty."

"Of the deepest kind," said Sky Thunder Kachina.

"Will it still feel human feelings? Will it suffer?"

"It is the most exquisite of pains in flesh and spirit. It will suffer past all human measure," said Black Wind Kachina who shivered at an imagined deliciousness.

"Who am I to cause such pain. It goes beyond ordinary vengeance," said Makona, resisting the idea.

"He who would be Great Chief does not have ordinary ambition. His vengeance should loom ever large against the hurtful sky," said Fire Kachina.

"And if I refuse?" said Makona but was now retreating from his mindful caution.

"He is unremembered insensate dust," said Fire Kachina. "and so are your dreams."

Makona gave way.

"What am I to do?"

"I have a sweetmeat. A piece of dead warrior's heart in my hand," said Sky Thunder Kachina and she held it up to Makona's face. "Eat my pretty pretty and the deed is done. By this act, you put the dead traitor under a spell of unawakening."

"I dare not," said Makona but he closed his eyes and then opened them again. His face hardened, his back straightened. The terror which had chased him, seem to fall away as if he had suddenly remembered some greatness in himself which lifted him up.

"I dare all!" He opened his mouth and Sky Thunder Kachina put the bloody flesh upon his tongue.

It revolted him. Makona's senses rebelled but yet he tasted. And held the heartflesh on his tongue until he resolved to do it. Finding courage at last, with gagging effort, Makona tilted his head back and swallowed.

In that instant, the dead warrior staggered under a swift blow as if a bewitched arrow had pierced him.

The dead warrior clutched his chest and turned his gaze toward Makona.

His moving lips which had formed soundless words, moved again and shaped a new word.

He seemed to have a voice.

The dead warrior's voice was loud as a woman's scream and as full of pain.

"MAKONA!"

Makona shuddered.

He now lived in a world where even the dead spoke his name.

If it was a kind of fame, it scared Makona to the bone.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Kalaw, Makona's wife stood beside the fire pit, adding logs to the fire. It blazed up suddenly, the weird light outlined her harsh and unforgiving face in fierce red light. She was tall and dark like the women of the Northern clans. The mask of Kalaw's face wore womanly beauty like a shield.

A shadow danced at the edge of the fire. Something dead that still moved with a semblance of life, came into the room with her.

A woman of less strength, would have viewed the apparition that appeared before her with almost mortal alarm. But her gaze was unwavering, her outward appearance calm. The dead man moved closer to her.

"Are you a ghost of some warrior killed in battle?" she asked fearlessly.

"I stand where no member of my race ever stood before. I am a warrior. I am also dead. But a ghost has more in this world than I. I walk between the worlds, without the first white light of dawn that is the breath of man."

"I was neither told of your shaping nor warned of your coming. Speak dead warrior, but

recently dead. Who's sent you on the path to me, that I must see you and hear what terror lies upon your lips?"

"Makona shaped and sent me," said the dead warrior.

"Power I knew he had, but not this knowing of the black arts," mused Kalaw with admiration.

"My heart is surprised to see he could will such a thing to be."

"Three Kachinas gave him their help and my hurt," the dead warrior explained. "Their contrivance and sorcery but done for Makona's sake."

"So you are a spirit borne being. For harm or other?"

"If harm is in the fashioning of me, it is not for you," said the dead warrior in a tone meant to reassure.

The dead warrior held out his hands entreatingly to her. "I fell cowardly in battle. Makona your husband, full of inherited sorceries, newly named, Shaman of Kawdor, keeps me from my grave rest! I beg a favor of you!"

"What has this to do with me?"

"Hear my message, woman of Makona and free my craven bones to journey into dust. Does not a wife share a husband's power or can will him to invoke it at her bidding. I ache for ancient sleep!" He moved closer, so close his torn and blood-stained garments brushed against her.

Kalaw moved back, repulsed by the sight and touch of the being before her.

"Whose message?" she asked, choosing to deal with only that part of what he said that had interest to her.

"Makona's. Every word he shaped, I have with me, his voice, his breath, I carry all with me, since I have none of my own."

Kalaw nodded. "I have heard of such things. Step back from me and speak loathsome thing.

What says my husband's tongue in yours?"

The dead warrior walked through the fire, unhurt. His tattered clothing smoked and smoldered but he took no heed. He turned about and faced her. The fire danced between them.

He spoke in a voice that sounded much like Makona's. "Three Kachinas, Sky Thunder, Fire and she of the Black Wind overtook me on the day of my success. They spoke in words of burnished prophecy."

"Why have they come?" Kalaw looked alarmed, as if uncertain such intervention could be favorable.

"It is not for me to know." said the dear warrior. "There is more to his message. Will you hear it?"

"Go on," she said a touch impatiently.

He continued to speak in the voice that was so much like Makona's. "I hang balanced on a knife edge of promises from a world beyond human knowledge. I would clearly know all they said. But when I bared my desire to question them further, the three Kachinas made themselves air, into which they vanished. Before I could move from that place where the spirit had visited me, runners came bearing words from Great Chief Sky He Sees, who hailed me 'Shaman of Kawdor'! By that clan sign, before, those dark Kachinas so named me! But also said of me, that a time will come in which this will be true. 'Hail Makona, Great Chief you will be hereafter!' I send word so you can rejoice in the spirit's show of favor to us. I could not travel to you myself because the world is changed from what it was. But let your heart soar, for as I rise, clan wife, so do you. Lay it to your heart Kalaw and see if it grows there."

Kalaw smiled. "You are well sent."

"So ends his tongue in mine. Have I leave now to die? I beg you let me die!" He leaned so far

forward in his eagerness he was almost in the fire again.

Kalaw waved her hand dismissively at him. "I am not one known for granting favors," Ignoring his plea, she said, "Shaman of Ga-Mis he is, from birth inheritance, and now Kawdor and more is promised!"

"Yes. Promised in prophecy all seeing."

Kalaw had more to say. She seemed not over happy but rather subtly discontented at the news. "But a promise must be fulfilled with action. It's good to have promises but I fear Makona's nature. He is too full of the milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way."

The dead warrior responded with great bitterness. "As he did with me, I've no proof of that. I beg him for death's release but he is content that I wear his revenge until he's had his use of me. I'd think there'd be no more milk in him than in a dead mother. But then I've only offended him once. You've slept with him."

Kalaw raged at him. "Such insolence in one so recently dead!"

"I am not myself," said the dead warrior. "I am unanswered in my requests. It makes me unkind."

"I am not interested in you, insult me or not. You are nothing to me! It is my husband Makona's place in the world that concerns me most."

"And mine only in leaving it."

"I know my husband all too well. Makona has greatness in him for he is not without skill and ambition. But Makona was born without the wicked qualities of mercilessness and deviousness that should go with it."

"Makona ate of my heart while I yet lived and conjured me in the doing, as you see me," said the dead warrior with sorrowing mien. "If my punishment seems a softness in his character to

you then you are such whose own kindly breath will break stone."

"I know him and you do not! What he would highest value, Makona would make sacred. What he would not play false, he would yet want to strongly win. Makona has a tender heart that cries when it should instead kill!"

"Can we be speaking of the same man? What tender heart is it, that pursues and punishes the dead after death?" cried the dead warrior.

"This tiresome prattle of yourself is wearying and most unpleasant to me."

The dead warrior acknowledged the gesture of dismissal Kalaw made to him and backed away.

"I have great things to contend with," Kalaw said and seemed glad for the task.

Kalaw moved away from the fire and stood in the entranceway to her house. She held her arms out to the dark wind that came down from the mountains. Her eyes searched the silent heart of the desert. "Come home to me Makona, that I may pour my dark, clear visions in your ear, and whip you with the venomous valor of my tongue!" Only the hot indifferent wind answered her.

"Where is Makona?" She demanded to know, whirling to face the dead warrior.

"He comes. He goes. How am I to know. If he was not behind me, following my steps then I do not know," said the dead warrior with a look that said his whereabouts were of no concern to him.

"I have such passion to see his face!" Kalaw said, her voice husky with sex and tenderness. "Good husband, if you were here in my arms, I'd poison all conflicting thoughts that stop you from stealing the rainbow that circles the center of the earth! Three Kachinas have clothed you in the robes of a Great Chief! If Makona must kill to have, then I am all that wishes you to have, and urges you to it."

"What love is it that holds so strong to hate!" said the dead warrior. He was overwhelmed with the ferocity of her darkness. "Two-hearted woman release me! Have I not done what I was bidden to do?"

"Be still!" she hissed in agitation.

He insisted. "Free me in death, woman of Makona! Or take up my cause and urge your husband to it."

Kalaw turned and stared at him. She said coyly, "Perhaps I shall but...only if you have said all that was said."

He hurried to tell the rest. "Great Chief Sky He Sees comes here tonight."

Kalaw, feeling betrayed, lashed out at him with harsh words. "You are a mad liar to say it! Is not Makona who sent you, standing even now with Sky He Sees?"

With as much patience as his eagerness for oblivion would allow, the dead warrior said, "It pleases you to disagree but it is true. The Great Chief is coming. I outdid them in travel, although dead for lack of breath, having breath scarce enough to make up this message. And now to my grave?"

Kalaw spat at him. "Go! Drag your bones to your final dust, what does it mean to me! I'd release you did I know the means, for the sight of you offends me but Makona's hand is on you, not to be undone by me. Still you are not without your uses. You did in truth bring great news."

Kalaw lingered in the doorway. She put her lips together and shrilly whistled a harsh bird-like piping. It was a call of awakening and a summoning.

Kalaw stared at the desert. A bird cried out a harsh 'KAW KAW' and she lifted her hand. A black crow winged through the doorway of the house and came to rest in her outstretched hand. He beat the air with his wings and raucously screeched 'KAW KAW'.

"Where shall I go?" asked the dead warrior, seeking guidance.

"Find a dark corner, out of my sight. Some use may be found for you. For now the sight of you, makes me most ill. Be gone!"

"But where?"

"Any place out of sight of my eyes and within reach of my voice, should I see fit to command you. Go now or I shall let my crow child taste your eyes. Go!"

The dead warrior bowed and left Makona's dwelling. He cowered in the dust near a refuse heap behind the house. He sat in the shadow of the house walls, a shadow in the shadows, awaiting release without hope of any.

Kalaw stroked the dark bird's head. "Are you hungry, little one? I have something that once was a human being to make a meal for you."

The crow settled its wings and seemed content in her hand.

"You are death's messenger," she cooed to him. "Bird of death you are hoarse in croaking the fatal entrance of Sky He Sees under my roof."

She stepped outside in the sunlight but the heat of midday seemed too intense. She moved back into the looming coolness of the house. Even confined within her house, her mind yet traveled.

Her voice rose in husky invocation to the spirits. "Are you in a night out there Kachinas, that spoke to Makona? Do my words reach you? I have a hunger after marvels, a thirst for wondrous things. I too have a desire to be a favored one of yours! Come, you Kachinas that know human thoughts, unsex me! Fill me full of wolfish cruelty. Make my blood thick, so neither sorrow nor mercy can flow through it. Come to my woman's breasts and make my milk the venom of a snake so I have no mother's loving thoughts!

The crow in her hands stabbed its beak at a piece of meat she held out to it. Her invocation to the spirits was not finished, the deepest wish yet to come.

"I call on the Kachinas who visioned for Makona, give him the sight and me the substance! Come thick night and shroud me in the darkest smoke of the spirit house so my keen knife doesn't see the wound it makes! Let no betraying emotion cut through the war blanket of the dark to cry 'Peace! Mercy!'"

Suddenly the brightly sunlit doorway was blocked by a shadowy figure. Makona came through the entrance and it was plain that he had overheard her.

"Why cry for peace and mercy? The war is over. Or is it my return you wail against, for fear I was a bear in war and might be one in peace?"

Kalaw rushed to embrace him, but Makona motioned for her to stop. She halted, but a step away. The black crow in her hands, upset by the quick movement toward Makona, flapped its wings and took flight. It arched through the doorway and out into the sun-drenched world beyond, startling Makona as it sped past his head. Kalaw seemed not to notice its flight.

"So steeped am I in warcraft's aftermath, I am not fit to be touched by human hands"

She smiled at him. "Then you are promised the sweetest embrace when you are again ready for it."

Makona did not seem comfortable in his own house. He stared at the walls like a stranger visiting a place he had never seen before.

Kalaw stared at him in dismay. His visage was ravaged. A man with a mortal wound looks thus. In her voice it sounded more a note of reproach than a sign of compassion. "My husband you have the manner of a man too long in the heated eye of the sun."

Makona's face contorted with memory. He suggested that it might be otherwise, "Or of one

kept too long in the dark."

Kalaw was reminded suddenly of the news. "Makona !Shaman of Ga-Mis, now you are clad in the war robes of Kawdor, greater than both! You hold the honor of two houses like a man who has tamed two of the directions and has the wind twice at his back!"

"Brought by death, sealed by traitorousness," said Makona but this disavowal meant nothing to Kalaw.

"Your words in the mouth of the dead, have transported me beyond the unchanging present, and I feel now the future in our hands!"

Makona shook his head. Other concerns, more immediate than that moved him. "I am close pursued Kalaw. My dearest love, Great Chief Sky He Sees comes here tonight, with Falcon and others of note from the Great Circle. My primacy in battle has won me the right to boast and celebrate within the walls of my Pueblo."

Kalaw had a calculating look upon her face. "Sky He Sees comes. And when leaves from here?"

"Figure all this day and night to discharge our duty to make all proper noises that avow our time of greatness. Praise can not last so long as rancor. Morning should see an end to it. My guess then is Sky He Sees leaves tomorrow by intent."

Kalaw stared at her hands. She moved one smooth-skinned hand, clawlike and her long nails seemed sharp enough to scratch out the eyes of the world.

She hesitated before she spoke, like a cougar not ready to spring.

"Never will the sun see that day!"

Makona understood her in an instant. He said calmly enough, "Those are words that murder!"

"Only if the strength to act behind them follows."

Makona flinched. His legs trembled and something cold as the grave seemed to enter Makona's house. He shivered and moved closer to the firepit. Its warmth did not reach him. The chill in him came from his own bones and not the air all around. Kalaw stood behind him patiently, awaiting an answer.

Makona kept his back turned to Kalaw.

At last he spoke, "When first the Kachinas spoke to me, I thought it would come to this."

Kalaw came up beside him and took him by the arm. "Your face, new named Shaman of Kawdor, is a bright burnished war shield where men may read all too clearly the reflection of your strange thoughts."

"Perhaps I shall live the rest of my life, showing my back to the world."

She yanked on his arm, spinning him round to face her.

"When the spirits promise you great favor, you must meet it with great desire! Are you the river of strength I married or a pebble washed away in it?"

"Have I not given enough past all my strength! But am I now to be asked to rest from this battle by imagining the next?" Makona felt oppressed.

"This is but a subtlety. Smaller than a spear thrust."

Makona shook his head. "A spear thrust is in the arm sent but a lie is large and lodged in the heart. "

"Let me be your heart, and you need not worry your own."

Makona nodded as if that were something that could be done just by the saying of it. "You Kalaw, are as affected as I by the mad dreams of those I met in the desert! But should we act on the shifting sands of their peyote dreams?"

"Can you give up all honor? Be no longer your birthright, Shaman of Ga-Mis. Refuse to walk

in the robes of the Shaman of Kawdor?" she demanded.

"I can not give them up. My whole life is aimed at them," admitted Makona knowing all too well he had no refusal in him. Still his thoughts were bleak, the first imagined step on this journey, daunting.

"Then the price of the prophecy is to be paid?" urged Kalaw.

Makona's answer was so soft, so reluctantly said it did not rise above the sound of the fire.

"Say it again. As if you mean it!" cried Kalaw, her hand clutching his arm so hard it pained him.

"YES!" raged Makona. "I would kill the whole world! But the world would see it in my face, and dodge the blow. I fear my face has such things in it as are too easily known."

"One must behave as occasion demands. Even though it might be that you hold welcome in your eyes, when a knife is in your hand. A woman know how to hold her face and thoughts apart. I can instruct you in this art," counseled Kalaw in a tone of ringing finality.

"How am I to act?"

"Not so much to act as seem to be. You must look like the innocent flower but be the biting snake under it," she counseled him.

"But of my other duties?"

"Sky He Sees must be provided for. This is my domain," Her face took on a crafty, eager look.

"Plotting is woman's work. Design always shows on a man's face."

"Then take care so that you do not know how death is be arranged. If you do not know the shaping dark, it can not show on your face."

"I know best by knowing nothing," Makona smiled bitterly. His voice reached the darker

irony. "There is wisdom in the lack of it."

"Put this night's dark business into my care and arrangement. If we follow my path we'll give to all our nights and days to come, rule over many and mastery over some," she said and her night-piercing eyes flashed.

"And if they ask me what darkens my face? If they ask what lurks behind my eyes? What then Kalaw? How am I to lie with a woman's easy grace?"

She spoke with certainty. "Only look up clear in all innocence. If you need to explain darkness, tell them the war still lives in you. It is a darkness as big as any other and they will understand. Remember this Makona, as a lesson you must in future days master. To change your face with each thought that's behind it, is ever to fear."

"Am I to have hopes of being some day fearless and thoughtless," said Makona with mockery.

She acted as if he had not spoke. The matter seemed settled once and for all in her mind and manner. "Leave all the rest to me. Go and rest for the night and the dark yet to come. I'll meet Sky He Sees here and put on a good face for the one you do not yet wear." She was done with him.

Kalaw left him standing by the fire. She had much to do to prepare the Pueblo for the coming of Sky He Sees and the hue and cry of great victory.

Makona stared into the fire, unwarmed and unkind in every aspect of his being. He brushed his hands across his chest like a man dazed by a buffet in battle, and uncertain where the wound lay. He aimed his thoughts at the heart of the fire.

"Do I live? How can that be when I feel I am living at the bottom of a grave."

The fire burned low. Makona dreamed but did not sleep.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Great Chief Sky He Sees waved at the throngs of people who stepped back to make way for him as he entered the Pueblo of Makona. He lifted his staff and made the signs of blessing. The feverish joy in the people increased at the mere sight of Sky He Sees. Voices called out his name. Singers made songs honoring him. Praise and love rained down on Sky He Sees from a thousand throats glad to be near him.

Great Chief Sky He Sees addressed a group of men who bore down on his party, laden with gifts and welcoming food and drink. "This Pueblo has a pleasant sight. The air has the sweet honey of night in it." His voice scarce could be heard above the riotous acclaim.

Builds Fire rode at Sky He Sees's side in a litter pulled by two of Sky He Sees's strongest warriors. He said by way of gracious explanation. "Makona's spirit is the sunlight that makes this Pueblo grow."

Kalaw, clanwife of Makona, came forward through the crowd. She moved like a great canoe, her face the carved prow that cut through the crowd. The joyous noise ceased as if a wind from the grave had quelled it. People backed away, voices stilled, faces masked to hide any betraying emotion.

Sky He Sees was surprised at the severity of the reaction. He did not know if they made way for her out of respect or fear. The sudden silence was thunderous. He thought to make up for this sudden awkwardness by kind flattery. "Kalaw! Beloved of Makona. Where you walk the air is charmed by magic. Your beauty rises like smoke up to the sky."

Kalaw gazed angrily at the silent faces of the people of the Pueblo. She turned back and faced the Great Chief with a becoming smile as if nothing was amiss. She said to Sky He Sees in a

most gracious voice, "It's not true. I have an aspect that frightens birds."

"So sweet are you, even in modesty," Sky He Sees continued. "Kalaw, human love that follows us, sometimes is trouble."

Kalaw smiled but it was without warmth. "No love you bear, could be trouble."

"A Great Chief's love is nothing but trouble," said Sky He Sees still clothed in the cares of the world. "but we are thankful to have love at all."

"If I were to ask how I should bid the Great Spirit reward us for anything done right in the world, your presence is the greatest honor I could ask for," said Kalaw, bowing to the Great Chief with respect

Sky He Sees smiled but the ritual flattery however sincerely meant, lost its savor when it outspoke the world. He acknowledged her praise and gave back some of his own. "The trouble I cause your house, is trouble that comes because of the great love I bear Makona. He would honor my son but he is the one honor belongs to. He deserves glories greater than I can give him."

Kalaw demurred. "His battle deeds in every way twice done, and then done double, would not begin to equal those honors deep and broad which Great Chief Sky He Sees brings upon our house by being in it. In the manner of those of old who walk the warrior's path up to the sky, we are those whose chants sing your names."

Sky He Sees looked around for some place to sit. The journey had tired him. The blazing sun in the sky, oppressed him. And the man he most wanted to see, was nowhere in sight. This cawing bird of a woman, meant well, but the man who was an object of his immediate affection, was not in sight. Sky He Sees felt his absence inconsiderate.

"Where is my new bird in flight, the Shaman of Kawdor? We pursued him closely but he travels the desert well and his great love for you, sharp as a lizard's claw, has helped him to his

house before us."

"He awaits you inside," said Kalaw and her face was a mask that hid her meaning. "How may I meet your immediate needs?" "If it pleases you, we desire to be out of the sun, and in welcoming shade. We need a brief rest so we are not tired in our growing joy."

Kalaw motioned for them to follow her and said, as she moved through the parting crowds. "The house of Makona is the house of Sky He Sees. So it shall be forever."

Great Chief Sky He Sees moved up beside her. He reached out for her. "Give me your hand. Lead me to Makona. I shall weave of his name the highest battle legend. When the histories of the people are sung, no one will sing of Sky He Sees without singing of Makona. Come. Show me to him. He and I are hawks whose wings ride the same wind."

They made their way through the Pueblo.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

At the door to Makona's house, Great Chief Sky He Sees paused before the opened door. It was plain something troubled him. When all who traveled with Sky He Sees were about to enter with him, Great Chief Sky He Sees turned to them with a grave look on his face. He gave instructions to his followers.

"Wait outside for me! It is my wish to speak alone with Makona!"

His two sons had a look of immediate disappointment. They clearly felt slighted.

Sky He Sees noted it but had other concerns. "My two sons, Falcon and Diving Bird, will stand guard," He turned away from them and addressed Makes Dead and Builds Fire. "After a time, I will ask Makes Dead and Builds Fire to come inside. When I have said what it is my mind

to say to Makona alone," Sky He Sees nodded to Kalaw. "and to his good wife, I would command your presence for counsel within."

He further commanded. "Lonewolf, who carries my words ever faithfully through out the nation, and has all my praise, stand near for I may have messages to send."

Great Chief Sky He Sees had an expression on his face that made him look old and weary with the cares of the nation. His request was honored by all and Sky He Sees alone entered the house with Kalaw at his side.

Falcon and Diving Bird stood guard outside Makona's house. The oldest and youngest son of the Great Chief were a study in contrasts. Falcon much favored his father Sky He Sees in looks and bearing. He had his mighty frame, his solid bones and height. Diving Bird favored his dead mother, slight of built, delicate of face and form. Lonewolf, tall and lean with a runner's grace such as befitted Sky He Sees's swiftest messenger, stood beside them.

Builds Fire and Makes Dead moved away, seeking the sheltering shade of a nearby house. They sat with their backs to the wall.

Builds Fire, comfortably settled, asked. "What make you of this sudden need for talk alone with Makona?"

Makes Dead shrugged. "Who knows what is in the mind of a Great Chief? Or in the mind of any man for that matter. No face is a map that we can truly read."

Builds Fire was not content with that answer.

"I marked how Sky He Sees's joy at our triumph over Mag-Way-Ya was short lived. He acts more as a man who grieves than savors victory," observed Builds Fire.

"Where treachery mars the nation," suggested Makes Dead as an answer. "should not those who have worked most to defeat it, be taken into Sky He Sees's confidence. Makona may be

given care to cut the wounds of treachery from the body of the nation. He is a man who deserves all favor."

"He is great in war," said Builds Fire in a tone that suggested that he was not saying all he knew. "I have seen the fury that is in his heart."

"Sky He Sees can't stomach a man who has a divided mind," said Makes Dead. "So the treachery of A-wis, who was Shaman of Kawdor, must have been a knife at his heart. Makona is a man who feels the good in life, its sincere purpose. He is of one heart. Would Great Chief Sky He Sees not find in Makona then, a heart that he could unburden his heart to?"

"Great Chief Sky He Sees is not a man to confide his inmost thoughts. He holds himself apart," disagreed Builds Fire. "It is more likely they talk of Makona's succession as Shaman of Kawdor. A-wis, he who was Shaman of Kawdor let evil into his heart and became two-hearted. I knew A-wis. I understood his weaknesses. When temptation called his name, he did not seek a warrior's defense against it, but sought a surrender least damaging to his pride."

"You do not know Sky He Sees as I know him. His heart is not hidden," said Makes Dead. "Burdened as he is, he must ever fight the urge to howl his sorrows at the uncaring moon. But speak to me of that final battle, when Mag-Way-Ya joined his ancestors. I would know how the day went."

"It wearies me to think of it," confessed Builds Fire. "I would rather leave it unsaid."

"But tell me a little of it that you saw!" said Makes Dead. "Do me this kindness for the friendship we have long held. I have a strong wish to know."

"And I have a stronger wish to forget," said Builds Fire. "Even now the bright sun burns the horror into my heart so deep, that I can only wish for it a vast oblivion too big for thought or feeling or remembrance."

"If it troubles you to speak of what you did, tell me about Makona. Forget what your hands did and tell me of the hands of another, if that offers more comfort. Surely noble Makona's actions are not a horror to relate."

"War has not stained you with all its colors yet Makes Dead. When it spreads in your mind, you will but stare at things you can not see and wish never to speak of it!" said Builds Fire with all the cares of a warrior in his voice. "You will never understand grief until you have cried the tears of a warrior."

Builds Fire stared at the youthful face of Makes Dead. Makes Dead was well married, with sturdy children good to look upon and that were the future of the nation. Makes Dead had a young man's need for answers.

"I think you will not let me rest until you have some news of me."

Builds Fire appeared thoughtful but his reluctance to speak was still great.

Makes Dead sensed his refusal and made further attempt to sway him. "If not incident recalled, just say how you find battle. For me it means one thing, for you another. You are more bloodied than I, stronger in war's arts. Still I know that how my mind sees it, could most benefit by what you know."

"You seek my feeling about war, my inmost thoughts. That I give you the residue that war has left in my mind?"

"I would be content with that," said Makes Dead.

"War is a bird who sits on the high mesa and tell me its secret. It's bird song is in my heart," said Builds Fire like a man remembering something that had graced him with its beauty. "I saw him at the end of day, as I and Makona walked through the dead we had brought the world."

Makes Dead returned Builds Fire's smile, glad he had convinced Builds Fire to this confiding,

and settled his back more comfortably against the stone walls of the house.

Builds Fire's smile stayed in place but it did not match the spirit of his words.

"Do you see that obscene carrion bird, black feathers aglisten with innocent blood?"

There was a hurt, aching wildness that flared in Builds Fire's eyes. His voice dropped to a whisper.

"Makes Dead, this bird, he comes into the world with me to feast on a child I did most cleverly spear!"

Builds Fire laughed. It was an unnatural laugh as if ripped from some mad throat.

"He walked as a man," cried Builds Fire. "held weapons like a man, but was a child who thought to make himself bigger than his own life. Did I look at legs too short to march with a warrior's stride, at hands too small to grip the spear with forceful intent. Did I spare him? No. War demands you not look too closely in the eyes of those you would kill. Why? For fear you would see your own face there! Pity which is the very root of life itself, has no place there."

"You need say no more. It is certain it troubles your heart and is not good to speak of," said Makes Dead in a voice as full of sorrow as a night is full of stars. "I am sorry I asked so much of you."

Builds Fire, trapped in a dark thicket of memories, seemed a man who had lost his way in life. He did not act as if Makes Dead's words had reached him.

"See how calmly he opens his claws, and eats with most respectful dignity," said Builds Fire, living again in that moment. "Makes Dead! When first I looked at that black bird, that gleaner of discarded lives, his dead yellow lidless eyes looked at me with love and adoration, for it was my killing hands that brought him this child feast!"

Builds Fire's voice had risen till it was almost a scream.

"But when I did look again! It was I who was but another feast, not yet laid out! I tell you he has nothing in his eyes except a forbearance as old as death itself! He waits for me and he will have me!"

Makes Dead put a soothing hand on Builds Fire's shoulder.

Unashamed, Builds Fire wept.

"That is war's gift to my mind. I take comfort that vultures so clearly find me desirable," finished Builds Fire.

"Try not to think about it," cautioned Makes Dead, his own heart grieving for the hurt in Builds Fire. "What has happened is over and we are in another day."

Builds Fire shook his head. "War never ends in the mind."

He cast his eyes upward. He saw something in the empty sky above him.

"Look Makes Dead! See how he hovers ever above me on ominous wings, spilling drops of blood down on me as he flies," cried Builds Fire.

Makes Dead did not look up to the sky.

He was afraid he would see what Builds Fire saw.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Makona sat on the highest roof in the Pueblo. From his vantage point, all the houses of the sleeping Pueblo stretched out before him. He saw how the luminous moonlight silvered the land, giving birth to form, carving the high mesas out of night. Only the night guards and dogs roamed the night watches below him. The Dead Warrior under Makona's curse of unawakening, stood silently beside him.

The dead warrior beseeched him. "And when shall I be dust?"

Makona was abrupt. He said somewhat curtly, "When the Shaman of Kawdor is tired of you."

"And when will that be?"

"When the flesh is so corrupt, it offends me. For now, you who know death so well, will be a sounding board for my plan."

Warily, the dead warrior asked. "What is the plan?"

Makona looked the picture of innocence. "Love of a kind is the plan and the plan is death."

"You sound doubtful of success."

"More sure than doubtful," said Makona, staring at the walls. "And that is the trouble with it."

"If it could be done once and for all, then it's best done quickly," advised the dead warrior.

Makona shook his head. "Nothing that momentous is ever so simple. If Sky He Sees's assassination could entrap its consequences, then that one killing blow might remake the world as we wish it. But upon the edge of this coursing arrow, poised to kill, this act risks all the life yet to come!"

The dead warrior thought of himself. "I know of no life yet to come. Only oblivion. Release me to a coward's grave. I move by your magic alone, but yet my mind and body aches with the torment of knowing its own death!"

Makona studied the decaying condition of the dead warrior before him. The sight of him seemed to fill him with a weary ache, a bitterness about what was yet to be.

"Might I not soon follow you?" mused Makona. "Perhaps I should keep you to light the way before me. When I find the Kachina-shaped death they plan for me, when these dark women have had my bones for necklaces, will they make me you? Do I not risk what has befallen you?"

The dead warrior protested, "But I have no wisdom from my own death to light the way to

yours. I am but a poor stupid thing stealing words half forgotten."

Makona seemed much vexed. "Be still and don't plague me while I think!"

Undeterred, the dead warrior posed a question. "But Makona do you still have judgment here? Is it the spirits prophecies that rule you? Or do you follow your wife's deadly instructions, which so darkly learned, may return to plague the makers?"

"Whose plaything are you, that you question me so? Even my own familiars plot against me in word and deed!" raged Makona.

The dead warrior was unmoved by his temper. He said calmly, "Even-handed justice is a two-edged knife."

"Your words leave a taste of poison on my lips. If you can say nothing of use, earthly or otherwise, I bid you be still."

The dead warrior seemed to ponder this. "If I speak to your problem, will you let me die finally?"

"Find my most succeeding thoughts for me and win your way to your grave," promised Makona with the air of a man who promises nothing but words.

The dead warrior strode the length of the roof, self absorbed in contemplation. He was arranging his thoughts before he spoke. Outlined against the night sky, he turned and faced Makona. He raised up two fingers and held them in front of Makona's face. He said, "First, Sky He Sees loves you and his love is the heart of the nation. To kill one who offers both love and honor to you, is a strong tide against the moon of your ambition. Secondly, by taking him into your house, you have made him and accord him all protection due a member of your own house. To kill him would be seen as killing one of your own blood. You are in custom and honor bound to shut the doors against his murder."

"I feel those edges, pricking me," agreed Makona. "But if I grant you the truth as you count it, what does it lead to?"

"You, Makona, can not bear the knife yourself. Or it must be made to look as if someone else has done it. To evade any taint of guilt, is your only path."

Makona admitted. "I sense the same but how to escape it? And besides Sky He Sees has used his powers so meek, has been so just in his rule, that his virtues will plead like good spirits, storm-tongued, against those sensed to have done his taking off. No one can see any good in his death."

The dead warrior said simply. "Great deeds have great consequences. But you may outrun them."

"Pity, riding an avenging wind, will blow the horrid deed into every eye and those tears may drown the world and me in it."

"Human grief may be more shallow than you think. Who is to say how much love will last when the thing that is loved is gone from life. You surprise me Makona. I would not have thought you a man to hesitate."

Makona laughed bitterly.

"The world sleeps below but Makona does not. For you see, dead warrior, I have no knife to prick the sides of my intent, but only rising ambition, which overreaches itself and falls I know not where."

A furious hand found Makona's shoulder and shook it roughly.

Makona turned around slowly, certain of the person's identity even before he saw her face. He noted her fierce demeanor.

"My beloved wife, Kalaw! Why here's a face that knows only certainty. And all of that angry.

What in this world so inflames you!"

"Even a dog has more sense than to hide on this occasion!" she raged. "Great Chief Sky He Sees has near finished his meal of honor. And where are you? You consort idly with the unworthy dead! Why have you left the feasting?"

Makona seemed incurious. "Has he asked for me?"

Kalaw's word were knife sharp. "You know he has!"

Makona pointed to the night-drenched houses of the sleeping Pueblo. "The wind up here is rare and comes from a different direction. It decides things in me. What if I were to say, we'll go no further in this plan?"

Kalaw said nothing.

Makona went on hastily. "Sky He Sees has honored me of late. I have by war strength, earned bright silver opinions from all in the Pueblo which I could wear honor bright into our spoken history."

Kalaw said not a word. She simply stared at him, her face a dark tormented mask. A grave spawned bonepicker has such a face when it is coiled to spring on some hapless human.

Makona argued on. "Is it wise to cast aside glory so soon that was so difficult to win?"

When Kalaw spoke it was like the sting of a whip.

"Was the hope maddened by peyote dreams where you dressed yourself? Has it slept since? And now does it wake, to look so green and pale at what was planned so bravely and well! Are you for the word or the deed? If the first, that is how I will see your love of me. Just a word!"

Makona countered her onslaught. "Even the dead are useless counsel. If what I want, has doubt in it, am I less a man, that thinks?"

Kalaw's voice sank to an icy calm. She had the look of a serpent practiced in argument. "Fear

is not thought. It is the scream of your sex, dying in you. Are you a man or are you afraid to be the same in action and valor as you are in desire?"

Makona could not let that insult pass.

"I am a man!"

Kalaw opened her hands as if to catch something. She taunted him.

"Prove then you are not a coward like the company you keep. There's a poor example of a man. Decide! Will you let 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would' and end like the bear who caught no fish for fear of wetting its paws?"

"Peace! I dare do all that makes a man a man! Who dares do more is none."

Kalaw would not relent. "When you dared do it, then you were a man. You dared dream to be more than what you are. But now that precious time and willful opportunity is full ripe, doubt unmakes you."

"Enough."

But she was not through with him. "I have given suck and know how tender it is to love the babe that milks me. But if I'd dreamed to be more than I am and went back on it, why then, even as the babe smiled in my face, I'd rather pluck my nipple from his boneless gums and dash his brains out!"

The dead warrior backed away. The dark force of her intent scared even him who should have been a being beyond fear.

"But if we should fail?" said Makona for that was the deepest secret heart of his worries.

Kalaw scoffed at the notion. "We fail? Carve your courage to the sticking place and we'll not fail! When Sky He Sees is sound asleep where his hard day's journey will so invite him, I will overpower his two night guards."

Makona cautioned. "You have not the strength." "No. But I have the guile. I'll lace their food and drink with secret plants, known only to me. I'll make memory, the keeper of the brain, nothing but smoke. The fetish bag of their reason will be the air that catches nothing. When they are safely taken in riotous night-drowned sleep, what cannot you and I perform upon the unguarded Sky He Sees? We'll put all the blame on his drugged warriors, who'll bear the guilt of our great killing."

Makona was amazed by the things that moved in her. "There is no woman fierce enough to be your equal! Future mother of sons, your undaunted spirit could conceive nothing but males! It is a plot to confound the stars themselves! When we mark with blood those sleepers of his own council and use their own knives on Sky He Sees, whom they are sworn to protect, who can doubt they've done the murder?"

Kalaw added fuel to the enthusiasm of his new fire. "Who would dare see it otherwise, as we'll make our public griefs a clamorous roar upon his death?"

"Alone I falter but with your words ringing me round like a forest of sheltering arrows, I am bolstered."

"Let me run ahead of you to show you a path and you can not fail," entreated Kalaw in her sweetest voice. Her mood had changed as Makona altered his to the shape of her designs.

Makona proclaimed. "I stand convinced. I'll throw my heart after yours. I'll bind my Dead Warrior to the deed as well. Come! Let's return to our guests and with much public affection, put on a show."

She further cautioned. "See that you do not forget Makona that a false face must hide what the false heart does know."

"Prick him with the arrow of your tongue, if you see him getting forgetful," suggested the

dead warrior with a sardonic smile.

Kalaw spat at him. "You are not dead enough to suit me."

Makona followed her off the darkened roof.

The dead warrior stared at a night which offered no shelter for one such as he.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

At the edge of the Pueblo, Builds Fire and his son Fire Child, walked a lonely night watch. Only coyotes giving mournful howl from the distant hills seemed to be in the world with them. Though both warriors searched the night with wary eyes for enemies, only shadows and the stillness of the desert seemed to dwell there.

Builds Fire walked like the proud father he was. His arm came to rest round the shoulders of his son, Fire Child. "How goes the night, boy?"

Fire Child shuddered. There was much of Builds Fire in his features and life had so far left his youthful face unmarked. He carried his father's spear for him, sharing in the task of night guard that was Builds Fire's duty. Fire Child seemed uneasy, restless in the comfort of his father's embrace.

"Father the night is very unlike itself. The moon is up. I have heard the night birds. Such things are usual comforts, but every shadow seems to hide a dark surprise. I sense something cold that seems to walk outside my vision. I can not find it's lair, yet I feel as if something stalks us."

"I too feel a cold wind but from direction it comes I can not say. Perhaps it comes from the

very heart of the earth itself," agreed Builds Fire.

"Something threatens but we can not see it," said Fire Child and his voice wavered in the still night air. "Father I welcome the red dawn's death of concealment."

Builds Fire tried to reassure him. "These are natural feelings. War's aftermath ruins nature for grace. But the moon rose at first bird cry and that would seem to say, things are right with the world. It is in its season."

"No. I think it fell later than that. And unnaturally so. Do you not feel it too father?" said Fire Child.

Builds Fire nodded and shivered. There was something in the air that chilled him to the bone. "I distrust this darkness that grows around us like strange corn. There's even thrift in the sky, the eyes of stars are all closed. A heavy call to surrender lies like death upon me, and yet I dare not sleep. I fear the incursion of accursed thoughts nature gives way to in sleep."

The sound of intruders passing there way, halted Builds Fire and Fire Child.

"Give me my spear. Who's there in the dark?" challenged Builds Fire, wishing in an instant his son was not with him and exposed to danger.

Makona's voice rang out in answer. "Makona! A live friend!"

Another voice answered soon after, "A dead one too, he would say, but the dead have no friends."

Builds Fire cried out in sudden alarm.

"Whose voice is that? Who travels with you?"

"A shadow who will not speak again if his wish for dust is ever to be granted," warned Makona, sensing that Builds Fire was not alone. "It was a ghost that I command who moves even now back into welcoming darkness, not to be seen or heard by you again."

"Is it come to you from those we met in the desert. Some spawn or messenger of them?"

Builds Fire viewed the tender face of his son, afraid that Fire Child was about to confront some inhuman horror.

Makona's answer skirted Builds Fire's questions.

"Fire Child is with you Builds Fire?"

"My son shares my duty."

"But he need not share the burden of visions visited upon us. Tender ears should not hear what was meant only for you and me," warned Makona.

The dead warrior taking his cue from Makona's direction faded back into the shadows.

Builds Fire addressed his concerns to Makona. "Not yet at rest Makona? You, like me, keep unkind hours." "War has shown us too many who sleep forever for us to love the little sleep of life," said Makona. "My mind wages war in sleep so I yet go about, busy with cares that tax the mind, making me forget what I remember."

"For my own sake, I feel best with my hand still near a spear," said Builds Fire. "My blood still races with war's clamor and my mind is poised to strike but I know not against what. Left to walk the night in strangeness, I stand night watch over the Pueblo more to give my mind safety than guard the Pueblo. But not all are so afflicted. The Great Chief Sky He Sees is abed."

"That is well."

"But before he slept, Sky He Sees was visited with an unusual gratitude and sent forth great gifts to us his children. Your absence from the full warmth of his welcome was noted and made much of," said Builds Fire, his concern for his war companion evident in his voice.

"Battle weariness," said Makona in less than truthful explanation. "Spear points were not enough to prick me to full wakefulness. I tarried in the restful shade to regain my strength."

"Shade at night?" said Fire Child, perplexed. "How can that be?"

Builds Fire sensed there was more to Makona's words and if meant to be discussed it held a content not fit for young and innocent ears. He handed Fire Child his spear with this command. "Go walk the farthest reaches of the Pueblo. Keep your eyes bright for our enemies. Makona and I must talk alone."

Fire Child shouldered Builds Fire's spear somewhat resentfully at being excluded and trudged off. Builds Fire did not speak until his son was quite some distance away.

"Great Chief Sky He Sees has noticed a strangeness in you," said Builds Fire. "But in all grace, you wife Kalaw, has smoothed out your rough edges."

"She can tender softness when it is needed. Kalaw has much of a woman's skill. If Sky He Sees finds himself content with her welcoming attentions, it is one less burden I myself carry."

Builds Fire unslung a deerskin pouch hanging from his shoulder and handed it to Makona.

"A messenger has just brought this," said Builds Fire. "It arrived too late for Sky He Sees to present it."

Makona opened the pouch. His hand probed the sack and came out with a heavy silver turquoise necklace.

"A woman's ornament. Why would he send this to me?" said Makona sounding somewhat insulted.

"A gift for you to give from your own hand to your wife. Sky He Sees said he wanted to bring back beauty to you who in battle, has seen human nature so raw. Kalaw, so adorned, would make you forget the strain of battle."

Makona stared at the necklace with an expression of displeasure.

There was a trace of bitterness in his voice. "Sky He Sees's generosity puts more eggs in my

nest than I can gladly hatch."

"I am asked to report your words on the gift," said Builds Fire, as if giving Makona a warning that what he had said would not quite do.

Grimfaced and with heartfelt insincerity, Makona said "Being unprepared for bestowed honor, my hospitality puts thin blankets on our guests. I am touched by all that he gives or means to give to me. Say to him that every honor reaches my heart and I hope to reach his in kind."

Builds Fire smiled. "That has a good sound to it. I shall say you said it. All's well in that but in other things I am not at peace."

"Builds Fire are you still at war? It is past imagining. You dear Builds Fire have run out of people to kill. That is peace and you should be tucked in it like a child in its cradle."

"My mind has not found the abandonment of caution that an absence of enemies suggests. I dreamed last night of the dread Three Kachinas. The voices of the Kachinas were an ancient lament of pursuit and death. In my dream, those unlucky enough to hear it, found all human hope drowned in the immensity of air."

"Dreams are things of night and men live in the day," said Makona, dismissing his fears.

"Still the Kachinas have their way with us. To you they have showed some terrible truth."

"I do not think of them!" The lie was easily said but not believable even to Makona. Makona reconsidered his thoughts. Fire Child was coming back their way, having circled round the entire Pueblo on his watch.

"I am mindful your son Fire Child returns soon to us. What is for our ears is not for his. Later, when we have a silence carved out for us, we'll talk of what we have and have not seen."

Fire Child hailed them.

Makona whispered. "The wind from the spirits blew a certain way that day, and we might

follow it together for our own profit."

"Any time you choose for us to talk alone, you will find me willing." agreed Builds Fire.

Makona put his hand on Builds Fire's shoulder. "If you ally yourself with me, I'll make honor for you."

Builds Fire did not reply immediately. He seemed to consider his words carefully before he spoke. "What we have seen holds more questions in it than answers. It is my mind too that the destiny imagined for us, is troubling. Still, as long as I keep my heart free from guilt and my allegiance clear, I am ready to listen to you."

Fire Child stood once again beside his father. Makona nodded to them and began to walk away. He called back at them. "Sleep well then for the night."

"The like to you," said Builds Fire. There was much in Makona that Builds Fire found unsettling.

"Father. Makona seems a changed man," said Fire Child as Makona was swallowed up in the darkness of the night.

"It is a changed world," said Builds Fire but that did not explain it all.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

As Makona made his way through the darkened Pueblo, his thoughts touched on the whereabouts of the dead warrior. That he was hidden somewhere ahead in the lowering gloom, Makona was certain. But he felt urgent need of him and his absence made him restless.

A figure appeared suddenly at his side, matching him in stride, step for step.

"Good. I have need of you," said Makona.

"Bad. I have no need of me," said the dead warrior. "What would you ask of me?"

"Go dead warrior. Ask Kalaw, when my night robes are readied, to strike softly the gourd rattles as if the wind had done so."

"And when will I be buried in my coward's bed?" The dead warrior's obsession never quit him.

"Never and forever."

"I have something hidden," said the dead warrior, clearly outlined now in a patch of bright moonlight.

He turned around slowly. The handle of a stone knife, plunged up to the hilt, protruded from the dead warrior's back.

"From where does it come?" cried Makona.

"Why from you. I have Makona's clear expression of love pricking me in my flesh. Is not this stone knife Makona's? It seems to glow with your name as it pierces my back. Perhaps you should pluck it out for future use?"

"It did not come from me. It is Kachina tainted. It is a message to me stuck in you."

"You are meant to take it then. Seize it out of me. It is too earnest a reminder I am dead but not at rest," said the dead warrior.

Makona was pale as a moon, eyes moved by strange tides. "Is this stone knife which I see before me, its handle fitted to my hand, the fatal vision?"

Makona tried to lay his hands on the thick bone handle of the knife but his hand could not quite close over it. It filled him with sudden dread. "Dare I clutch it? I have it not and yet I see it still."

Makona made another attempt, as futile as the last, to secure the knife.

"It eludes me! Have they who sent it, made it not as real to touch as to sight? Is it to be only a knife of the mind, a false creation tumbling from a fevered brain? Yet it looks as real as the one sheathed to my side!"

"It is false spring. A new opened bloom in the corpse of the old dead to proclaim the new dead! Pluck it out!" said the dead warrior, offering Makona the thing in his back.

"What mockery rides me in my own instrument? And marshals me the way I was going?" asked Makona. "My eyes make fools of the other senses. My hand can not touch it, but I see it still, and on blade and handle now are clots of blood which were not there before! It can not be! For the dead, cease to bleed!"

The dead warrior suggested. "Perhaps other spirits sent it, as a reminder that I am a being kept beyond my time?"

Makona shook his head. "No. It is some Kachina meant thing, beyond immediate understanding. It's the blood-filled prophecy which shapes itself to my eye."

"If it is a message to you, take it from me."

"Should I? Or is it a sign of ill favor that I would do well to avoid? Does it come to taunt me, to rob me of certitude? If Kachina sent, it comes from a half of the world, where nature seems dead and wicked dreams mislead protected sleep."

Makona seemed very troubled by this knife which promised murder.

The dead warrior thought Makona's failure to take the knife was in only his fear to touch it. He urged him on. "Take the Kachina's gift from my back and fit it to you plan. The hilt is shaped to the grip of your hand."

Makona turned on him with venom. "Oh you dare entice me? And whose words are behind your own? Do you speak for yourself or for those who made you? I would give worlds to know.

Is this knife, promise or threat? This vague sorcery celebrates the dark Kachina's offerings! But asks what? Tells what? Withered murder is aroused by you, mirrored in you, the Kachina's foul sentinel, the coward wolf whose howl is his path!"

The dead warrior made no answer to his charges. He simply waited.

Makona asked in a much distracted way. "I have knives of my own, why would I need another?"

"You might need one that is specially blessed," reasoned the dead warrior.

"More like it is specially cursed."

"If I could reach it, I'd seize it and hand it to you. But the temptation is beyond my reach. Take it out of me Makona."

"Do you turn against me too, with stealthy pace and with the dark walker's ravishing strides!" cried a fearful Makona. "Out of the design of others, now moves a ghost who betrays my purpose for all to see!"

"I am harmless and full of harm, sated with it. But my hand is not set against you. But I can not speak for the Kachinas. Their purpose is air."

"Do they mean to expose my intent by what you wear in your back?" asked Makona.

"The spirits do not have the constancy of men. But they speak only to you, I speak only at your bidding. There is a cloak over what they plan that hides all. A certain and firmly set earth hears not your steps, or senses which way you walk, for fear the very stones would tell of your whereabouts."

"There is wisdom in what you say. The knife is aimed, but the thrust of it does not point to me," reasoned Makona. He seemed easier in his mind.

"Go. You have been given a task," ordered Makona, dismissing him. "Drape some deerskin

over the bladed horror which in you now awaits."

"I go to command your wife shake the gourd rattle," said the dead warrior and he moved into the darkness and left Makona alone in the cool pale moonlight.

Makona looked up at the moon, as if something in his heart might be written up there on its cold face.

"Oh, I do threaten! But Sky He Sees lives. But for no length of time, for life is no longer than the blade of a knife. Sky He Sees's stride is measured in stabbing breaths."

From the direction of his house in the center of the Pueblo, came the poisonous sounding snaketail rustle of a gourd rattle.

"The summoning. I go, and it is done. The rattle invites me. Hear it not, Great Chief Sky He Sees, for it is death, that summons you."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Outside Sky He Sees's house, a hunter's moon was caught in the trees. It made the branches dance so that they speared the world with light and shadow.

Makona crept through those revealing shadows toward dawn and Sky He Sees's death.

Talaway, that red sunrise glow in which man stands proudly revealed in the fullness of creation would grieve to see Makona creep through that night of the knife.

The houses of the Pueblo were alive with night noise.

The wind seemed to rattle all the hanging gourds against Pueblo walls until they clattered like the bones of the dead. Coyotes howled from distant hills singing of dark hunts and prey overtaken.

Other inexplicable noises resonated in the night, perhaps the ghostly flute-like voices of the dead from the ancient burial grounds, or the echoes of what flashed in Makona's ambition haunted mind.

His legs moved him willingly, but Makona's mind was full of hesitation and a pricking fear of discovery.

He opened the door to Sky He Sees's house with quiet care. Sky He Sees's guards were not within sight. He listened for sounds of movement in the darkened rooms but all was quiet. He passed into the dark gloom of Sky He Sees's house. The nightfires which his otherwise watchful guards had in their keeping, were burning low. The walls were lit only with the faint trceries of glowing embers.

None disputed his passage.

At the door to Sky He Sees's sleeping rooms, Makona unsheathed his obsidian bladed knife. He pushed aside the animal skin hanging that covered the doorway and peered within.

Sky He Sees's guards lay along the walls of the chamber, slumped over in drugged and dreamless sleep. So quietly and swiftly had the drugs taken them, those warrior's duty bound to protect Sky He Sees still clutched their now useless weapons.

Kalaw's black arts had prevailed. She had woven her scheme well.

Makona crept past them, and approached the pile of buffalo robes on which sleeping Sky He Sees lay.

Sky He Sees was still painted for war's sake, for the victories that would be celebrated throughout the Pueblos. Sky He Sees's face was painted green with bird tracks marked on it. His body was painted black with the imprint of white hands outlined on front and back. He was deeply asleep and had a look of peace upon his countenance.

Makona stood over him, the knife held at his side.

The dying firelight cast shadows across Makona's face as deep as the shadows that danced in Makona's mind.

Makona lifted the knife, prepared for a killing stroke. But something in Sky He Sees's face stayed his hand. Here where ambition's searing fire most raged in Makona's blood, yet it was touched by glacial fear, that alternately burned and froze his heart.

Sky He Sees slept like a man whose arms cradled the children of the nation. It was a noble face, for all its painted reminders of war. He was a man awake but a woman in aspect when he slept, for he had the veiled midnight lashes of his mother. Sky He Sees's face was a song of innocent splendor, soft and yielding. Makona had to look away, to cast his eyes elsewhere lest his nerves fail him.

Makona looked around at the room, as if he wanted to paint in his mind every detail of the way it looked before his hand fell with the knife in it. Sky He Sees's war weapons and shields were gone from the walls. The women of the Pueblo had visited this chamber to prepare it in welcome for Sky He Sees. They had taken away all things that spoke of the dark heart of war.

They had come in with the strengths and tenderness of their sex and wove the enchantment of harvest and renewal and left their nurturing mark on this room.

In their place where the weapons had been, hung woven baskets brimming with a cheerful cascade of gifts. Earth colored rugs softened the sharp angles of the walls. The walls of the room were lined with piles of squash, corn and baked loaves of cornbread. On the morrow, these were to be distributed throughout the Pueblo to all who had lost someone in battle.

There was a peace in this room that reminded him of some other place and of another Makona who had once walked the earth.

Unbidden, memories assaulted him, things Makona thought buried in himself, put their hands up and clawed at his unresisting mind.

Suddenly the walls vanished, and the fire lit gloom here was changed into a long ago night. Now Makona stood in a room graced by the presence of one who had once lived in Makona's heart. She who had died in this other room, giving birth to the child that would never live.

It was not Sky He Sees abed in his sleeping robes that Makona saw but Dawani, his first wife, on the night she died and in the nights before.

The knife in his hand was forgotten. Instead he saw the slender form of the woman who had come to him like a streak of stars on a cloudless night. She had touched him with her beauty, with a spirit lit with an inner grace. Dawani had passed like the moon through the rooms of Makona's heart and bathed them in burnished silver.

Makona fell beneath a wave of darkness in his mind, into the anguish of the unforgotten.

Makona stood transfixed over the body of the man he meant to murder and saw him not. Instead he put one hand to his face, remembering the searing heat of Dawani's first kisses that branded him with her gentleness.

The scorching ache of his old dead love was a weight that threatened to crush Makona. The cruelty and hardness of life that makes the giving of life such a mortal threat was an arrow that never left his heart.

In Dawani's arms Makona had felt desires deep as oceans, old as rimrock mesas and as enduring. Despite her years, she was a being touched by ancient things. Makona in youthful pride, had once held himself aloof, with an untamed heart that would never settle to earth, but Dawani had snared him, changed him into a thing that loved with all its heart. And once caught, Makona had no wish to break free.

But that last night in this darkened room, when Dawina took her name out of the world giving birth to their son, slaughtered Makona's unshakable heart and that love that had made him greater than himself, marked him with a darkness the world could never light again.

So deeply did the memories swim in him, that Makona was almost lost to his purpose for being in this room. Some stray fear of being found out, of failing to win through, seized him and he tried once again to be back in the world.

Makona shook himself like a man trying to throw off some attacker's embrace and lifted the knife once again.

Sky He Sees turned in his sleep and his eyes opened. They were colder than the sea, and Makona shivered as they passed over his form. Makona stared into those glaring eyes with the sudden alarm of a man caught in the act of murder. But Sky He Sees's eyes had been unseeing, like that of the dead. Sky He Sees closed them again, stirred as if in a dream and then settled more deeply in the grip of sleep.

Makona shuddered. 'Twas strange that Sky He Sees had moved thus in his sleep.

He had seen eyes like that before, open and unseeing, holding within them the dream landscapes of all forgotten mysteries.

Dawina's face came to mind again. It was there as he imagined it, shadowed in the dying firelight. All the light and love in it were diminished, drowned in the pain that coursed through her frail body. She screamed at Makona in the half darkness, begging for release, for oblivion. It seemed to his feverish mind she even cursed him for the pain Makona had put in her. But Makona couldn't make out the words only the shape of her anguish. He held himself in abject, half-joyous, half-fearful expectant solitude. Not in the room but having so much of his heart in it, Makona felt as if he were there.

Makona sitting outside in the darkness, strained to hear the first cry of his newborn child. Above him in the sky, the track of the moon seemed an intoxication and a glory like no other he had ever seen. It was a fitting end to a day that made his heart sing with love and pride. Dawina's labor began mid-day and now followed the path of the moon. But the night went on too long.

When the door opened, and Makona saw the harried faces of the women who attended her birthing, he knew in an instant the world had gone wrong.

His heart was too much involved not to be a part of it. Though twas against all practice, Makona entered the house and went into the room where she lay.

The midwives having failed, sent for a healer to drive out the bad spirits that seemed to possess Dawina. The lament that echoed from their throats, said even to Makona's untutored ears, that Dawina was dying.

Whatever joy Makona had in that night, shattered.

He pushed all who urged him not to be there, aside. Taking the midwives place by her, Makona bent down to Dawina, touched her face with a hand as gentle as breath.

Dawina was so weak now, only her eyes moved, looking at him with love and tenderness and regret. Her lips moved and the words 'I am sorry.' formed there but she had not the breath to say them.

He bent to kiss her, to forgive and to mourn, and to breathe his life into her if he could, but she was gone before his lips could meet hers.

All that he would ever know of love, died with her. For whatever darkness that lived within Makona, he once was a man whose heart shone bright.

Makona woke with his nerveless lips almost upon that of sleeping Sky He Sees's face. He recoiled in horror and loss and pain.

Where Makona was and what he was about, almost stopped his heart and his breath.

Instead of a child, I hold a knife, thought Makona. The child that never graced our cradleboard, that never cooed in the wordless language of babies. That child that never called me father with its first words. That child that never went on all fours, held to my legs for support, marched through my heart on shaky legs as it took its first wondrous step. That boy who never cried when hurt and ceased to cry in the comfort of my sheltering arms.

If they had lived, I would not have need to win so much of the world. They were a world big enough. Now I climb the sky, until it is my name.

Makona lifted the knife.

It reached up to the sky and the force of Makona's arm brought it down to earth. The hard obsidian blade plunged into Sky He Sees's chest.

Sky He Sees awakened with the sudden lancing pain.

He cried out in fatal recognition. "MAKONA! WHY?"

Sky He Sees felt the compelling enormity of his own death. The hard stone knife in his chest trembled with the might that had driven it. Makona's hand was still closed over the handle. He tugged upon it, and pulled it free.

Sky He Sees's life followed it in a red stream.

Makona's answer to Sky He Sees's why was his whole life.

What it might have been because he did not have her.

Makona was gone now, no longer in the room where Dawina had been. From this night on, he might never enter it again.

He was in the room with murdered Sky He Sees. Makona's midnight eyes were cold as a dead fire. His mind was as roiled as the desert in the grip of a wintry storm and as full of concealment.

He spoke to the still form. "Sky He Sees the Pueblo will weep for you, for the season the world considers your due. You will be found to be as fair in death as in life. I killed you but would not time's relentless voyage have done the same for you? I but hurried you on your way. I have murdered with you, all stratagems, dreams, and all unspoken wishes that remained in you. For this I beg no forgiveness, for life must give way to life. I ride a greater need."

It was an argument he seemed to make to himself, as if Makona was much in need of convincing as to the overbearing truth of his own words.

To contain himself, Makona held to his ambition as hard as he gripped the handle of his blood stained knife for there was comfort in this. All else that he might think of was disturbing, for love was not a sensible emotion.

And the memory of it, had almost unmanned him.

Makona chased from his mind the images of his dead past.

He was a long time in the room. Other things happened there that terrified him and made him almost flee, yet he held to his purpose. He scurried about with Kalaw's plan uppermost in his mind. Terror stalked him every minute he tarried there.

He thought of Kalaw and the promises he had given her. Her ambition was a river of deviousness, so vast and complicated that Makona retreated before it. Her rushing flood promised results that Makona's male logic could not command. As always, he gave in to her, unable to fight the dark current of her mind. Kalaw loved him not for what he was as a man but for what she could contrive for him.

Makona knew it full well but it was an uncomplicated demand, not like the rending beasts from the high reaches of the human mountainside who clawed deep under a man's skin, when they asked for love or loyalty or other human things.

With a heart that had been broken, it was easier to murder than to love.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Kalaw fed the night fire with dried mesquite branches. The crackling of the fire was loud but she was alert for other sounds the night might make.

The night fire made her face a translucent duskrose. She shook out her hair that was darkness itself.

She let her hand rest ever so softly on the finely sewn robe that proclaimed her husband Makona, Shaman of Kawdor. She spoke to the garment as if it were a friend who paid heed to her every word. "The doors are open and the drugged night guards mock their vows of protection with snores. Makona moves with death!"

She lifted the robe up and held it to her breast. "If only it were mine to wear. Someday, a woman will have this honor, the first of her kind. Till then I will ascend to stars which Makona wins. He will be Great Chief to lead a nation but he will ever follow me!"

An animal cry on some distant hill echoed through the night. It sounded unearthly, like the plaintive wail of a tortured soul.

Kalaw went to the doorway and looked out. Her night black eyes studied the night with keen anticipation. Her full wine red lips shaped themselves into a becoming smile.

"Are you out there spirits? Do you listen and watch? Do you heed my words and thoughts?"

Silence filled the night.

"Do you know my night's work Kachinas? That which has made Sky He Sees's men drunk has made me bold. What has quenched them, has given me fire! I have so drugged their food and

drink, death and nature contend in them to see whether they live or die."

There was a keening, piercing cry from the sky above the Pueblo. Kalaw started at the nearness of it.

"What did I hear? Ah, it was the owl that shrieked, the fatal omen which gives the deepest good night."

Now someone moved outside the doorway, taking certain and cautious steps towards the doorway of Makona's house. A dark figure crouched in the dark, wary and threatening.

The figure called out to her. "Who's there?"

Kalaw cried out in panic. "Hideous ruin! By that sudden hail, I fear the Pueblo is awakened and murder is not yet done! The attempt and not the deed destroys us."

The voice came again from the dark man crouching outside the doorway.

"Speak or risk death!"

Kalaw cursed an opportunity she'd had in her hands and let go. Makona had failed her. They were found out and all was lost! Had Sky He Sees not resembled my own father as he slept, I'd have done it myself to be sure of success!

"Oh how could Makona fail me?" she moaned to herself under her breath. "I laid the guard's stone knives ready to hand so Makona could not miss them. Wiped in Sky He Sees's blood, the blame would have fallen on them. Oh pity me!"

The crouched figure sprang at something, at a sound made by something unseen. Nothing stood in the path of his advance.

The dark man hesitated, as if confused. Then with halting steps walked to the entranceway of Makona's house. He stepped inside.

Kalaw stood well back from the door. Her eyes were wide open in terror until the figure

revealed itself by the light of the fire.

"My husband?" Her voice trembled with relief.

"I've done the murder!" cried Makona but panic overtook him as he spoke it aloud. "Has someone been here? Am I pursued? Did you hear a noise outside the door?" demanded Makona.

His nerves were ragged, his speech rapid and overexcited. He had the look of a man who outruns a flood. Kalaw saw how troubled he was, his senses outraged. She sensed he needed calming and soothing force. She said sweetly, "I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry."

"When?" insisted Makona.

"Now?"

"As I descended?"

Kalaw nodded reassuringly. "Yes. That and your voice outside the door."

"I could have sworn someone followed me here."

"A guilt seized man flees when none pursues," cautioned Kalaw. "You were alone in the dark. I marked the manner of your coming. You arrived safe to me, unpursued and undiscovered."

Makona's senses would not rest. He bolted with sudden alarm. "I hear a stirring! Who lies in the second sleeping room?"

Kalaw laid a calming hand on his shoulder.

Low voiced she said. "Dead Sky He Sees's other son, Diving Bird. Speak softly of all that has happened, less you wake him."

Makona looked at his hands. They glowed blood red in the firelight. "This is a sorry sight."

"A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight. An ordinary man's blood might be, but this is the noble blood of a Great Chief. And my pride follows you."

Makona did not look at her and her words seemed to have little effect. His eyes stared at other

rooms. His voice was a harsh whisper above the snapping hiss of the fire. "I thought one night guard laughed in his sleep and one cried "Murder!" so loud that they woke themselves up. In my mind I heard them when my hand did the murder. But I prayed to the Kachinas to take them under the night and back to unsurprised sleep."

"It was the drugs that moved in them or else your fevered mind imagined it. You need not fear those guards who are two lodged together in guilt."

Makona went on in the same harsh almost mad tone. "One cried 'Great Spirit look down upon me' and said his own secret, sacred clan name as if he had seen me with these blood dripping hands, carrying his fear. I could not say my name, as one must do when the Sky Spirit's are invoked. As if my own sacred name was no longer mine to say!"

Kalaw's displeasure at his state of mind increased. His weakness in the aftermath was most unwelcome. Kalaw was a woman with an edge to her tongue and the flash of quick lightning in her eyes. She snapped at him in a voice that commanded. "Don't let your mind dwell on it!"

Makona was not persuaded. He went on, "But how does it happen that I could not pronounce my sacred name? I had most need of blessing then and my sacred name by which only the great Sky Spirits know me, stuck in my throat."

Kalaw tried to put her arm round him in a comforting embrace but he pushed her back. She said with sullen anger. "Makona! These deeds must not be thought of in these deeply considered ways. It will make you mad."

"I thought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more! Makona murders sleep'...the innocent sleep! Sleep that knits up the living heart of care, the death of each day's life, the balm of hurt minds, the chief nourisher in life's feast." His voice sank and then rose until it almost shouted.

Kalaw looked around in a panic, lest his shout rouse the sleepers in their house. She forced her voice lower. "Speak soft. Do not rouse Sky He Sees's son. What do you mean?"

Makona said in tones less ringing. "Still it cried 'Sleep no more!' to all in the Pueblo! The Shaman of Ga-Mis, of Kawdor, has murdered sleep and like the dead warrior kept from sleep, will sleep no more! Makona shall sleep no more!"

Kalaw put the weight of all her calmest reason behind her words. "Who was it that cried it out? I heard no such voice. Why, worthy shaman, do you waste your noble strength, by thinking of these things? Go get some water and wash the filthy red truth from your hands."

Makona looked momentarily sorrowful. He reached into his robes and brought out two well bloodied stone knives. He turned to her and said. "Do the men who make beauty in the shaping of knives, know what they are used for?"

Kalaw was flame and fury. She seized the knives out of his hands. She stood over him like an angry snake stealing eggs from a nest. She hissed at him in consummate rage. "Why did you bring these stone knives from the killing place? You'll kill us with unthinking fear!

She thrust them back into his hands. "They must remain there! Go! Hurry! Carry them back and smear the night guards with Sky He Sees's spilled blood!"

Makona suddenly seemed petulant as a child. The light was gone from his eyes. He was a man without life's vigor. Even his voice had no lifeblood in it. "I will go no more."

Kalaw rose up in full fury. Her words were killing jabs. "Coward! Give me the stone knives!"

"I'm afraid to think of what I've done, afraid to look on it again."

"The sleeping and the dead are no more than pictures."

"This one paints me a murderer. I will go no more," said Makona.

"You go back on yourself who was once all man! You see with the eyes of a timid child, eyes

that fear a painted demon!"

"I will go no more!"

Kalaw's face was stern, her voice unforgiving. "I go to where Sky He Sees bleeds, to paint the guard's faces with the color of his life. It was my scheme and you had no right to abandon it! As planned, it must seem their guilt or we too are buried in Sky He Sees's grave!"

Clutching the stone knives, Kalaw fled into the night.

Makona much vexed, stood at the doorway. The strength that had carried him as far as he had gone in this night, seemed to have left him. The hand that murdered Sky He Sees trembled like the hand of a small child singed by fire.

A clamorous knocking sounded from somewhere within the Pueblo. There was a sound of something breaking. As if a clay pot had been smashed against a wall.

Makona rushed to the doorway. "Who is that knocking?"

In his mind's eye, he imagined that it was Sky He Sees, wandering about with his skull in hand, beating it against the house walls to rouse the pity of the sleepers inside.

Makona wondered aloud. "How is it with me, that every noise appalls me?"

He stared at his bloody hands as if they were a threat to his own life. "What manner of hands are these? If I had wisdom, I would cut them off and use them as cups for my plucked eyes! Would even the great oceans of the world wash this blood clean from my hands? No. What's on my hands would stain the great distant sea, making the green deeps, darkest red."

Kalaw came back through the door, chest heaving, breathless from the force of her stealthy exertions.

She held up her hands to Makona in reproach. "My hands are of your color but I'd know shame to wear a heart so white."

The sound of knocking came again from somewhere among the darkened houses of the Pueblo.

Kalaw reacted with alarm. "I hear knocking at the south entry. Let's hurry to our sleeping rooms. A little water will wash us clean of this murder. The hard things have been done. When we are cleansed of this red residue, how easy it is, then!"

The knocking grew louder.

Makona said bitterly. "Wake Sky He Sees with your knocking. I would that you could!"

Kalaw hissed in disapproval. "Hold on to your reason! Your courage has left you unattended."

The knocking sound seemed to grow closer.

"What's this! More knocking. Get on your robes of sleep Makona, lest discoverers call and show us to be awake. Don't be so poorly lost in your thoughts. Hurry! Hurry!"

Makona complied with her commands, moving slowly like a man already in the grip of some heavy troubling sleep.

Makona muttered "To know my deed, it is best not to know myself."

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

The dead warrior that Makona had thought to hide, manned the southern gates. Kalaw saw him as a gift from the spirits, an omen of supernatural favor, a marker that noted Makona's greatness and she boasted of the dead warrior's presence throughout the Pueblo. So great is Makona, the dead are given him to serve as spirit allies by the Kachinas was her avowal. Kalaw broadcast it throughout the Pueblo. She said it to all listeners but loathed the actual sight of him.

Paraded like a pet dog, before Sky He Sees, this dead warrior who still walked the earth was acclaimed both a wonder and a curse.

That it added to Makona's glory, all were agreed, but the sight of it, this decaying thing that once was a man, repulsed all of gentle nature and so it was deemed his duties when not doing Makona's bidding, were best discharged at night where darkness served to mask his more hideous aspects.

Heavy hands struck wood. Men were outside the southern gate, seeking admission. The dead warrior leaned against the door, listening to the sounds from without.

"There's a knocking indeed! If a man were a guardian to the gates of the spirit land, he should be better paid for turning the ghost key," said the dead warrior.

The knocking came again, insistent.

"Knock, knock, knock! Do I ask who's there, in the name of night spirits? Why perhaps here's a planter of corn that killed himself in the expectation of plenty. Arrived in time, aching for death but here like me, he'll sweat for it."

The knocking sound was imperious, demanding admittance.

"Knock, knock! Who's there do I ask, in what other demon's name? Why here's a darkness that would swear his lightness of being, who committed cowardly treason enough for the Great Spirit's sake, yet would say no to life and yes to death!" The dead warrior's bitter words were so soft spoken they fell on no human ears.

Now the haft of a spear replaced the fists striking the door. The dull thwack of hard wood striking wood rang out.

"Knock, knock, never at quiet! Who are you that so troubles the night? This place is too cold for the spirit land! I'll be a demon at the gate no longer."

With those words, the dead warrior opened the gate.

Great Chief Sky He Sees's men, steadfast and most worthy Makes Dead and Lonewolf, Sky He Sees's most trusted war messenger stood in the gateway.

Makes Dead was angered at the unseemly delay. He complained most bitterly. "Was it so late, Dead Warrior, or did you stand so self-entranced on the rim of your own grave, that you took so long to answer our knock?"

The dead warrior answered him with equal venom. "Unkind Makes Dead, I was walking the peyote road until the coming of dawn. Sleep is destroyed in me and bleak prospect is all I know. If they will not let me die, at least they let me dream. And peyote is a great provoker of three things."

Makes Dead regarded the dead warrior as the grave spawned curiosity he was. Speech with one such as he who stood before him, provoked troublesome thoughts.

"What three things does peyote provoke?" asked Makes Dead reluctantly.

"Dreams that do not die, deaths that do not dream... and vomiting. Visions it provokes and unprovokes. It provokes great ambition but takes away the performance. Peyote makes the man and mars him, sets him on and it takes him off. Persuades him that the stars are his and disheartens him when they are not. Makes him stand to and not stand to. Falsely promises him that what he is when asleep is what he is awake and awake, asleep, and giving him the lie, leaves him."

Makes Dead stared at the dead warrior's eyes. There were as dark as the night they were in.

"I believe peyote gave you the lie last night," said Makes Dead.

"That it did, in the very throat of me. I dreamed that I was dead, a loveliness ruined by your knocking. But I would have requited it for its lie, though it took up my legs sometimes, yet I

managed to pass the night in one way or another."

Makes Dead's impatience reasserted itself. "We've talked enough. Is Makona, who keeps you from your grave, awake?"

A man came out of the shadows behind the dead warrior. It was Makona, who moved like a man whose muscles were taut bowstrings. His intent expression had the manner of an arrow poised to strike. "Your knocking has awakened me."

Makona rubbed his eyes like a man wiping away the ghostly traces of sleep.

Lonewolf stepped forward with an apology. "I greet you with the dawn Makona, with apologies for rattling the surly bones of morning. It was not my wish to tread upon your sleep."

Makona shrugged. "Think nothing of it. What is sleep worth anyway?"

"Everything. It is worth everything," said the dead warrior.

Makona turned on him in sudden temper. "No one speaks to you. Be still."

Makes Dead asked, "Is the Great Chief stirring, worthy Shaman of Kawdor?"

Makona looked away. "Ah. Not yet. It would not seem that he is up with the sun."

Makes Dead explained. "He commanded me to call him at first light. It has almost slipped past the time of his asked for awakening."

Makona waved them into the courtyard. "Follow me. I'll bring you to him."

Makes Dead added. "Sky He Sees sails through a great storm that exhausts the human heart. It is good to know he has finally slept, sheltered from the sky. I hate to rouse him from his sleep."

Makona motioned them to come along. "Then you must be with me when he is roused. I do not envy you the task. This is his door."

Makona raised his hand to knock on the side of house but Makes Dead gestured for him to stop.

"Sky He Sees bids me wake him alone. It is my custom to do so," He raised his own hand and knocked softly. "It is giving to me alone to do and also it is my daily duty to light Sky He Sees's morning fires."

Makona nodded. "Come Lonewolf. Let's walk on and leave Makes Dead to his task."

Makona made his way back into the Pueblo, moving towards his house. Lonewolf kept pace with him. The dead warrior walked behind them, like a reeking shadow that no one sunshine could disperse.

As they walked, Lonewolf asked. "Does the Great Chief travel forth today?"

"He does. Or said he does," counseled Makona.

Lonewolf shivered with the chill of the morning air and the quality of his own thoughts. "The night has been unruly. Where we lay, our smoke holes were blown down and lamentings were heard in the air, strange screams of death. The wind seemed to carry prophesying with terrible voices speaking of dire uproar and confused event, new hatched on the woeful night. The obscene bird of omen clamored the livelong night. And it seemed the earth was feverous and did shake."

Makona had his own dark night. He admitted to it. "It was a rough night. But battle weariness would make a sleep of any storm."

Lonewolf envied Makona. "So you had a night's rest. That is good. Your great deeds are washed with the clean robes of sleep. I only wish I could have had such a night as that. The embrace of sleep escaped me. My green memory can remember no night such as this ever in this world."

There was the sound of a man running through the Pueblo. A voice shouted, a plaintive wail but the nature of what was shouted was not clear.

Makona and Lonewolf turned to stare at the running man. It was Makes Dead and he was headed straight toward them.

Even before he had quite stopped running, Makes Dead gasped out. "Ancient ruin! Desecration and horror! Human words can't begin to name it!"

Makona and Lonewolf regarded Makes Dead with two kinds of alarm. Lonewolf's alarm was informed with a mystery unsolved, and Makona's of a solution.

"Makes Dead!" said Makona in a voice that revealed nothing. "What's the matter?"

"Ruin now has made his masterwork! Most sacrilegious murder has broken open the sacred Kiva and stole from it the life of the Pueblo!"

Makona pretended great surprise. "What is it you say? The life?"

Lonewolf's eyes were wide with shock. "Murdered! Do you say it is Great Chief Sky He Sees?"

Makes Dead went on. "Approach his sleeping bed and destroy your sight with an inflicted horror! Do not ask me to speak more, my heart is stopped, see and then speak yourselves."

Makona acted decisively. "Come with me Lonewolf. Be a witness to treachery. We'll see it with our own eyes."

Makona and Lonewolf ran off into the heart of the darkened Pueblo, toward the house that Sky He Sees died in.

Makes Dead stood there like a man who has lost his way. The dead warrior stayed with him, either by choice or accident, since none commanded his presence elsewhere.

He spoke softly to Makes Dead. "Dead and finally so. Such a one I could envy. I would love to look upon him so that I might know where I myself would like to go."

Makes Dead turned on him with sudden rage. "Coward! You are not fit to step in his blood!"

Go sound the war cry! Rouse the Pueblo! Fetch Builds Fire and Diving Bird and Falcon. Tell them to shake off their downy sleep, death's counterfeit and come look on death itself."

The dead warrior hesitated, for he was in the grip of no man's passion except Makona's. Still this was a duty in keeping with what Makona would ask of him.

"I shall bring them up to see the great doom's image. I am a messenger fit in keeping with this horror, as I walk like a spirit, from my own grave risen up. I go to summon them."

The dead warrior left. A figure that had been standing quietly in nearby shadows suddenly moved forward.

With much show of feigned surprise, Kalaw said. "What's this business that such a hideous messenger calls to wakefulness, the sleepers of the Pueblo? Speak! I would have an answer!"

Makes Dead seemed reluctant to share the grievous news. "Gentle mother of children, it is not for you to hear what I have to speak. Told in a woman's ear, it would murder gentleness as it fell."

There was a shout and a thunder of running feet, and a dazed and much troubled Builds Fire came rushing up to them. He cried. "Makes Dead! Our Great Chief is murdered, dragged down in an unkind death! The father of the corn is withered!"

Kalaw gasped and held her breast in exaggerated astonishment. "Ruin! Not here? In our house?"

Builds Fire shook his head in real sorrow. "Too cruel anywhere. Makes Dead, I beg you, say it isn't so."

Builds Fire was about to speak when Makona came up behind him. Builds Fire turned and stared at Makona instead of answering.

Makona, pricked by a feeling of uncomfortableness at the intensity of Builds Fire's stare was

moved to speak. "Had I died an hour before, I would have lived in a blessed time but from this instant on, there's nothing good left in life. Blessedness, renown and grace are dead in the world! The bow of life is drawn and the last arrow is broken on the string. There's nothing worth praising left on earth."

Others meant to speak but held their tongues for another joined their circle and for him, lay the greater sorrow. Falcon stood before them. His manner was that of a man who knows the world is turning against him.

He had one hand on the handle of a knife. His eyes were flushed with a battle anger. "What's wrong?" he cried.

Makona chose to be the bearer of the news. "You are and do not know it. The seeping spring, the birth head, the green tree of your blood is stopped."

Makes Dead bowed his head and said with respect. "Your father, the Great Chief, has been murdered."

Falcon studied the faces of each man as if the answer he sought were there somewhere. "By what hand?"

Makes Dead spoke up. "Those of his house who served him. His night guards, it seems, have done it. Their hands and faces were all marked with blood. So were their stone knives which, still bloodied, Makona and I found tucked in their sleeping robes. When forced awake, they stared with uncaring madness and were distracted. No man's life was to be trusted with them."

"Bring them to me!" commanded Falcon in a killing rage. "Let their own words skin them."

Makona shook his head. "They can not be carried only buried."

"What! How is it so?"

Makona looked ashamed. "Coming upon them as I did after the first summons, I now repent

my fury, that made me kill them on the spot."

Falcon regarded Makona with coldness and approbation. "Why did you? Was it not my kinship, my inheritance in blood, my own hand that should have had revenge upon them?"

"Who can be wise, temperate and furious, loyal and neutral all in one moment?"

Falcon continued his argument. "But the dead can give us no reason for the act. And their suffering for the size of their evil, was mercifully too short."

Makona shrugged. "The haste of my violent love for your sacred father outran the reasons for staying my life-taking hands."

Falcon's voice was disbelieving. "I did not know your love was so great."

"But see it as I saw it! There lay Sky He Sees, with each fatal knife stab a breach in nature for ruin's withered entrance. There lie the murderers painted in the color of treachery, their stone knives still stained with gore! Who could stop himself that had a heart to love and in that heart, courage to make one's love known!"

Falcon was not satisfied. "There is some mystery here. These were men my father loved. Why they would do as they have done is not revealed. Knowledge of the deed, dies with that expression of Makona's..." Falcon hesitated as if not sure what word to use. "...love."

Moonlight suddenly revealed, a man staggering under a great burden. Diving Bird, The Great Chief's other son, with the bloody corpse of his father Sky He Sees clasped in his arms came toward them.

Diving Bird spoke over the body of his dead father. "The grass is burnt where he slept. Warriors weep for the life that lives no more!"

Kalaw screamed and hid her face.

"Take me away! Such a thing burns out my woman's eyes and heart!"

Makes Dead was quickest to respond. He took her arm and said by way of instruction to Builds Fire. "Builds Fire see to the gentle mother!" Then Makes Dead turned and spoke to Sky He Sees's son. "Diving Bird, your son's grief for a father has turned you aside from reason. Put him down now. Sky He Sees's journey is over. Give him to the Dead Warrior. Let the dead tend the newly dead."

Builds Fire with a show of tender concern helped a distraught Kalaw back to the solace of Makona's house.

Diving Bird let the dead warrior take the bleeding body from his hands. His eyes were clouded with tears and he could look no man in the face. He was shattered by the death of his father.

Makona proposed. "I'll follow Kalaw and see her fears calmed. To know men are capable of this vileness taints us all and makes us wish we were not men."

Falcon nodded. "Fears and doubts shake us all."

Makona averred. "At the Great Spirit's hand you know I stand and you know against undivulged design, I have always fought treasonous malice."

Falcon said with a strange smile. "Your hand in action is well known."

Makes Dead moved up beside the dead warrior. He reached out and cradled the dangling head of dead Sky He Sees. "I take some of the duty of carrying the body of the Great Chief upon myself. I will do honor to Sky He Sees. He shall have a man by his side that once loved him. And not be alone in his death."

Makes Dead and the dead warrior carried the body of Sky He Sees back to the scene of the murder.

Falcon, full of undivulged thoughts, watched them go off with Sky He Sees's body. He turned

and spoke to Makona. "When I am able to stand and reason with lessened grief, I'll meet again with you. Grief for now shortens my grasp of things."

Makona agreed. "I am at your command always. I return to my house and await your summons."

Makona walked off into the sheltering night.

Falcon went up to grieving Diving Bird and put his arm around him.

"It is a great loss. A great man, a good man, has gone out of the world. When we are born sons, we have a duty to some day lose our fathers. The debt is upon us both," said Falcon. "I will shed no tears. Duty is as large as love."

"As a father, he was without equal. My heart is crushed," said Diving Bird.

"But not your mind," said Falcon. "Or your will to live. For that unknown hand that took our father out of life, must have another knife in it."

"But the hand is known! The murderers are caught and punished!" insisted Diving Bird.

"The men who look like murderers are dead," said Falcon.

"What are you suggesting?"

"Could you say of these sleeping guards that they were discovered idiots in life?" asked Falcon.

"No. I knew them since childhood. Sky He Sees often sought their counsel. They were not thoughtless men in life," answered Diving Bird.

"Then I judge them too wise to murder in so foolish a fashion. They would have taken greater care not to point blame's finger at themselves. There is a great wrong here that their untimely death hides."

"Who do you suspect?" asked Diving Bird with the seeds of rage planted in his voice.

Falcon let go of Diving Bird's shoulder and looked off into the distance. He paused for a while before he spoke. "I name no one, nor should you. We should keep our own counsel."

Diving Bird agreed. "I understand that others who mean harm have less of a claim to this grief than we do. We are besieged by a great pretender. Even the dullest mind can seize it."

Falcon said with approval. "You have some of Sky He Sees's quality of the mind. He will be proud of you even though it will have to come from beyond the grave."

Diving Bird said. "What should we say here brother? What should we admit we know while we yet linger in this place where our own lives, threaten to travel up the smoke hole and harm may come to us from unknown hands. Death may rush and seize us."

"The deaths of those said to have done it, was too conveniently done," said Falcon. "That most strongly says something to me."

Diving Bird said. "This speaks most strongly to me. Murder by his night guards flies in the face of the love they had for Sky He Sees, a love that was years in the making."

Falcon held an imaginary knife in his hand. His words sank almost to a whisper. "We must find the hand that held it."

"Our tears do not fall in the right direction. Our sorrow should move us against the guilty!" Diving Bird's grief was moving towards revenge.

Falcon pondered. "What are we to do?"

"Let's not consort with Makona. I mistrust his unfelt sorrow. If he is a false man, it is a task he does easy. I think it would be wise for me to travel toward the western Pueblos. We have relatives there, clan brothers who ride none of the ambitions that dwell here," reasoned Diving Bird with the wisdom that would some day make him a Great Chief.

Falcon nodded. "It seems a wise choice Diving Bird. To the northern Pueblo's, I'll go, pushed by the same suspicion. Our separated paths shall keep us both safer. Where we are, there are knives in men's smiles. The near in blood, the nearer bloody."

Diving Bird stared out at the unrevealing night. "I fear there is more than one arrow driven by that bow."

Falcon shuddered. "The second arrow's murderous shaft, has not lighted yet and our safest way is travel, to avoid its aim. Put the wind at our backs and be not kind in our leave taking. Let's steal ourselves away from this house of murder that promises no mercy."

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

Two figures were seated on the raised floor of the eastern end of the Kiva. Played by some unseen hand, the sound of turtle shell rattles echoed throughout the plaza of Makona's Pueblo. The Kiva was lit with the faint glow of the burning logs in the firepit.

The dead warrior was the first to speak. "I can remember even beyond my birth and in that volume of time, I have seen hours dreadful and things strange but this dark night dwarfs all former knowledge."

The other man, Sky He Sees's messenger, Lonewolf sat a bit back, as if too close contact with the dead, was uncomfortable. Yet though he avoided him, he still sought his counsel. "Dead warrior, do you see the spirit world so troubled with man's actions that it threatens our mortal world? By the eye it is day and yet dark night strangles the morning fires. Is it the dominion of night or the day's shame that brings the darkness of the grave over the face of earth?"

"The world has gone unnatural like the murder that's been done. A recent day past, an eagle

towering in her pride of place was attacked by a hunting owl, taken down and killed."

Lonewolf was in full agreement. "And the lizards that dwelt in the walls of Sky He Sees's Pueblo, sleek and quick, the pride of their race, turned wild, and attacked all who approached, contending against their natures as if they meant to make war with mankind itself. And their brothers, the snakes, seemed to threaten fanged death at every path leading to Sky He Sees's door."

"The lizard people and the snake people are brothers but it is said by the spirits that they eat each other," said the Dead Warrior. "Not all meanings are clear."

Lonewolf offered his opinion. "As they do so, it is done to the amazement of my eyes who has seen it done."

The deerskin hanging over the door parted and Makes Dead entered the room.

Lonewolf greeted him. "How goes the world Makes Dead?"

"Why ask unless you are blind?" said Makes Dead.

"Is it known finally who has done this infamous murder?"

Makes Dead shrugged. "If belief is to be believed, those that Makona has killed, stained with the foul trace of their murder. No one has the strength to say otherwise."

The dead warrior mused unhappily. "How unfair that they should be rewarded so mercifully for murder and I be so punished for running from it. There is no justice in the world of men."

Makes Dead turned on him with venom. "Silence coward! What should cowards and murderers expect?"

Makes Dead went on. "But rumors abound. The murderers did not act alone. Falcon and Diving Bird, the Great Chief's two sons, have stolen away and fled, which puts upon them shared suspicion of the murder. It is not the first time in the world, sons have tried to gain the father's

place by murder."

Lonewolf's face was an ugly mask. "Reckless ambition will devour them! With that crime against them, it seems most likely the ascent to Great Chief will fall upon Makona whose justice was so swift."

Makes Dead looked particularly troubled, as if he knew things he did not want to know. "Makona is already named and gone to the sacred Hill of Chiefs, to be invested with visions. So it is told to me by the elders of the clans."

Lonewolf seemed cheered at the prospect. "That is good news. We are lost without a leader to summon the rainbow. Makona has a great warrior's heart."

Makes Dead's face was a map of human emotions, all of them suspicious. "I am not agreed that Makona has such a heart."

Lonewolf laughed at Makes Dead. "You are too gloomy and distrusting. Makona is as good a man as any other. Your doubting will be the sad death of you someday. Have you other news. Where is Sky He Sees's body?"

The dead warrior spoke instead. "I carried it to TEWA, the sacred storehouse of our ancestors. Where he goes, I can not stay, and staying, he can not go."

Lonewolf spoke with reverence. "We are blessed to have Sky He Sees with our ancestors."

Makes Dead's dark gloom was unrelenting. His words flashed with sullen anger. "We are cursed to have Sky He Sees gone from this life."

The dead warrior spoke somewhat cryptically. "We are more cursed than blessed."

Lonewolf tried to put the best face on it. "It is true Sky He Sees's name has gone out of the world. But the door closed, is soon opened. Makona shall keep the fires of the Pueblo burning."

The dead warrior looked at Makes Dead before he spoke. He seemed to address his words

more to him than to the other. "But is the light from his fire your light, that flashes and flares? Or is it the light that shows you only the dark in which you live?"

Makes Dead looked confused. "I do not know how to speak to that. It is a thought too strange to follow to an answer."

Lonewolf was solemn, distant in his regard but still respectful. "You who are dead but not dead, your words travel a distance we know nothing of."

"Or all that distance and more. For men are much alike," said the dead warrior. His words did not seem to illuminate. "One can know too much about too little."

Lonewolf prodded Makes Dead. "Surely you have a good wish for Makona. He climbs the mountain for a nation's honor. He has fought well, killed well in battle for us all. Surely you can venture an unsuspecting kindness upon him!"

Makes Dead said grudgingly. "That has little cost. If its a word he needs in the air, I give it to him. May Makona have good visions to lead us!"

The dead warrior stared into the depths of the fire. His voice seemed to hold all the sorrows of the world.

"Visions Makona has. And that is the trouble."

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

Builds Fire stood outside the entranceway to Makona's house. Builds Fire was at war with himself, with things that loomed as large and daunting as the battle he had fought beside Makona. It was in his mind that he was late and that he should hurry through the door to greet those who had expectation of his arrival. But Builds Fire's mind was assailed by thoughts that

held him motionless, stopped dead in his tracks like an arrow pierced deer.

Builds Fire's thoughts touched on Makona, and as ever, on the three Kachinas. In his dreams, he nightly saw the dread sisters with his still beating heart, dripping in their human shaping hands. Though Builds Fire knew he was a man with blood in him and dreams and heart-felt longings, all of that might count for nothing if his life was blown on a wind issuing from their sere ruined lips. His mind also considered Makona and was even more deeply troubled.

Makona, you have it all now, Great Chief, Shaman of Kawdor, Shaman of Ga-Mis, all, as the Three Kachina's promised! Certainly there was wonder that had been visited upon Makona. Sweet favored imagining, surest foreknowledge, all of that dwelt in the giving voices of the spirits. But deep inside Builds Fire's mind was the conviction and fear that Makona evilly conspired for it. All was not as it pretended in the world to be.

That Falcon and Diving Bird had fled, that seemed to suggest a murderer's guilt. That was the talk in the Pueblo and the informed reason Makona ascended to Great Chief in their stead. Still, there was another twisting to the tale that to Builds Fire might mean it was not so. If the murder lay at the door of another, safety might be the cause of their flight, for what force killed their father, might also move toward them. Such thoughts were much in Builds Fire's mind.

It was the disturbing remains of the Kachina's visions, the things not yet come true, Builds Fire found most troubling. There was also the prophecy that Great Chief was an honor not to be passed on to Makona's sons. That it would fall not to Builds Fire either, to hold that honor bright, but instead he Builds Fire, would be the father of many Great Chiefs.

How this could be was like a thorn in Builds Fire's mind.

If only truth came from the Three Kachinas who upon Makona let their shining, omened speeches fall, then, by the truths on Makona made good, they were Builds Fire's omen makers as

well. Builds Fire wondered aloud. "Can I trust their words to set me up in hope?"

As if someone had heard his words, there was a sound of drums and gourd rattles. Builds Fire turned away from Makona's door and muttered under his breath. "Something this way comes!"

Makona, wearing the robes of Great Chief stood at the head of a procession of helmeted and painted priests. The priests wore white buckskin robes over their bare bodies, with turtle-shell and deer-hoof rattles on each leg. Makona's hair was adorned with tufts of parrot feathers and eagle down with two corn leaves hanging down behind. His shoulders were painted yellow and three yellow bands ran across his back. In high honor Makona wore a mark painted under his left eye, to show that he saw only this world.

Makona turned and motioned for his followers to leave him alone. The priests glided silently away into rosy dawn in a silence that had no words only the ghostly clacking of their turtle-shell rattles.

Kalaw, dressed in resplendent robes stood beside him. Immediately behind her, like an obscene shadow, stood the Dead Warrior.

Makona proclaimed. "Here's Builds Fire, our honored guest. Like an unopened present at our door. This very night we hold a ceremonial feast and I have most especially asked for your presence here Builds Fire."

Kalaw added. "I hope his reluctance to enter is not a harbinger of his leaving."

Builds Fire replied with much ceremony. "Noble chief Makona! Your command upon my loyalties is a binding, sky and earth can never break. But I have promised in such a way to be elsewhere that I am bound by honor to travel there."

Makona looked grievously wounded by the news. He said with dark tones. "Honor must be served. Do you travel this day?"

"Yes Great Chief. As promised, by the South trail to see my kin in a near Pueblo."

Makona stared at his hands abstractedly. They twitched unwonted and he hid them quickly inside his robes. He looked at Builds Fire with an intensity that was forbidding. There was a lost quality to his speech and manner. "We desired your good advice, both grave and concerned, in this day's council but we'll take your words of heeding instead on the next day. Is it far you travel?"

"As far as all the time between now and the feast. If my legs are not swift, I may become a borrower of night for a dark hour before I arrive."

Kalaw entreated in a sweet voice. "Do not fail to return. Your presence here does us much honor."

Builds Fire smiled. "Great man and great woman, I will not."

Kalaw shuddered and moved away from the dead warrior standing behind her. It was clear she was uncomfortable in the presence of the dead warrior.

"So Builds Fire confounds us with leave taking when we would most hold him to us and does not promise to stay. Still we will smile again only when we see you," said Kalaw with elaborate courtesy.

Kalaw's eyes lit upon the dead warrior. Sensing his closeness, she made warding off motions. "Must we suffer the presence of this loathsome dead warrior, dogging our every step? Send him away. He begins to smell strongly of the grave he's been cheated of. To think of him and feasting in the same breath is an offense against eye and appetite."

Makona said as much for Builds Fire's sake as hers. "I have need of him. He is my guard against treachery. Did you know Builds Fire that I have word that Sky He Sees's murderous kin are in the Pueblo's of our ancient enemies, not confessing their cruel crimes, but filling our

enemies with strange invention and conspiracy!"

"That seems to confirm the bad that is said of them," said Builds Fire.

"Yes," agreed Makona impatiently. "But that's food for tomorrow, when we'll have affairs of the nations occupying us all. Go to your travels Builds Fire! Journey well till your return. Does Fire Child go with you?"

"Yes Great Chief. My son and I travel together."

Makona expressed his wishes for them. "May the spirits speed your journey swift and sure of foot on the South trail."

Kalaw further reminded them. "Builds Fire and Fire Child travel with the hand of Makona on your shoulders and the care of our hearts at your backs."

"With that, my way is made smooth before me."

The dear warrior said to the air, so softly none heard it but he. "Rather say it is made and unmade for you."

Builds Fire bowed in reverence as he took leave of them. Builds Fire walked away. All eyes were on him unto he passed from sight behind the walls of other houses in the Pueblo.

Makona at length spoke. "Kalaw, good wife, if you are offended by sight and sense of my dead slave, go and prepare yourself for the night's ceremonies."

"Till the hour of the feast, keep him far from my sight!" Kalaw went inside her house. She called back from the doorway. "I do not like having this dead thing about my house. He attracts flies."

"I would not do so if I were secure in my grave," rejoined the dead warrior. "I'd romance worms instead."

The dead warrior began to move away but Makona stopped him with a command.

"Dead warrior, wait upon my commands."

"Have I choice?"

"To be what I am is nothing until I am safely what I am. My fears in Builds Fire stick deep and in his noble beginnings and ascendant nature reigns that which I fear."

"What is the shape of this fear?"

Makona reasoned. "There is much Builds Fire dares and with that fearless temper of mind he has a wisdom that protects him. His being I most fear. In his existence, my ascendancy is rebuked. He commanded the three Kachinas when first they put the name of Great Chief upon me. That is courage, to make demands of the spirits! He bid them speak to him. Then in prophecy they hailed him father to a line of chiefs. Upon my head they nailed a fruitless headdress and put a barren medicine stick in my hand. Am I to be plagued, with no son of mine succeeding?"

"Plagued you are certainly."

Makona took it as insolence. "Silence! Is it to be not for mine, but for Builds Fire's children, I have corrupted my mind?"

"Great Chief Sky He Sees you have murdered! But done not for an everlasting glory to be passed to your own sons. That path is carved out for Builds Fire's sons, and pushed are they along on the path, by this murder!" said the dead warrior. "This was known to you in prophecy most clear yet you acted upon it."

Makona raised his voice with the fury of his discontent. "That's what puts bitterness in the clay pot of my peace. Only for them! And my heart spirit given to the Dark Walker, only to make the seeds of Builds Fire, chiefs! Great Chiefs! Anything but that! I command you, Dead Warrior in single combat to give death to that unkind dream!"

"And how is he any more my enemy than you who keeps me from sleep?"

Makona felt great contempt for the creature which stood to do his bidding. "When the Kachinas gave me mastery over you, and aided me in the shaping of you to my dark design, did we not speak together?"

"Yes. And I have considered your speeches as speeches."

Makona raged. "Why do you ever mock me? I expect willingness and headlong volition. You must be the arrow I shoot from my bow, unvarying in direction. Why do you contend against me?"

"I protest in words but obey in actions. I can not deflect from that path. The Kachinas have left me without movement of my own."

Makona sought to explain it in a way that would make the dead warrior's obedience more palatable. "Consider this. It was Builds Fire that made you a coward! It was his duty to raise you up in the craft of war. Yet you were grievously unprepared for battle. In times past, Builds Fire held you back in knowledge with a dark, stifling hand, which you thought a flaw in your own innocent self. My words prove it to you. You were deceived! Crossed in combat! Then left alone, badly prepared, you journeyed into cowardice, all by Builds Fire's design! He had ancient grievance with your father and chose you as the instrument of his malice. As his star rose, yours descended. Builds Fire's clever hand was on you, and all things, even to half a spirit and to a mind crazed, all say, 'Builds Fire made a coward of you!'"

The dead warrior's face was a map no man could read. He said calmly in a voice that was neither persuaded or unswayed. "You make it known to me."

"I did so and go further, in laying guilt and blame. Do you find patience so dominant in you that you dare let this go unavenged?"

The dead warrior protested. "I thought I was taken untimely from my coward's grave to serve you and not me."

Makona's sarcasm was thick as flies on the old unburied dead. "No. I am a selfless man. But are you so filled with brotherly love that you'd ask favor for this man and for his children yet to be? This man Builds Fire, whose heavy hand has carried you to the grave and beggared your existence forever?"

He was calm. The dead warrior's voice was of an even tenor. "I am a man, Makona."

Makona did not agree.

"Was a man. As sparrows, geese, hawks, eagles and vultures are called all by the name of birds. The valued list distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle, the watchful, the hunter, every one according to the gift which nature has given, where each receives particular benefit from the shaping that counsels them all alike. So it is with men. But look how you rank in the sacred lists of being! You are in the worst rank of manhood! Admit it now and I'll put edged weapons in your cold hands. Skillful use of them, takes your enemy off, and holds you to the heart and love of me! Builds Fire's death is the cure to the sickness he's laid at your door!"

"I am one, Great Chief, whom the evil blows and beatings of the world has so outraged that I am reckless in what I do to spite the world."

Makona made his final bid. "If wearied with this disaster that has fallen on you, would you set your release from bondage to any chance to mend it or be rid of it?"

"To be rid of me is my hope," said the dead warrior and he could not keep the longing out of his voice.

"Then you must know that Builds Fire is your only enemy, the only one standing between you and the oblivion of sleep," promised Makona.

"If you say it, it is true or must be taken as such."

"So too is he my enemy and every minute of his being, is a knife thrust against my heart. I myself could with bold moves sweep him from my sight and make my will answer for it but I dare not!" Makona stared at the dead warrior with cold calculation. "Certain clan brothers, both his and mine, whose duty would be to avenge his blood, would seek mine. These are loves I dare not invoke. I must seem to grieve and not rejoice at Builds Fire's death or I die with him. What I can not do, you can, unseen by the eyes of the world."

The dead warrior's answer was direct and forthright.

"I'll do what you command me, whether I believe in it or not."

Makona crowed. "Your spirit shines through you. Do me this deed and I will mercifully send you to your grave in good haste."

"To trade my sleep for the sleep of another. I am an arrow aimed at only that."

Makona was cheered by the dead warrior's compliance. "I'll advise you where to hide along the South Trail, acquaint you with the perfect moment for murder. It must be done tonight and at some distance from the Pueblo, so strangers are suspected guilty of the murder. Fire Child, his son, travels at his side. His death is as important to me as his father's. He too must embrace the same knife in darkness. Go and make your weapons ready! I'll come to you soon."

The dead warrior scuttled off into the growing darkness.

Makona stared off after him. His thoughts were of distant dark things, of things yet to be. He wondered if the surrounding dark gave shelter to the three Kachinas. It was to them he next spoke "Tonight is made mine. If you can hear me, and know what is in my heart, you know full well if I succeed, then Kachina's, your prophecy is overturned. When you spirits again whisper the names of men who walk above the clouds, they will say the names of Makona's yet to born

sons, who inherit the earth, while Builds Fire's inherit dust!"

Makona strained to hear an answer that might come to him in the night.

But only silence seemed to live in the world.

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

The dead warrior passed through the rooms of Makona's house like an empty corn husk, pushed by a chivvying wind. He had come there with a desperate ill-conceived notion that would have spared Builds Fire. If Kalaw would by some dark contrivance release him in death, before he killed Builds Fire and Fire Child, three aches would cease to hurt. But the idea did not live long enough to enter the room with him. Kalaw's relentless presence was too much felt in this room and the idea of mercy, was no idea she had ever entertained.

The very real ache in him for death that had brought him inside to beg for it once again, was very small and quiet, and did not tear at him with the old urgency. The evil that walked in this place fell across him like a blanket that covered up his want. His desires were so small when measured against the tides that moved in Kalaw.

He had approached her with his plea well-rehearsed but the sight of her face, shadow-sharpened into an angular ghost white mask of fear and want, stilled him. And her eyes, burnt copper moons, turned fully on him, filled him with a dread so nameless and unspeakable he could not remain in her presence.

Kalaw caught the dead warrior's arm as he was about to pass her. She let go quickly as if she had touched something unclean.

She demanded. "Is Builds Fire gone from the Pueblo?"

"As gone as he can get but not as gone as others would have him get."

"You reeking fool! I might as well ask the wind passing over the burial racks as consult you! Send Makona to me, if that is not beyond your strength."

"At least I smell strong. I'd have him at your feet in an instant but I have other dark things to do. The dead do not run as fast as the living, perhaps because we know what chases us."

The dead warrior took leave of her, his vain plea unspoken, bustling to do his other dark errands.

Kalaw turned back to the fire and spoke her thoughts aloud. "I have come to loath the sight of him! Makona should put him in his coward's grave. We are too much burdened with death already."

Makona stood in the doorway. His voice rang out with false cheer. "And here is my one true love."

Kalaw spun about at the sound of his voice. "Where have you been? Why do you keep yourself alone?"

Makona came into the room. He seemed a man who can not find comfort anywhere. He stood uneasily before the fire. "I am troubled by things I see and have not seen. By things I have done and have yet to do."

"It's not good to stay so much alone with darkest imaginings your only companion," Kalaw's concern for his state of mind was in her voice.

"I have fearsome doubts. We sink! We prevail! I do not know which way the wind blows. In my uncertainty it seems nothings gained and all has been spent," he said. He seemed too restless to stand still. He shifted from foot to foot as if they ached.

"Thoughts that should have died with the murder still live on in you!" Kalaw despised the weakness in Makona. He had not the steadfast heart that beat in her.

Makona could not change his gloomy thoughts but followed them to an end. "It would be safer to be that which we destroy than suffer desire without contentment."

Kalaw came to stand beside him. She took his hand in her own and looked deep into his eyes. "Things without cure should be without regard. What's done is done."

Makona shook his hand loose from hers, not angrily but as if a human touch was too burdensome or overwhelming. "We have scorched the snake, not killed it. She may heal and be herself again while our poor malice remains in danger of her ancient teeth. By our actions, the spiderweb frame of the universe comes undone, and all the four sacred directions suffer. Ever after we will eat in fear and sleep afflicted with terrible dreams come to shake us nightly."

"It seems I lost Makona, the man who dared and now have Makona who dares not," said Kalaw. Her eyes were venomous, her voice unforgiving. Her manner was forceful and intent on overwhelming his moods. "Relent from this tide of gloom. Be the man again!"

Makona stood away from her. If he felt the heat of the fire, it brought no warmth. There was a coldness that seemed to come from him, like a wind from the icy North. "Better be with the dead, we have sent into a dark eternal peace, than lie in reckless mad sleep tortured by the thought of discovery."

"You have all you desire ahead of you. Why fear troubles that time will put to sleep? To live and rule as Great Chief will entice the memory of fear out of you!" Kalaw was desperate to seize some argument that would lighten the darkness in Makona.

"Sky He Sees was Great Chief for honor's sake. Now Sky He Sees is on his burial rack! After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well. Treason has done its worst. Knives, poison, rebellion, enemies,

nothing can touch him," Makona's pang of remorse filled Kalaw with resentment and unspoken rage.

"I begin to envy the dead!" admitted Makona, inconsolable in his thoughts.

Kalaw took his hand forcefully and put it on her breast. Her voice was heavy with sex and ambition. "The dead do not have their pleasures."

Makona stirred.

"Hold me! Feel the heat of my love for you."

She threw her arms around him and kissed him with ancient knowledge and promise. Makona flushed with desire.

She pulled back, ending the kiss but its effect lingered on in Makona.

"The taste of passion! The life that still is strong in you and shall father sons to rule the nation. Taste this and you envy no one!" said Kalaw. Her heart seized his, in the way a woman can do with a man and Makona aroused from his mortal fears. His desire for her raged larger than his dark thoughts and they were pushed aside and forgotten.

Kalaw smiled in womanly triumph, aware of the change she had wrought. "Come, remember who you have become, Great Chief. Smooth over those dark looks. Be a man who charms the heart of the nation."

Makona held her tenderly. "So I will as you will," His mind touched again on uncompleted schemes. "And for your part Kalaw, seek to reassure Builds Fire. Grant him honor with flattering speech."

"Oh I hope I know what is in your heart. Tell me Makona that from this day forth, Builds Fire travels unsafe!" said Kalaw, her face mirroring her utmost approval.

"So unsafe he may not travel far. But I will not explain it. We must make faces that mask our

hearts, disguising what they are."

"I will publicly wash our honors in flattering streams. Your words makes my blood heat! Makona is himself again!" said Kalaw.

As if he suddenly remembered that he had not been himself, Makona found another doubt. "But can I keep my dark thoughts at bay? There are scorpions in my mind!"

"You must abandon this mood or put us in danger. We walk into a thin wind. You know full well that Builds Fire and his son Fire Child still live."

"They live yes," said Makona with a strongly threatening tone. "but they have not been granted eternal life."

Makona's words seemed to suggest he was a man with arrows still in flight. Kalaw touched his face tenderly. "You mean more than you say."

Makona squared his shoulders. He reached to take the hand that caressed his face. He turned Kalaw's hand and kissed the palm with affection. He tried to reassure her, to take strength from her presence and counsel.

"Builds Fire and Fire Child are vulnerable to me. Before the night bird has flown his shadow-drenched flight, the world will move to a Dark Walker's summons."

"When does it begin? This ridding and going away?"

"Before night closes its tired eyes, my unrelenting one moves to ensure that a darkness of dreadful note shall be done."

Kalaw was moved by the prospect. "What have you done?"

Makona was protective of her gentle nature which the world had seen little of. "Be innocent of knowledge 'til you can taste the triumph of full success. If it is done as I willed it, dark night will blind the tender eyes of day and tear to pieces, that future prophecy the three Kachinas

made."

"My pride in you goes towards the sun."

Makona seemed lost in thought, his eyes straying to look out the doorway and to the desert beyond. "Light thickens and already my funeral bird makes wing to the desert. The innocence of the day begins to lose its wary edge while my night's black hunter goes to his prey," said Makona. "When Builds Fire and Fire Child, are fatally clawed, they will say of me, Makona was not there to do it. The beak that drew blood will not be mine. Yet Kalaw, it is Makona that sets loose the hunting hawk."

Kalaw was dizzy with joy. Makona's plans pleased her to the bone. Still Kalaw wished her hand was in the scheme's shaping for she did not quite trust Makona's wavering nature.

She spoke of her joy and slight uncertainty. "The predator flies from the perch of Makona's hand, carrying death to others and joy to me. I marvel at your words but taste a tiny terror, a fear of falling, that holds me still beside you."

Makona put his arm around her shoulders. "Come to bed with me my love."

"Willingly."

"A day badly begun can yet make itself strong with the strength of its own evil!" Makona's words were both promise and threat. His hands caressed her.

She whispered in his ear. "We are two birds of the same kind, you and I."

Makona's reply was but a thought before passion took him.

"If birds we are, we are they that eat the dead."

CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

Two lone figures hurried with insect haste along the south trail that led through the heart of the high desert.

Somewhere ahead of them, behind an outcropping of sandstone that hid him from sight, crouched a man who was not a man. He had a knife and murderous intent.

Builds Fire cast his eyes warily back the way they had come. He urged his son on.

"Hurry!"

Fire Child was struggling to match the long strides of his father.

"Why such haste father?"

"Murder has long legs." Builds Fire kept his hand on the hilt of his knife.

"But where are we going? We've reached a distance that makes it unlikely we'll return in time for Makona's feast," Fire Child was all in. His sides were heaving. "I have to rest father."

Builds Fire slowed his pace but did not stop. The rigor of the journey showed in him too.

"It's not so much a feast as a chance to be eaten. Move your feet and not your tongue. The young are forever full of questions and not deeds."

Fire Child staggered along beside him, forcing himself to speed up to match his father's pace.

"Surely no one could have traveled as far or as fast as we have gone."

Builds Fire saw that his son was in sore need of rest. "It's true. We've gone swift as any could go. Let us rest in the shade of those boulders ahead. I would say we are safe now."

They slowed to a walk. They trudged on in silence. Builds Fire still had a wary eye out but Fire Child was absorbed in his own thoughts.

Fire Child said. "What would drive a man to commit murder, to kill a good hearted man like Sky He Sees? It must be a sickness of the mind to make a man do that."

"Murder is in all men. It is a seed planted in us all but envy and evil are the rain that makes it

grow," said Builds Fire.

"If the night guards, murdered him, they were mad," reasoned Fire Child. "For they had no reason to do it."

"And if Makona murdered them, he had reason to do so," said Builds Fire. "A man who plots and plans, is not mad."

"Makona should be put to death," said Fire Child.

"Strong suspicions are not proof. And he is a man of known greatness. His war deeds have carried the nation. Such a man can be brought down only with proof plainly seen."

They had reached the outcropping of sandstone. Ancient carvings festooned the rocks high above their head. "See the mark of the old ones? It is a mark of favor to see their sign written there," said Builds Fire, his eyes on the old inscriptions written in stone.

The dead warrior crept toward them, knife raised. While Builds Fire was gazing upward, the dead warrior rose from concealment and struck.

Unseen, he leaped among them and stabbed Builds Fire in the chest.

Builds Fire screamed. "'Treachery! Run Fire Child! I am murdered!'"

The dead warrior strove to withdraw the knife so that he might turn and slay Fire Child. The shifting of his body and baleful glance he sent Fire Child's way, indicated that Fire Child was to be his next victim.

Builds Fire understood his dark purpose. Two-handed, the dead warrior seized the handle of the knife, bent on withdrawing it to strike again at Fire Child. With the last of his strength, Builds Fire encircled the dead warrior with his arms, imprisoning the knife in his chest. The grave born assassin struggled to free the knife.

"Father!" cried Fire Child and he held his own knife in his hand and was ready to spring to his

father's defense.

Builds Fire read his intent and spoke with the last of his life-force. "If you love me, leave me! You can not kill this thing that killed me. But he will kill you if you do not flee! Run! Run if you love me!"

Eyes brimming in tears, Fire Child threw down his knife and ran as if all the evil in the world chased him. So swift was his flight, it was clear Fire Child could escape the fate that befell his father.

The dead warrior struggled in vain to break Builds Fire's fierce embrace. Only the last tremors of his own death, broke Builds Fire's hold on the dead warrior.

The dead warrior eased Builds Fire's body to the ground. His dead eyes searched the desert for the second face of his twinned task but Fire Child was no longer in sight.

The dead warrior spoke to Builds Fire.

"You struggled so well to keep my knife, you may keep it now forever. Builds Fire is brave!"

"Where is my son?" Builds Fire's greatest concern was not for himself. All his last hopes were centered on Fire Child.

"Your boy Fire Child is safely fled and I have lost the most important half of this black night's work. I forgot the encircling strength of a father's love."

Builds Fire asked. "Am I dead like you?"

"Half way there."

Builds Fire sat up slowly. He felt the handle of the knife still embedded in his chest, and looked down on it sorrowfully.

"I am what would move a stone to tears."

The dead warrior was solemn, and seemed to be grieving.

"Two stones."

Builds Fire stared off into the distance, in the direction Fire Child had run. "My son lives. I will be avenged."

"Twice avenged."

Builds Fire looked at the dead warrior with a confounded expression. "How so?"

"Your son is alive to make revenge."

Builds Fire understood that but no more. "That is once avenged."

The dead warrior further explained. "And now you stand dead before me, a vengeful ghost, drenched in black hate."

Builds Fire seemed amazed by the thought.

"Am I? Then I am rich even in death."

The dead warrior helped the ghost of Builds Fire get to his feet. "I return to report how much has been done and not done. You may travel with me, since I can not stop you."

Builds Fire asked. "If I am dead, how can I travel?"

"I go about and none say I live," said the dead warrior.

"But you are cursed," said Builds Fire.

"All murdered men are and do walk about."

Builds Fire seemed stunned by this news. He reeled and almost fell. The dead warrior seized his arm and helped him stand up. The shock of what had happened to Builds Fire, left him dazed and unable to think clearly.

"I can not find words to say how I feel."

"You feel things for which no human beings have words."

"Who has words then for what I feel?" cried Builds Fire.

"Ghosts and spirits."

"Am I now become such a thing?"

"But not learned in it. You are an infant of this moment. The language of the dead will stick to your tongue when custom and usage fits its form on you."

The dead warrior began to walk down the south trail, heading in the direction of Makona's Pueblo. Builds Fire stood uncertainly in the dust of the trail behind him. His mind was divided as to whether he should stay or follow. He felt a sentimental attachment to this stone outcropping, this stopping place in the desert. For it was the last place Builds Fire had lived on earth.

"And will you tell Makona of me as well as my son?" he called out after the dead warrior. The dead warrior turned to Builds Fire and said. "The spirits have their own way of entering a human room. He will know soon enough."

The dead warrior moved on down the trail. He did not look back.

Builds Fire meant to stay, to linger at the place where he had forever left the earth as a human being but a crushing loneliness overtook him. On unsteady legs, he hurried after the disappearing form of the dead warrior.

Even the company of the dead was preferable to the void Builds Fire now found himself inhabiting.

CHAPTER TWENTY SIX

Makona's sat where all Great Chief's sit, warmed by a great fire that the fairest children of the Pueblo kept burning bright. Though he sat in the place of highest honor, his head was ever turning sideways towards the doorway that faced the plaza. To those who observed his sidelong

glances, it was plain that Makona awaited the coming of someone, perhaps a messenger, from some other Pueblo. He had the air of a man who was much distracted and whose thoughts were in some distant place.

A great feast was spread out before him. Lonewolf was by his side while all around other warriors of high rank, took their places in close proximity to Makona. There was a milling about and much confusion, for with Sky He Sees's death, those who once rode with his hand on them in patronage and favor, were uncertain of their placement in Makona's constellation. Makona was aware of their distress and moved quickly to address it.

"You know your seats by right around the fire. Those honored by Sky He Sees are honored by me. Sit then unmoved in those sites as if Sky He Sees were still with us and with all his favor still invested in you all. You have my word that no one who had his favor will not have mine in equal measure."

Lonewolf spoke for them all as they settled in their places.

"All thanks to you Great Chief Makona!" He sat at Makona's right side as he had thus sat at Sky He Sees's side. "Sky He Sees's reign did not die with him. It lives on in you."

Makona waved it aside. He said. "I have come to be with you in a welcome lacking grace but it must do because Kalaw is not ready yet for your company."

Kalaw came into the room, unseen by Makona. Her voice was cheerful and kept a note of joy in it. She was radiant, a woman seemingly caught in a special blaze of sun. As slender as a willow, her burnished copper skin glowed as if washed by the sun. Her voice made music as she spoke. "Ready enough. To all our friends, my heart speaks that they are welcome."

A shadowy figure appeared in the doorway and Makona jumped in alarm. The dead warrior stood silently at the door and beckoned for Makona to come outside.

Makona nodded and turned to look at Kalaw.

"Kalaw they encounter you with their own heart's thanks. All faces here, swim in a sea of honor. Good wife sit among them and be loud in good praise of our friends. I'll be back soon to pass the drinking gourd with one and all."

Makona got up. He shook off the Great Chief's robes and went quickly to the door. The dead warrior moved back so that Makona could pass through.

Makona whispered urgently. "Get back out of sight. There's blood upon your face."

The dead warrior moved to one side so that those inside could not see him. He said. "Builds Fire's blood."

Makona motioned him to silence. "Don't speak until we are a distance away fool!"

Makona and the dead warrior walked across the empty plaza.

The dead warrior moved slowly like some hurt animal that loses its strength. Makona moved with all eagerness, bursting to know the news the dead warrior had brought.

Makona looked back at his house. They were safely out of earshot. He demanded at once. "Is he dead?"

The dead warrior laughed bitterly. "He says he is."

Makona looked troubled. It was a strange answer.

"What means you by that?"

The dead warrior enjoyed the discomfort in Makona's face.

"Say then instead that he wears my knife forever in his chest. If that is death, then dead he is."

Makona was bucked up in spirit by those words. The fear that had gripped him seem to fall from his shoulders like a dropped cloak.

"A man who no longer fears death, upon you already accomplished, is the best of killers! And

Fire Child, his wretched hope for a son, does he ride into the same grave?"

"He rides but elsewhere."

Makona was startled.

"What?"

"He has escaped!" confessed the dead warrior.

Makona ranted at him. "'Coward! You have failed me again! Two murders would have made me perfect, as whole in spirit and being as the great stone mesas, as free as the river of air above me but now I am doomed to insolent doubts and fears."

The dead warrior tried to smooth it over. "Half your fears are gone."

Makona would not be consoled.

"One fear is as big as two. It grows to fill the mind that owns it. But Builds Fire is no longer to be feared?"

The dead warrior moved his hand in a stabbing motion, reconstructing the crime for Makona. His words marked the manner of Builds Fire's downfall. "In the ground his body rests, with my knife buried in it. His fleshy body walks no more. But who am I to judge what is to be feared? To see what I have seen might fill you with fear."

Makona was grudging in his admission. "I owe you thanks for that."

"And as promised, will you now release me to my earned death?"

Makona was resolute in his refusal. "When Fire Child dies by your hand, only then do I give you back to your grave. It's in that fatal failure, that the Ancient of Reptiles waits."

The dead warrior wanted to protest bitterly, to plead for his release but Makona's temper assured he was in no mood to listen.

Makona went on. "Fire Child, like the scorpion caressing its own sting, Fire Child that has

fled my will, has in his nature an aspect that breeds venom!" Makona turned on him with newfound vehemence. "Go from my sight! Always you fail me, where I need you most!"

The dead warrior turned and walked away. His shoulder slumped in defeat and the ruined being that he was, seemed even more diminished and withered.

Makona stood in the empty plaza. His eyes were shut. His face a mask of fear and contention.

A hand touched his shoulder and roused him from his state. Kalaw was at his side. She, was in a far greater state of agitation than Makona.

"Is the deed done?" She ached to know.

"Half done."

"How so?"

"Builds Fire is dead and Fire Child is fled,"

She raised a hand to her face in dismay. She sought to overturn it.

"He is but a boy. Can he not be overtaken?"

"He knows too much to be caught. He has seen his father's murder done and it made wings for him. Too many will rise to aid him, for love of Builds Fire. I fear he is out of our hands entire."

"This has a ruinous face," said Kalaw. "Still we must look at it in the light of day. It was not your hand that killed. The dead warrior is a Kachina being. We can deny his dark purpose was our own, and set it to the spirits!"

"We deny and deny but who will believe?" asked Makona, sensing the storms yet to come.

"We will beat down those who do not!" cried Kalaw with sudden righteous fury.

"If by crushing the whole nation, is the way as Great Chief I must rule, then I am to have domain over dust."

"They will all come round to our way of thinking," suggested Kalaw. "But that is a future

worry. We have more immediate needs. Come Makona. Think no more on it," She took him firmly by the hand and began to lead him back towards their house. "They hold your place for you. It grows cold beside the feast fire. Your absence deprives our guests of your favor."

Although Makona walked in the full warmth of the sun, he shuddered as if some wintry blast from the frozen North had blown against him. He shrugged the feeling off and entered his own house, Kalaw at his side.

As they passed through the door, Lonewolf stood there to welcome them back. "Come take your place Makona. We are many, all come to ceremonially honor you at the feasting."

Makona put on as cheerful a face as he could pretend to and said. "Lonewolf, you are a loyal friend. Here are all those who represent the glory of our race, all present except warleader Builds Fire. I lay his absence to matters important to the nation rather than to accident or design."

A shadowy figure moved ahead of him. The ghost of Builds Fire walked to the place of honor and sat at the fire in Makona's place. His wound was gaping and hideous in the firelight. His eyes were empty of humanness, his face contorted in the mortis of death.

Lonewolf beckoned Makona. "Come take your place, Great Chief, that we may all be graced with your near presence."

Makona stepped back in full horror. "My place by the fire is taken."

Lonewolf protested. "Why none living would dare! It awaits you with all highest honors."

Makona vented his fury. "Liars! He sits in my place, dripping blood!"

Lonewolf regarded Makona with consternation. "Who? What strangeness moves you, Great Chief?"

Makona turned on his betrayers. "Which of you has done this? I'll have his hands cut off, his eyes speared with cactus spines!"

Lonewolf's mouth was agape in amazement. "Done what?"

Makona tried to seize Builds Fire's arm, to yank him out of Makona's seat, to face him with accusation. His hands passed through the phantom like a knife through thin air. He raged at the insolent being that sat in his place. "Do you say that I did it? Do not shake your gore drenched face at me!"

Lonewolf rose in protective defense of the Great Chief. This was not a sight for all eyes to see. "Rise warriors! Makona is not well!" he proclaimed.

Kalaw hastened to reassure all hearers. Her lie was quickly created and adroitly spoken in the smoothest, most calming way. "Sit worthy warriors. My husband is often like this and has been from his youth. Please stay. The fit is momentary, a lingering from a childhood injury. In an instant, he will be well again. If you make much over it, you'll excite him all the more. Eat and drink and regard him not."

Kalaw took Makona the arm and led him aside. Some warriors had begun to rise at Lonewolf's bidding but the soothing words of Kalaw were a balm that settled them back in their places.

Kalaw muttered under her breath to Makona as she led him away from the edge of the feast. "Are you a man?"

Makona allowed himself to be led away but could not keep his stare from the bloody apparition of Builds Fire. He answered her without shifting his gaze. "Yes and no. Yes when I am myself but no when I must look on that which would affright a bonepicker!"

Kalaw whispered with urgency. "What do you claim you see?"

Makona could not quite believe she had not seen it as well. "It is the hate-filled ghost of Builds Fire, at my place beside the council fire! I see him

clear as I see my own hand! And the look on his face when he shakes his bloody hair at me! It is a look that would blind the sun!"

"You see nothing," hissed Kalaw.

"It is a bloody murdered nothing. If nothing can be stabbed and bleed, then that is the nothing that confronts me! Look! See how its eyes track me with malice, follow me with relentless intensity, and stalk me with their pleading."

Kalaw shook him as a dog shakes a caught snake. "Rave on child! This is the painting of your fear. This is the wind-drawn knife which you said led you to Sky He Sees. These outbursts are suitable only in tales told by old women at a winter's fire. Shame itself! Why do you make such faces?"

"No worse than the one made at me."

"When all's done, you stare at nothing!"

Makona could not be shaken from it. "See him there! Look!"

Kalaw turned to look, as if to humor his fantasy. She saw an empty spot at the feast where Makona, in his right mind, would be.

Makona saw Builds Fire's ghost touch the gore spattered knife in his chest and then point an accusing finger at Makona.

Makona was close to fainting, so pale had he become in face and form. "He accuses me! Spirit, can you speak? What do I care about death now if every one I do is undone? If the boneyards and our graves send all those we bury back, then our bodies should be thrown to scavengers and never buried."

Builds Fire's ghost lifted its hand from the hilt of the knife. He held his hand out, open palmed, as if begging for sweet pity. The figure rose up and moved toward Makona.

Makona stood transfixed in horror. The ghost neared. Makona tensed to move aside, to get out of the way of the phantom. But before his outraged senses could command his body. Build's Fire, shrieking with silent, ghostly laughter, advanced on him at a full run. Makona was paralyzed in motionless terror.

Builds Fire's ghost reached him, then passed through him entirely like water flowing through sand. Makona quivered like something burned and singed in a fire.

Kalaw jerked at Makona's arm roughly, spinning him out of his mad tinged immobility. She said in her most forceful, commanding voice. "There's nothing! Nothing! Unmanned in folly, you howl at empty space! I see nothing but your fear."

Makona was adamant but seemed somewhat shaken awake by her crude laying on of hands. "If I stand here with certainty, then with certainty, I saw Builds Fire's ghost taking my place by the feast fire."

Kalaw rebuked him. "Shame!"

Makona had much on his mind and was moved to say it, despite her chiding. "Blood wantonly shed in the ancient days, before law and custom held sway in the Pueblos, were outrages against all human nature. Savage passion ruled and reason could not win against it. But the murders in the world now, are evils too deep for any past season. A dead warrior walks the land and does my bidding. Builds Fire's dead and walks the land to accuse me!"

"You must come to grips with this," said Kalaw. "Sky He Sees is DEAD! Yet he is gone out of the world without track of his passing. No other beings rise from recent battles to assault us. Peaceful are the dead, except for those you only think you see! There are not there! Except the dead warrior, Kachina cursed and alit on this narrow perch of ambition to give flight to your dreams, all else is fevered fancy."

If Makona followed her reasoning, he gave no sign of it.

He stared at the distant horizon. He spoke as much to himself as to her. "Once it was that when brains or hearts were cut out, a man died and that was an end to it. But now they rise again with murders of their own and push me from my seat at the fire. This is more strange than the deviousness of murder itself!"

All the while Makona raved, and seemed deep in the grip of his affliction, Kalaw had forced him to walk, steering him back toward the comfort of his own house. She forced him through the door and admonished him against the eyes and ears that were all around them now.

"Remember Makona you are now a Great Chief. You must be with your warriors now!" urged Kalaw. "Overtroubled man, recover! Be Makona and be with your friends!"

Makona turned to her and said with sarcasm. "Friends? Do they follow me or chase me, I do forget? But I have a strange infirmity which should be nothing to those who claim to know me. Yes, my love, I am myself again and will pass the drinking gourd with love and health to all. Now I shall take my rightful place."

Makona moved toward his empty seat at the fire. No ghostly presence seemed evident to him, though he looked with eyes so fierce and seeking they could have holed cloth.

Unseen, Builds Fire's ghost came to stand at Makona's back, peering like some unblinking owl over his shoulder. But now Builds Fire wore the soft white doeskin garments of a young bride. His face seemed to be that of a young woman frozen in death and strange invitation. It was a face that Makona would know, a face that Makona once loved. It was a terror more compelling than the gaping wound from which Builds Fire's life had been poured.

Makona held up a drinking gourd to all present. He toasted them. "I drink to the long life of those who honor me. To our ancestors and to our children yet to be. To warriors dead and absent.

To my dear friend Builds Fire, with a wish that he were here. Glory and honor to all!"

Makona drank from the gourd. The bitter liquor burned his mouth. He turned to look at the warriors gathered behind him. And saw once again the bloody ghost of Builds Fire who now wore the face of a young woman and the clothes of a bride.

Lonewolf gave a shout. "Live long Makona!" which was taken up and echoed by other warriors in the room till the housebeams fair echoed with the tumult.

Makona's screams rose above that clamor. "Get away from me! Quit my sight! Let the earth hide you! Your bones are boneless, your blood is bled out!"

Lonewolf and the other warriors rose up in a body, distress evident in their faces. The warriors seemed ready to leave.

Makona hugged himself, as if trying to contain his pain with the strength in his own arms. "I buried you. You are dead with my little one. Please stay in your grave. Don't remind me of a love that is gone! I can not bear it!" The last was wrenched out of Makona with a sob that shook his entire body.

Makona's outburst brought silence and uneasy looks from all present. All eyes were on Makona. No one was happy to see him take on in such a fashion. It was not seemly behavior in a Great Chief.

Kalaw tried to appease them but one by one warriors began to trickle out the door. They had heard enough, seen enough to want to be elsewhere. Her words could not stem the tide that took them away. "Warriors! Think little of this. It is a tiny aberration. It only spoils the pleasure of the time, and effects him not at all, in other aspects of his life."

Makona addressed himself to the bloody ghost of Builds Fire. "What man dares, I dare. Are you come for me, in the guise of bonepicker? Or are you my long dead bride of the nightlands? If

my life as a man is to end, married to the woman of death, who once wore my heart in her? Are you next to be the child I loved and that did not live to walk even a little ways with me ? Oh, sorrow! Sorrow! Be not that to me, hideous one. Take any shape but that and my firm nerves shall never tremble. But if you are those, I am undone."

Builds Fire's ghost moved toward Makona. He walked not like a man but like a young woman who moved with grace and beauty.

The last of the warriors, with much shaking of their heads and muttering, left Makona's house.

Kalaw begged them as they went through the door. "Good warriors, stay. The wind is about to change and this fancy is almost out of him."

Makona struggled against his fancies. Builds Fire's ghost changed form as he neared Makona. No longer did he resemble Makona's dead first wife. Now he was himself again, bloodied and murdered. Makona raged at him.

"Come to life again Builds Fire and dare me to fight you in the desert! I will match you knife thrust to knife thrust! If fear keeps me from meeting your challenge, I am then the baby of a girl!"

Builds Fire turned in his path, as if Makona were something to be avoided, and passed by him. He followed after the departing warriors. He was in the doorway in one instant and then he was smoke and vanished in the wind.

Lonewolf was the last warrior to leave the room. His face was a mirror of tragedy sensed but not understood.

Makona shouted after the vanished apparition.

"Flee night shadow!"

Kalaw held her head with her hands. She was grievous and enraged and disheartened all in

one. "Your madness banished the good that could have been done here. Your friends with whom you must jointly rule the nation, have fled the sight of you!"

Makona turned it back on her. "Woman, you make me strange to my own nature. How can you see such a gruesome sight and keep the natural color of your face when mine goes white with fear?"

Kalaw said with all the bitterness of salt poured on a wound. "The only sight I've seen, is a child dressed mockingly as a man."

Makona wondered, his mind adrift. His imagination had seized him in an insect grip and crawled out from under him, taking a wild oblique course that he could not cure or correct. He moaned. "Can such things be? Things that pass over us as quick as a summer cloud?"

Kalaw thought it best to find somehow in speech or thought, safety in some other realm that would restore Makona. She said most tenderly. "You should rest now. You grow worse and worse. Speech seems to enrage you."

Makona raved on. "It will have blood. They say blood will have blood. Stones have been known to move and trees to speak. Omens and prophecies traced in the flights of messenger birds and dark night birds who eat the dead, bring forth the secrets of men who deal in blood!"

Kalaw raised her hand and slapped him hard across the face.

Makona reeled with the force of the blow. That more than anything she had said seemed to bring him back to himself. His face reddened with the imprint of her hand. He stared at her. His eyes seemed clearer, his face more purposeful.

"Can your mind order itself or are you permanently undone?"

Makona said softly. "Kalaw good wife, the ghost being gone," His hand brushed his stinging cheek. "and with your tender womanly cares to comfort me, I am a man again. What is the

night?"

"Gone. Almost at the birth of morning."

Makona seemed well content with that. "The time when most schemes are hatched. What do you say to the fact that Makes Dead denies his person at our great feast?"

Kalaw stared at Makona with mixed amazement and joy. "If you can ask that, then you are yourself again. Did you send for him?"

"A spy in his house who wears my name has reported his refusal to return. Tomorrow I'll seek the counsel of the three Kachina's where I met them last. They might know what I am to make of this denial."

Kalaw shuddered. "You seek their hand too often in yours. You are bent to know the worst by the worst means. For your own good, all supernatural causes should give way. Avoid them for fear your reason will be strangled."

Makona could not countenance that abandonment. "I am in blood so deeply stepped that should I refuse to wade in deeper, the swim back is as far as going ahead. Strange things I have in my head. I need to quell them with answers in my hand."

Kalaw put her arm around him. "You lack the cure of sleep. Later is time enough for your journey."

Makona bowed in weary acknowledgment. "Yes. I am tired out. Let us sleep."

Kalaw led him toward the sleeping rooms. She spoke to him as a mother comforts her child. "Your strange hallucination is only the beginning of fear. We are yet young in deed. A gentle river of sleep will wash the terror away."

Makona softly countered it.

"There are no rivers in the desert."

CHAPTER TWENTY SEVEN

The dead warrior sat beneath a lightning struck tree. He rested his back against the stunted trunk but found no position of comfort.

He was in a desolate place where the refuse and litter of the Pueblo were tossed in great mounds. Being there suited the dead warrior's mood and mirrored his own discarded existence.

A voice sounded in the distance. It hailed him by the name that had once been his while he lived as a man.

The name was familiar but of no use to him. The voice was not one he recognized. He did not answer.

Lonewolf picked his way carefully through the rubble. He saw the unmoving form of the dead warrior and made straight for him.

Lonewolf greeted him. "I sought you out."

"As do flies seek me out."

"I would have words with you, to probe your knowledge of certain things." said Lonewolf.

"You know me, I am Lonewolf, and once was Sky He Sees's right hand and most trusted messenger."

"You will never know me," said the dead warrior. "You have the shape of a human. You walk and talk and show no sign you once were a human hand."

"You mock me!" said Lonewolf who was offended by the dead warrior's manner.

"My own existence is a jest. I seem forced to inflict it on others. But tell me why does Lonewolf seek my counsel which reeks over strongly of the grave and is not to be trusted?"

asked the dead warrior.

"I suspect you have insights from the spirit world. Cautious word from you, may give way secrets about Makona, who holds you in unwanted bondage and earns your enmity," said Lonewolf.

"I would say Sky He Sees's messenger Lonewolf has carried too many words and the human emotions in them, break his heart."

Lonewolf looked solemn. Something in this pathetic creature kindled his sympathies. "Things have been strangely carried into the world. As a walking testimony to strangeness, do you see this as I see it?"

The dead warrior felt some stirring of forgotten emotions in him. Things that should no longer be his to feel, still touched him. "What you've said before, hits my thoughts and can be taken to mean much more. But what I know I can not say."

Lonewolf could understand the dead warrior's reluctance. Allegiance was a bond and not easily broken, even past the grave. He considered his words carefully before he spoke again, seeking the key to unlock this dead man's silence.

"Sky He Sees was pitied and made much over by Makona. But it's easy to pity the dead. And brave Builds Fire, one of our greatest warriors was slain upon the Southern path. Because he fled, we are supposed to believe his own son, Fire Child killed him. We have reaped an overabundant crop of sons that kill fathers."

The dead warrior smiled at Lonewolf's construction of events. He said. "Men should not have sons it seems, in Makona's Pueblo. It is not so elsewhere."

"And who can not fail to think how monstrous it was for Falcon and Diving Bird to kill their father, Great Chief Sky He Sees! An outrageous fact if believed! If believed! And how deeply

did Makona grieve!" This last was said with heavy irony.

The dead warrior smiled as he remembered Makona's actions.

"He wept like a stone."

Lonewolf went on. "And Makona in loyal rage, quickly killed the two hired murderers that were slaves of deep drink and sleep. He kills quick, both men and questions."

The dead warrior nodded in subtle understanding. "And wisely done for it would have angered any heart alive to hear those men deny it."

"Dead warrior, your master Makona has suffered all things well," Lonewolf's outrage was in his voice and face. "And I do think that if he had Fire Child and Sky He Sees's sons prisoner in the manner he holds you, Dead Warrior, they would find how serious a crime it is to seem to kill one's own father."

"And Makes Dead from talking truths too freely and because he refused his presence at Makona's great feast, even noble Makes Dead now lives in disgrace. There is much made of his unknown whereabouts. Lonewolf, do you know where he is fled?" asked the dead warrior.

"Do you ask for yourself or for Makona?" asked a wary Lonewolf.

"Is Makona here?" said the dead warrior with feigned alarm. "Do you see his noble face?"

Lonewolf looked around. "I do not see him anywhere midst the rubble."

"Then it is asked for no one's sake, not even my own. I would forget it as soon as I heard it," vowed the dead warrior.

Lonewolf understood a little then of what was in the dead warrior's words. He decided to risk what he knew, to tell in the hope, he traded for things only the dead warrior knew.

"Makes Dead the heir of Sky He Sees from whom Makona withholds his birth right, lives in the Pueblos of our oldest enemies." said Lonewolf.

"How is he received?"

"With such grace by the Bird Clan that the changing winds of fortune paint Makes Dead with high respect. He journeyed there to raise an army of distant clan brothers. By the help of these our Pueblo as Makes Dead proclaims it, may again give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights, and free us from feasts which are occasions for murder and not honor. A peace is promised and a continuing for which we all long. I find Makes Dead's words singing in my heart." confessed Lonewolf.

"This would pass for treason, could Makona hear you say it," said the dead warrior venturing his opinion.

"Truth can not be treasonable. But does it go now to Makona's ear from yours?"

"If it is truth, men may not want to hear it," said the dead warrior cynically. "If it is treason, it bears repetition. But Makona can not hear it, not from me for I heard nothing come from your mouth but the wind. Besides Makona already knows much of Makes Dead's schemes. This knowledge has so wounded Makona that he prepares for war," confessed the dead warrior. "Will the Pueblo stand behind him?"

Lonewolf shook his head in disavowal. "He has not the faith of his people behind him."

"Or his own faith in himself either," said the dead warrior. "At times he thinks the whole natural world is turned against him."

"You seem to know much of him who owns you," observed Lonewolf.

"Too much. Makona sent a runner to Makes Dead to order him to return to our Pueblo. With the direst order that it is treason to refuse such a direct command."

Lonewolf said. "I was there when the message was returned. Makes Dead sent the runner back in parts."

The dead warrior laughed. It was a dark answer that pleased him. "A finger that was an accusation. An eye that had seen too much. A tongue that would speak the truth and could not be stopped. I myself understand the list of dead parts, being one myself."

"Makes Dead's caution and wisdom holds him to the distance. I shall send a runner myself to him with a different message!" Lonewolf hesitated before he said more. He pondered how much he should trust to the dead man's discretion.

The dead warrior understood Lonewolf's discomfort and addressed it.

"Makona will never know we talked. Your heart which serves the nation and not Makona is safe with me," said the dead warrior with an earnestness that was all convincing. "What might that message be?"

"A pledge of loyalty to throw at his coming, that Makes Dead may know the favor his quick return will bring to this suffering nation, bleeding under a hand accursed," said Lonewolf. His voice rose with the strength of his deep conviction. "I have told what moves me. Can you tell me forces that shape Makona, the direction of his heart?"

"The dead can not have hopes about the living. I am owned, my favor is suspect and counts for nothing. If those who had the need of it, could know what I know, then the world would be different. But if I am not free to die I am not free to speak. My silence is in the hand of he who holds me and the nation."

"You despair much for one who is already past it."

The dead warrior leaned back against the tree. His eyes were an ache and his voice was regret.

"Yes. But if wishes were nightbirds, my heart would fly straight to Makes Dead."

CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT

Dark wind blowing down from the heights was not the only sound in the world. There was a stirring and rustling as the Three Kachinas scrambled among the rocks. As they moved it sounded like the wings of vultures, scraping against dust as they prepared to take flight.

Sky Thunder Kachina drew her robes about her. She was chilled in the dawn's rose-hued mist. She peered through the haze, unable to pierce the murk. Dense fog rose from distant mountain canyons and edged out over the desert, obscuring in clouds that walked like men. Sky Thunder Kachina spoke to her sisters. "We are wondrous blind."

Her elder sister, Black Wind Kachina cackled and bared her shrunken breasts to the cold winds. She hissed "We are the enemies of light."

Fire Kachina exulted. "We see only darkness. Darkness!"

Sky Thunder Kachina asked. "Are we blind?"

Black Wind Kachina was there to deny it. "We see only things that are not there. That is the greater vision."

Fire Kachina raised her hands in invocation. "I call light the second inviter. It is a spirit that shakes its fire red hands against us, and scorning us, says our darkness can not prevail!"

Sky Thunder Kachina answered in a voice like a grave.

"Three times the great lizard has moved in the cave with our secret names upon his tongue."

Black Wind Kachina took up the promise. "See you not the favor such a tongue puts on us? The world is a corpse and we are the feasting worms. The cruel wind rains blood. And birds who eat the dead are a rainbow that follows our storm. Who dares say our darkness will not rule! Have we not the hearts of men, as the promise and proof of it?"

Fire Kachina held out her hands as if she had something cupped in it. She blew into her hands

and scattered dust. She laughed and then spoke like a being writhing in some great mortal agony. It was meant to be an imitation of Makona's voice. "A nightspirit-shaped man, Makona, Shaman of Kawdor, who dances to our drumming, cries. 'The black time is upon me!'"

Sky Thunder Kachina turned to her sisters with a question. "Why are we summoned here?"

Black Wind Kachina explained. "Why because an omen stalks us. Blind ones, can you describe it to me?"

Fire Kachina gazed at the dust. It spoke to her. She moaned. "If blind we are, we see all too well."

Sky Thunder Kachina gazed at the sky. It spoke to her. She cried. "I see a dark bird of marvelous strength. It has no eyes, no feathers, no bones! It is made only out of sound. The sound of murder, ancient old, human born and echoing on the wind."

The Three Kachinas began to dance and chant, working sere magic on the ruined world.

Sky Thunder Kachina danced on bleeding feet, splashing the sharp edged rocks with red traces. The pain was exquisite and filled her with killing joy. She danced and danced and began then to sing. "Round about the mind of Makona our dances go. In the poisoned entrails of suspicion throw. Heart of his woman, with envies' eyes that darkly glows. In cold motherhood, days and nights has for thirty snows, given off venom that ambitious sleeping got. Boil Kalaw first in our sorcerored plot."

Her sisters in darkness, watching entranced as she capered about, took up the refrain and they all sang with one great hideous voice. "Dance the dance of undoing, rise up on our skeletons. That twice twice the evil this way comes."

Black Wind Kachina took her own part of the song. Her voice was the sound of a child crying. "We dance with a venom-fanged snake. In the dance his bones we shake. Eyes of lizards

and rumors of war. We dance with night things that are no more. Scorpion dreams and caressing sting. All these darkesses, our dances bring. Ancestral lizard alive in the soft skull of man. It too darkly dances with our ruinous plan. We dance and chant for Makona! To tear his human heart away!"

It made her laugh to sing such a sweet thing.

Her sisters chanted. "Chant the chant of undoing, dark love move our skeletons. That twice twice the evil this way comes."

There was silence in the desert except for the rasping sound of Sky Thunder's bare feet striking against the rocks. Sky Thunder sank suddenly to the ground, the dance finished like a fire snuffed out.

The wind rose up and began to chase the mist away. The sun rose higher in the sky. They stayed motionless, like dead things, in their final resting places.

Fire Kachina stirred. She chanted softly at first and then her voice rose till it was a great human roar.

"Our blooded hands beat drums of human skin. The kill sound of our drumming does man in. Our drums are the heartbeat of the dead and dying. Their human souls dug in the dark, are stretched and drying. Our war day drumming says Makona's time is coming. And ambitions echoes misunderstood. Dance in the dark human wood! And strong bow wood slivers in the moon's eclipse. And whispers treachery from a birth-strangled baby's lips!" Fire Kachina's voice rose till it was almost a scream. "Drum loud a dance in our dark flood! That we may swim in human blood!"

Her sisters answered in dulcet harmony. "Drum the sounds of undoing, ancient thirst move our skeletons. That twice twice the evil this way comes."

Black Wind Kachina asked for more. "Seal our sorceries with Kalaw's icy blood. Whose evil is all evil and who evils good."

A featureless black shape, robed in black, appeared out of the vanishing mist. He walked like a man, fearful but resolute.

Sky Thunder Kachina was the first to see him and crowed of her discovery. "Kachinas! Is that our dark thing that now stands before us?"

Black Wind Kachina cried. "By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes."

The dark figure came more fully into the light and they saw that it is Makona, wrapped in a plain warrior's cloak. He had put aside the robes of Great Chief, so that none would know he traveled to see the Three Kachinas.

Makona unloosened the cloak so that his face could be seen.

Makona hailed them. "Secret, black and night born beings! I Makona come among you to ask what you newly shape in the dark for me."

They answered with one voice. "Deeds without names."

Makona proclaimed. "I conjure you."

Sky Thunder Kachina was almost coy. "What is conjured is not us."

Makona went on though his courage was fading. "By the dark gifts that make you see into night, I would have answers from you. Though you unleash the winds and make then fight against the sky, though you beat the green corn of men flat and are famine to man at your whim, and great Pueblos tremble to their living roots at your passing, I would have answers to what I ask you."

Sky Thunder Kachina exhorted. "Speak!"

Black Wind Kachina cried. "Ask for an answer!"

Fire Kachina whispered. "We'll answer well if not truthfully or if truthfully, not well."

Makona regarded them uneasily. Their near presence and aspect was unsettling. Still he had not come all this way to be denied. "Are you what rules the night and has knowledge of my destiny in your hands?"

Sky Thunder Kachina answered. "We rule and are ruled. If you can bear the sight, would you have answers from our mouths or from our master?"

Makona thought on it before he made his reply. "Who makes the strongest answer is best. Call him. I would see his face."

Sky Thunder Kachina's evil laugh boomed out. She looked at Makona as a mountain lion looks at a wounded fawn. She lifted her hands to the sky. "If face it has, you will."

When next she spoke her words rang out, in a pleading to something in the air above. "I pour the blood of a mother that has eaten her own child into the air. With this human sweetness, I call the dark one who waits there."

Black Wind Kachina saw something in the air. She spoke of it to Makona. "He comes with a face you know."

Distant thunder sounded. The wind suddenly raged all about them, whipping dust into the air, that stung Makona's face. A dust devil roiled the ground at Makona's feet. Then as suddenly as it had come, the wind died.

In its place, something swirled in the air, glowed like a dimly seen fire. The spectral spawn of air and sky grew more solid. The ghost-lit but much decayed face of Builds Fire appeared, hovering in the air.

Makona gasped in sudden recognition. It was Builds Fire's ghost but much advanced in the

stages of its decay.

Makona recoiled in horror. He cried out. "Builds Fire! I am betrayed! If he I murdered, holds my fate, I am lost!"

Sky Thunder Kachina counseled. "It only borrows a face to make you cower. Ask what you will. He knows your thoughts, hears your speech even if you remain silent. Ask Makona, if you dare!"

Builds Fire's ghost moaned. "Makona! Makona! Makona! Beware Makes Dead! Beware the shaman who has fled."

Makona's face was a mask of human fright. Though the visage in front of him filled him with deepest dread, yet the words had a good nature and seemed to favor him. It was to that Makona made answer. "Whatever you are, for your good warning, thanks. You have hit my own fears but..."

Sky Thunder Kachina interrupted him. "It will not be commanded. It speaks again, more potently than before!"

Builds Fire's ghost exclaimed. "Makona! Makona! Makona!"

There was a silence as if that were all the apparition had to speak.

Makona muttered. "I know my own name. There's no mystery there."

Builds Fire's ghost went on, the peeling and shredding lips mouthing the words. "Fears vanish! As these words are spoken, the power of conspiracy is broken. Never comes a day, when a man of woman born can kill Makona!"

Makona was stunned for the words seem to give him the world. He exclaimed with full delight. "Then live Makes Dead! Why should I fear you? But yet I'll make doubly sure and take a vow that Makes Dead shall not live. That I may tell pale hearted fear it lies and I can find sleep

in spite of thunder."

Sky Thunder Kachina asked. "When all conspire, what is broken?"

Thunder crashed in the distant mountains. The face of Builds Fire's ghost glowed fitfully like a fire in need of logs.

The eyes of the phantom seemed to follow Makona, seemed fixed on his face. Builds Fire's ghost spoke again. "Be as heart strong as the wolf. Take no notice of conspiracies against you. Makona will not be vanquished until the Great Desert itself rises and moves against his Pueblo."

Makona was amazed at his announced good fortune. "That can never be! Not even the spirits can make the desert march, command the sagebrush and cacti to unfix their earthbound roots! Good omens! Rebellious dead, till the Great Desert rises, rise never! Highly favored Makona will live the length of his nature. Only then will he pay his final breath to old age's mortal custom. Though I glory in this, my heart yet aches to know one thing."

As one, the three dark sisters shrieked with laughter. Startled, Makona turned to look at them. If there was a jest here, some mockery, it was not one Makona could perceive. Still their merriment at a time of such great import was discomfiting. Makona turned back to the ghostly face that hovered in mid-air.

He spoke again. "Tell me, you who wear the horror face of Builds Fire, will Builds Fire's children ever rule in my land?"

Even a face so ruined by the ravages of death was capable of mirth. Builds Fire's ghost appeared to laugh. But it was a laugh so closely laced with the tremors of suffering, Makona could not divine its final meaning.

Makona was in an agony to know. He asked the question again, so great was his desire. "Will Builds Fire's children ever rule in my land?"

Builds Fire's ghost seemed to reassure him with its next words. "They will never rule in YOUR land!"

Makona was troubled. "I distrust your laughter. You are too much like the spirit of Builds Fire. Go, your mockery sears my ears!"

"Be cautious Makona. It is not for you to command such a one as he or to order him about," warned Sky Thunder Kachina. "Else you will see such things as will rip your eyes out."

Builds Fire's ghost stared at Makona, lips tightly pressed together. The eyes glowed with a new malevolence. The being spoke again. "Shall I show you eight things which wear the robes of chief? Eight seeds sewn by another. Eight hopes for another future, that your ambition did not smother?"

Makona's joy sank. To be reminded of failures in his life, was not why he had come. To be assured of success, that was what drove him. He declined. "I see too much as it is."

Sky Thunder Kachina teased. "But understand too little."

Makona protested. "You leave me as confused in spirit as when I came."

Builds Fire's ghost said. "You came with yourself. That's the father of uncertainty."

Makona ventured further. New questions occurred to him, new doubts assailed him, that he would quell. He implored the ghostly image. "I would ask you more."

But the being that wore dead Builds Fire's face was fading. Already the edges of the ghostly face were vanishing. As the face dissolved, its lips moved a final time. The last of what it had to say rang out as soft as muted thunder. "For everything that was done, you are your own answer."

And then the dust devil appeared again. He seemed to whirl up the last of the ghostly face and raced away with it to some secret place from whence it had come. Makona stared after it, unasked questions brimming in his mind. He was lifted up and cast down. Confused and

enlightened. Reassured and plagued with doubt. If Makona could but trust the promises, it seemed all was right in his world.

Black Wind Kachina put her hands to her bared breasts. She caressed herself. She looked at Makona with a pretense of longing. Makona was shocked. He was repulsed by the sight of her. She smiled for that seemed to be her purpose.

Black Wind Kachina covered herself with a feigned modesty. She stared at the sun, which was now rising with spreading heat and light into the sky. She remarked on it. "A stranger comes with the dawn."

Fire Kachina's eyes also tracked the box of daylight that crossed the sky. She said. "The light of day is not kind to us."

Black Wind Kachina said. "We go that are gone."

Sky Thunder Kachina pronounced. "We were never here!"

Nothingness. There was no smoke or fire. No stirring in the air, no sound to mark their passing from Makona's presence. Just nothingness.

They were there in one instant, and ceased to be in the eyeblink of another.

It was so sudden a departure, it made Makona doubt that he had even seen them.

Only blood splattered rocks, which Makona saw, seemed the only unnatural reminder that they had been there. Makona studied the rocks but what they portended, he could not say.

Makona looked all around, for any lingering trace of them.

"Where are they? Vanished? There is a fog about this going away. If what they tell me does not live in the world yet to be, then let their poisoned words stand cursed in the list of days."

Makona sat among the bloody rocks and tried to sort the words said to him into sweet reason.

So lost was Makona in thought, that he was unaware of the approach of another until a hand

rested on his shoulder. Makona jerked in mortal fright, thinking an enemy had overtaken him.

He was relieved to find that it was only the dead warrior, that loathsome thing that dragged itself about to do his bidding. Even a being in this decayed state, was a welcome sight. For Makona had felt surrounded by things that danced past his sure understanding of them. The dead warrior was not quite human that now kept him company but at least it hewed to his purpose.

The dead warrior spoke. "Those of your Pueblo thought you lost, Makona. Kalaw ordered me to your side. None knew your whereabouts. But I knew. Your presence is asked for."

Makona turned to the dead warrior for confirmation of his own senses. "Did you see the Three Kachinas, dead warrior?"

"No. Only dawn."

"Did they not come by you?" insisted Makona.

"No, my chief. Only vultures passed me on the way and they found me too lively for their taste."

Makona cursed the Three Kachina's half understood obscurities. "Infect the air they ride on and damn all those that trust them! They have misused me."

"Say you so."

"And served me well and drenched me in favor. I can not climb to either assurance," admitted Makona with a look of much vexation.

"Without humans to eat, they say a Kachina's fires within are banked. It is said their kiss is the cure and not the disease. Others hold the opposite is true."

Makona turned at a sound. "I hear the sound of someone running. Who's come?" He saw two men crossing the desert, moving away from him. Two male warriors ran east toward the distant

Pueblos.

"Come and gone," said the dead warrior. "Two faithful runners from a distant Pueblo, gave me further word to take to you. Kalaw sent them to me, since you were not yet found. I have their words to bring you as well as Kalaw's message. Her message is that you must return at once."

"What did the messengers say?"

"They bring you word that Makes Dead is fled to the Great Desert!"

Makona gasped at the portent of those words. "Fled to the Great Desert!"

"Yes. Could news be more strange?" mused the dead warrior.

"Or more bad. Time outraces me. So closely do my enemies press me that my purpose threatens to vanish completely unless it is carried out at once. From this moment the first born of my heart shall be the first born of my hand."

The dead warrior without the will for inmost denial said what for him was only inevitable.

"You have but to think it, Great Chief Makona, and it is done."

Makona was every inch a warrior chief, sending his plan into battle. "Then my thoughts are that you bury the edge of your knife in the heart of the house of Makes Dead."

"And the manner of this?"

"His wife, his babies and all unfortunate bodies that follow in his line of blood. I think their immediate deaths by your dead hand."

The dead warrior was unprotesting. Acceptance was his only path.

"If that is what passes for thought in you, it is done."

CHAPTER TWENTY NINE

The looming sun made the rooms of Makes Dead's Pueblo pleasant to the eyes. Rich were the rooms and the comforts there. Kawi, Makes Dead's wife, was a clever maker of baskets and woven hangings. She had made all the colors of the living earth, bloom on walls and floors. Fresh desert flowers hung in sweet smelling bunches from the rafters. It had the human touch that only the grace of a woman can make of a house.

Kawi's son Ahni sat in a patch of sunlight. He was playing a flute softly. It was a song of his own devising. It trilled and had the air of a songbird welcoming morning. Kawi was dark eyed and dark skinned and her child Ahni had much of her face and form invested in him. She glanced up and looked at him. She smiled.

Ahni had her gentleness. He would never be a great warrior like her husband Makes Dead. But that was a good thing. A warrior's path was not the only light that could shine. For other paths, healing and teaching, to name only two, led to wisdom and long life and rained down goodness on everyone.

Ahni, Kawi was sure, already had the manner and future seeing eyes of a teacher. Ahni's skill with the flute already approached that of some of the old men with a lifetime of flute playing behind them.

Kawi was sure Ahni was destined for some other greatness that would come from the sweetness and durability of his nature. His hands were clever and his mind brimmed with ideas.

There was a knock at the door and Lonewolf stood in the entranceway.

"Enter Lonewolf and grace us with your presence."

Lonewolf came into the room. Kawi looked at him with much curiosity.

"Do you bring news of my husband Makes Dead? Your coming here is not a harbinger that he

follows in your footsteps?" said Kawi with a look of faint hope on her face.

He did not even have to speak. The expression on Lonewolf's face said it all. Lonewolf spread his hands in a gesture that said clearly there was nothing that could be done about it.

Kawi shook her head ruefully. "What has Makes Dead done, to make him fly the land?"

Lonewolf advised her. "You must have patience with the affairs of men."

Kawi looked at her son before she spoke. Disappointment was written large on her face. She said. "Makes Dead had none. His flight is madness. Fear makes him a traitor."

"You can not know if Makes Dead's flight was from wisdom or fear."

Kawi was furious. "Wisdom! To leave his wife, to leave his babies in a place from which he himself flees! Lonewolf tell me, if the danger is for him, is it not for us too?"

If Lonewolf had an opinion on that, he did not share it. He shrugged.

"Who can know?"

Kawi bitterly lamented. "Makes Dead does not love us! He lacks the natural instincts of a father. Even the cactus wren will fight for the young ones in her nest against the great night owl."

Lonewolf rose to the defense of his gender.

"Men show love in different ways."

Kawi went on. "In Makes Dead all is for fear and nothing is for love."

Lonewolf tried to calm her. He understood the strain that was upon her.

"Control yourself. Makes Dead is wise and best knows the disorders of present times. He understands the wind."

"To be blown about by it, is not understanding. Wisdom comes when you are grown rooted in one place," admonished Kawi.

"I can not say much more, but cruel are the times when men are made to run against their own

natures." admitted Lonewolf.

"Men do not know themselves." she said with rising impatience.

"If that were the measure of it, then all men stand accused of treason but are unconscious of it in themselves," confessed Lonewolf. He felt rebuked himself but did not know how to counter her dark thoughts.

Kawi unswayed, said. "I see only Makes Dead's homeward-looking treason when his flight runs against all reason."

Lonewolf walked to the door and looked out on the houses of the Pueblo and to the desert beyond. He seemed moved by genuine apprehensions and earnest regret. "The land is full of fear, yet Makes Dead does not know what to fear. Are you safe? Is he safe? Is the danger his alone or both yours and his? How can he know what to fear?" Lonewolf turned and looked at Kawi. It was plain he was much moved by her plight. "It is true that Makes Dead floats upon a wild and violent wind, blowing each way and none. But Kawi take comfort that things at their worst will cease or will climb back to what they were before."

Kawi smiled. She understood the good heart of this man who stood before her. She wished she had not spoken so harshly to him. Lonewolf was a man of utmost beneficence in deed and intention. Kawi wished to speak to him with tenderness but still the anger changed her words even as she spoke them.

"I'd ask you to stay but you can not, it seems protect yourself, let alone me and mine," She regretted the words almost as soon as she had said them. The tide of anger in her was too high to stem.

Lonewolf tried to take no offense at her words, to act and speak as if his only concern was her well being. He spoke of another reason for not staying, dismissing her anger. He said "Should

your clan brothers find me alone with you, it would be my disgrace and your discomfort. I'll go at once."

Kawi reacted as if it were a new proof of her accusations on the inconstant nature of men. She said "Lonewolf, you fear everything, even the opinion of others. You are as much comfort gone as here."

Lonewolf's face reddened. His presence was unwelcomed, his kind words turned aside. He felt tragically misunderstood. As a man feels when in dissembling argument with a woman who knows too much truth and is not afraid to say it.

Lonewolf went to the door.

As he went through it, he said "I leave you."

"Is that not what men are taught to do?" said Kawi but she told it to an empty door.

Lonewolf was gone.

CHAPTER THIRTY

Kawi gave her son a hug. She held him so tight it made Ahni wince in pain. He gently moved in her grip until she loosened her hold on him. Ahni knew she was fearful and held to him all the more tightly because of it.

Kawi let go of him and stepped back. She said. "Fathered you are and fatherless. Child, your father's dead and what will you do now? How will you live?"

Ahni smiled and fingered his flute with the urge to make it sing. "As birds do, mother."

Kawi reacted with mock surprise. "What! With worms and flies?"

Ahni put down his flute and explained. "With what I get, I mean, and so do they."

Kawi scolded. "Poor innocent bird! You have not the heart to believe the violence that waits to break your wings and make a meal of you."

Ahni ventured. "Why should I mother? Poor birds are not worth the eating. My father is not dead for all your saying."

"Yes. He's dead to me. What will you do for a father?"

Ahni grinned. He teased. "Rather, what will you do for a husband?"

Kawi laughed derisively. "Why I can buy twenty in the next Pueblo at market day."

Her son said impishly. "Then you'll buy them to sell them again."

"You speak with all your wisdom and with wisdom enough for one your age."

Ahni turned serious. He asked. "Was my father a traitor, mother?"

Kawi put her arm around him and held him close to her. "Yes. In Makes Dead's absence from us."

"What is a traitor?"

Kawi said. "Why, one that lies and swears."

"And are all traitors that do that?"

Kawi insisted. "Everyone that does so, is a traitor and should be killed."

"And must they be all killed?"

Kawi was resolute. "Every one."

"Who must kill them mother?"

"Why, honest men."

Ahni grinned. "If to lie and swear is the mark of treason on a man, then there's not enough honest men left to carry out the act."

Kawi rolled her eyes. "May the spirits help you, little deserted bird! But whatever will you do

for a father!"

"If he were dead, you'd weep for him," reasoned Ahni with mischievous glee. "If you did not, it would be a good sign that I should soon have a new father."

Kawi scolded him but could not keep a smile off her face. "Wicked tongued bird! How you cheep for scandalous food!"

There was a resolute knocking at the door.

"Enter!" called out Kawi, her face momentarily lighting with the hope another messenger brought news of Makes Dead's return.

There was no movement at the doorway.

Whoever was out there did not seem bold enough to enter.

The knocking came again.

"You have my voice welcoming you. Enter!" ordered Kawi, puzzled by the visitor's reluctance.

A man appeared in the doorway. He stood there, peering inside but making no attempt to cross the threshold. It was the dead warrior. He spoke. "Are you Kawi, the woman of Makes Dead? I am a messenger sent to you."

"I will not talk to a man too timorous to enter my house," said Kawi. "It is not good manners to shout through a doorway. Come inside."

The dead warrior stepped through the door and came a little way into the room.

"Are you Kawi? Clanwife of Makes Dead?" the dead warrior asked again.

"I am Kawi but to whom I belong is a question," she said mischievously.

The dead warrior seemed troubled. He asked. "I am not to you known?"

Kawi regarded him with distinct disfavor. "You are the dead warrior that goes about with

Makona's hand behind yours. Speak your speech quickly and get away. You bring the contagion of the grave into our house."

The dead warrior shifted uncomfortably. His hands were trembling and his manner was tentative and hesitant. "I suspect some near danger approaches you. If you would take the advice of a man..."

Kawi interrupted. "Who is no man and suffers now the lack."

The dead warrior hove to his purpose. "True. But yet, I give you a moment, the blink of an eye to heed my warning and for you to be not found here. If you and your little ones could flee in the instant when my face turned away and then back, you might find hope."

The dead warrior's appeal to them came from some small spark of decency, some remembered goodness that once had been his. But it was a small flame and prone to be easily distinguished.

Kawi did not sense the dead warrior's subtleties. Instead she reacted to his larger message. And was not pleased in her reply. "Where should I go in flight? I have done no harm."

"To live is to do harm."

Kawi continued her heartfelt complaint. "Oh yes, I remember now, I am in this earth of men, where to do harm is often praiseable and to do good sometimes is noted as dangerous folly. But a woman's only defense is to have done no harm."

The dead warrior's voice was an earnest plea wrenched from the very center of him. "Will you flee?"

Kawi asked sarcastically. "Am I not fled?"

"You stand before me," said the dead warrior.

"So women do always. Women have roots unlike men."

The dead warrior stepped toward them and unsheathed his knife.

"That is the saddest answer!" He raised the knife. "I can not escape now nor can you."

Kawi backed away in horror. She seized Ahni and protectively pushed him behind her.

"What is this, you offer me!"

The dead warrior advanced, the blade extended, arm poised to strike.

He hesitated as if he had suddenly remembered something. He lowered the blade a trifle. "Do you know where your husband Makes Dead is?"

She spat at him. "Would I tell you if I knew? I hope he's in such a place so sacred, that no profane hand such as yours shall ever find him."

"Makes Dead's been named a traitor to the nation."

"No. Only to his home and that is not the same."

The dead warrior lifted the knife and advanced, done with words.

Ahni quickly stepped in front of his mother, trying to shield Kawi from attack. He accused.

"You swear and you lie! You wolf faced bastard!"

Ahni ran at him before a stunned Kawi could restrain him. His body slammed against the dead warrior's chest. With his boyishly quick hands, Ahni tried to wrest the knife from the Dead Warrior's cold-skinned hands.

The dead warrior brushed him aside with one sweep of his hand. Ahni tripped and fell on his back. The dead warrior bent down, raised the knife and stabbed Ahni in the chest. The blow was made with such inhuman force that the blade went all the way through the boy and stuck in the floor.

Ahni screamed and his eyes went wide. The knife thrust was a heart piercing stroke, sure and mortal. Ahni struggled but could not even bring his arms up to cover his chest. The light in his

eyes began to go out and that which had once been a son of Kawi and the nation was soon to be dead.

The dead warrior looked at Kawi. She was motionless in a horror as large as the world. She stood like a dream of a woman, frozen in a nightmare of living stone.

The dead warrior pulled the knife out. The body it was in, was still now, except for the stinging juices of life cooling and staining the floor.

He touched the young face of the boy he had killed. It was a gentle touch, from a hand moved by sorrow and pity.

"Little one! What grief! It is not my hand that holds the knife!"

Ahni moved his lips. "I am killed, mother!"

And then he died and would speak no more.

The dead warrior was a being without tears but his face cried a river just by the look in it.

He looked at the woman he had so dishonored. He said. "Grief makes the hand of Makona behind mine weak. Run woman! Flee before the strength returns to my foul hands!"

"You do this at Makona's bidding!" The accusing words were ripped out of Kawi's disbelieving throat. "How could any man's heart desire what you have done?"

"No crimes from the spirit world can equal the horror one man, trapped in his own mind, can conjure out of his own darkness," The dead warrior was moved to explain but his apology did not right a wrong, only limned it. "Save yourself!" entreated the dead warrior, already fighting the urge to raise the knife for another blow.

Kawi came back to life. She screamed at him. Any thought of her own safety was buried in a mother's rage.

"I'll kill you!"

She launched herself at him. She screamed and beat her fists against him.

She curled her fingers like claws and savagely tried to put out his eyes. But she is impotent against the dead warrior's strength which was beyond this world. He held her off easily with one hand.

"You can not kill what is already killed," he said with great pity for this woman who struggled against him. Sorrow darkened his voice. "All the killing is in me."

He raised the knife again.

A woman screamed.

It was the last living sound she made on earth.

CHAPTER THIRTY ONE

Falcon was outlined against the blazing sun. Makes Dead stood beside him.

"There are rivers that run hidden beneath the desert. They run in the old river beds when no man is looking," said Falcon, casting his eyes down on the desert floor stretched beneath them. His voice betrayed an exaggerated weariness. "When night is upon us, those rivers talk to us at night with magic voices. These rushing waters hold the names of all men in a high contempt, born of their nightly knowledge of what man is capable of."

A hard wind swirled the dust at their feet. Makes Dead looked down and said. "The dark wind roils the sand till it screeches in a human voice, speaking dark thunder into our hearts."

"What answers can the wind find in such as we?" asked Falcon but that was a question that had no answer except shared and silent misery.

Makes Dead looked up.

"It should be a better day. The blue sky grants clarity but all human beauty is singed. So dark is the world, the bright sun is but the black and formless shape of despair."

Falcon and Makes Dead walked to the edge of the bluff. The hot sun blazed down on them. Falcon pointed to an outcropping of rock where respite might be found from the merciless sun.

Falcon said. "Let's seek out desolate shade and there weep our sad hearts empty."

Makes Dead had other ideas. He was the machinery of hate.

"Makes Dead does not weep! Instead he holds fast to vengeance!"

Falcon averred. "I am sorrow itself."

"We should instead burn with hate like good men astride our fallen birthright and fight to protect our nation, so cruelly beaten to its knees," insisted Makes Dead. His face was lit by the fire in his heart.

Falcon mistrusted Makes Dead's passion. "You are too much rage and too little thought for my comfort."

Makes Dead's reply was heated. "In each new night, new widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows strike the sugar honey moon! The moon itself echoes as if it felt the hand of murder on its face and echoes our pain as large as the night!"

Falcon took the calmer way. "What I believe, I cry out. What I know, I do believe and what I can avenge at first favorable opportunity, I will."

Makes Dead brandished his war spear. "The time for revenge is at hand."

Falcon had a calculating look on his face.

"What you speak may be as you say. These things may be in your heart. But this Makona, whose name blisters our tongue, you Makes Dead, once loved him loyally."

"And was betrayed in that love."

"Still you say so but Makona in his evil has strangely not touched you or your house."

Makes Dead turned the spear toward Falcon. He was rage itself.

"You dare accuse me!"

Falcon held up his hand as if to ward off his anger. "Forgive me Makes Dead. I am young and prone to mistakes of that condition," He put his hand gently on Makes Dead's spear and turned its point away from him. Makes Dead did not seem to mind, the first flush of anger having passed in him.

"Hold your anger if I say words that seem harsh. But you may think to betray me to Makona."

Makes Dead's anger was rising again but Falcon spoke so gently it was hard to hold to it.

"Should I be your weak, trusting, innocent sheep given up in offering to appease an angry god?" asked Falcon with such grace that Makes Dead felt more shamed than affronted.

Makes Dead swore. "Falcon! I am not treacherous!"

Falcon said. "But Makona is. And a good honorable nature may turn to avoid the displeasure of a Great Chief."

Makes Dead turned his back on Falcon.

"You wound me!"

Falcon put his hand on Makes Dead's shoulder. "I crave your forgiveness. No matter how the wind blows, my suspicions have not changed who you are, so I've not harmed you. Forgive me. Everything evil to work its poisoned magic must wear the appearance of virtue, yet there is no other way for virtue to look except like itself."

Makes Dead turned to look at Falcon. He despaired. "If even you, doubt me, I have lost all hope."

"I could find other strong doubts in the unprotected state you left wife and child. How quickly

you abandoned those strong knots of love, those precious motives!" said Falcon. "If you expect no danger for them, then perhaps you travel assured of Makona's favor. My suspicions are not to insult you but to insure my own safety."

Makes Dead bitterly lamented. "Bleed, bleed ruined Pueblo! Great evil, you may freely take root for goodness does not dare oppose you! Keep your stolen honors Makona! By Falcon's hesitation, your right to them is made the law of the land!"

Falcon gave him a sharp look. "Am I to believe this? These words?"

Makes Dead roughly shook Falcon's hand from his shoulder. His voice trembled with rage. "Go your way and I will go another! I would not be the dark one that you think me for the whole world that's in Makona's grasp and the whole world beyond."

Falcon tried to reason with his anger. "I do not offend your honor. I do not speak in absolute fear of you. I think our nation sinks beneath the ruling hand of Makona. It weeps, it bleeds and each new day, a gash is added to its wounds. I think there would be warriors raised in my cause. From the distant Pueblo's, men would march to my war song, but should I capture Makona's chiefly robes for myself?"

"Is that not our nation's hope for an end to evil?"

Falcon seemed uncertain. "A killing war is worse than a killing peace. I'm not certain my succession would not bring more evil than has gone before."

Makes Dead protested. "Except for undue suspicion of me, which I hold and forgive as witlessly unjust, what is wrong in you?"

"I know myself and the evils I am capable of. Exposed to the air, black Makona may seem as pure as snow and the nation may remember him as a lamb brought down by a black-hearted wolf."

Makes Dead was vehement.

"Not in the uncountable tribes of blackest night, can a night spirit more damned in evils be found, or that is the equal of Makona! He makes evil seem new again."

Falcon considered his words carefully. Even more carefully he studied Makes Dead's face as if trying to read whatever meaning therein his words evoked.

"I count Makona greedy, false, lying, violent, malicious, wearing every evil that has a name."

"You have described him!" cried Makes Dead.

"But there's no bottom, none, in my own lustfulness. The wives, daughters, women, old and young of the nation, could not fill up the desert spring of my desire. This rage for flesh in me would overturn any that opposed my will. Better Makona than one like me to rule!"

Makes Dead lowered his head. It was troubling, what Falcon claimed for himself. Makes Dead tried to put a good face on it. "Any great desire is a tyranny in nature. It has been the death of human dreams and the fall of many chiefs. But you may manage in secret to find your pleasures in abundant plenty and yet seem outwardly cold. There are women willing enough. But that fault aside, there can't be that vulture in you, that devours as many as it pushes to greatness."

Falcon went on. He had a crafty look on his face, as if he played some dark game and Makes Dead was enmeshed in it. He said. "With this fire, also grows another desire. A greed, a need to have. If I were the Great Chief, I'd move to cut off the people from their possessions, to empty each Pueblo house of its treasure. To take women, land and treasure. Each thing that I took would be a drink to make me want to take more. To that end, I'd start wars against the good and loyal Pueblos to loot them of their wealth."

Makes Dead found this greatly disturbing.

"This greed sticks deeper, grows blacker roots than spring time desire. It has been the dark poison of other dead chiefs. But the land has abundance to fill your wants. Could this fault be made bearable if balanced with other goodnesses within you?"

Falcon exclaimed. "Goodnesses! But I have none. The qualities of Great Chiefs, justice, truthfulness, generosity, perseverance, mercy, devotion, patience, courage. I have no trace of any of them. No, if I had power, I would pour the sweet milk of treachery into the nightland, ruin peace in the land forever, and break all the ties of our people to the land."

Makes Dead took his spear and broke the haft across his knee. He threw it off the cliff. It clattered among the rocks and fell to the desert floor. He sent his broken words after it. "My heart rises in sorrow for our nation!"

Falcon implored him. "If such a man is fit to be Great Chief, speak to me. I am as I have spoken."

Makes Dead was scorn sharp enough to abrade skin. "Fit to be Great Chief! No! Not fit to live! Ruined nation! With murderous Makona unopposed as Great Chief! When will this nation ever see good in the land again! Never! Since the blood descendant of dead Sky He Sees by his own curse is cursed. Your father, Sky He Sees, was the best that ever walked the great path and the woman that birthed you walked in beauty each day that she lived. But you are a stain in the blood! Go from my sight! The evils you tell about yourself, end all hope for our nation! The sight of you offends and moves me to murder!"

Falcon was overjoyed. With each insult, Makes Dead hurled at him, his heart became lighter. He was grateful. He was lifted up. His reply to Makes Dead was all embracing.

"Makes Dead, you are the child of honor! Your words end my doubts of your true heart. Makona, by many enticements tried to win me into his power. Caution then has slowed me in

trusting you but now I put myself in your hands. I unspeak what has been spoken."

Makes Dead did not understand.

"How can that be?"

Falcon said. "To reveal a lie is to end it. The evils I laid upon myself, are strange to my nature. I am yet unknown to women, never was obsessed by them. I have not desired what is not my own. I have not broken faith with any man and would not betray even a night spirit to the night father himself! I put more honor in truth than in life itself. My biggest lies were the lies I just told on myself, to test your heart for signs and omens that Makona had blackened it with his touch. What I truly am, is yours and our poor nations to command. Even as we speak, I have raised up a thousand thousand warriors, already armed and setting forth."

Makes Dead was silent, like a man struck by a fallen tree that knocked the words out of him.

"Come with me true brother. We share the same heart! Why so silent?" asked Falcon.

Makes Dead passed his hand over his face. "So much coming unwelcome and then coming so quickly apart, is hard to bear. The swift overturning of imagined grief has burned my heart."

A man toiled up the stone path to the top of the mesa. Makes Dead saw him and saw too that it was only a being that once had been a man.

Makes Dead pointed him out to Falcon. He said. "See who comes here!"

Falcon studied the walking figure as it moved up the path. He commented with much venom. "Here's another for whom we have no use."

The dead warrior reached the end of the trail, stepped out on the smooth stone top of the mesa and made directly for them.

Falcon hailed him. "Dead warrior, why are you come? I have no memory that your presence was asked for. It is not welcomed."

The dead warrior bowed respectfully before them. "Noble warriors! I have sought you out."

"To speak to us with Makona's lying tongue?" jeered Makes Dead.

The dead warrior understood their distrust. He admitted. "Often does Makona speak through me but sometimes what I used to be speaks for me. You may have more use of me than you know."

Makes Dead whispered his fears to Falcon. "Be careful of word and deed. All will go back on dead legs to Makona."

Though the words were not meant to reach him, the dead warrior heard them. He spoke to their fears. "You'd do well not to trust me. I am not myself entire."

Falcon asked cynically. "Stands the Pueblo of Makona where you left it?"

The dead warrior had return for his wit. "More apt to say it lies. Poor nation afraid to know itself. It has more the aspect of a welcoming grave than an embracing milk-giving mother now."

"It goes well then under Makona's gentle hand!" was Falcon's sarcastic comment.

"Makona has filled the sky with victim's sighs and groans and murderous shrieks that split the air, sounds so common they go unnoticed. Violent sorrow is the nation's everyday emotion," said the dead warrior.

Makes Dead was perplexed by the rancor of the dead warrior's words. "You speak dangerously of your master. What trick is this?"

"When I am sent by Makona, what I do is for him. But far from the Pueblo, his magic weakens in me. The sorcery that holds me to my ruined body is not so strong. But that weakness, strengthens me to say Makona murders and murders again!"

The last drew grudging approval from Falcon.

"Too nicely said and too true."

Makes Dead was not so pleased. "You are hardly the one to be trusted for news of the latest grief."

"Who better to say than the hand that brings the blackness," said the dead warrior. The things he left unspoken hung in the air like a threat.

Makes Dead was the first to discern their possible meaning.

"Is my wife well? Is she safe?" Makes Dead's hands clenched and unclenched, already regretting the loss of his spear.

The dead warrior made swift and glib assurance. "Very safe."

Makes Dead insisted. "And my children?"

"Safer still, having seen less of the world."

Makes Dead both doubted and believed. "If this lie that walks can be trusted, then my heart rises up in me."

The dead warrior shook his head in sorrow. He added. "I am not to be trusted."

Falcon was livid. "His double speech is maddening."

"When I came here at Makona's command to find what men are plotting against his house, I find you two foremost in the conspiracy," said the dead warrior. "I am a dead spy in the house of the living. I have eaten the rumor that many warriors march here from the distant Pueblos. Your eyes in the land make warriors see you as the new hope to end Makona's time on earth."

Makes Dead exclaimed. "Now we know this treacherous piece of rotting meat's reason for being here!"

"I am sent to do what I do and do it. But I do travel so slow in returning, that I hope you pass me in the path."

Falcon was amazed by the revelation. "Do even the cowardly dead envy our cause? You have

more reasons than are reasonable."

"I have words for you that would howl in the desert air, where hearing should never catch them," said the dead warrior. "I was sent but I also send myself. My deeds are commanded, but words can escape Makona's grasping dominion."

Falcon considered this and guessed. "He has secrets and can not keep them."

Makes Dead agreed. "I think, he has clay pots to sell, painted with some private earth sorrow."

The dead warrior turned to look at Makes Dead. "From me Makes Dead, you will hear the heaviest sorrow that any man can ever hear."

Makes Dead sarcastically ventured.

"Is it a child's game that we must guess it?"

The dead warrior shuddered. Memories, too recent, done too violent, done too bloody, and done too much by his own hands, assaulted him. He spoke to Makes Dead when the wave of dread was darkest upon him. "Your birth house is surprised. Your wife and babies unkindly killed. I'll not tell you of the manner of their deaths, how Makona claims the spoils of the hunt are of no weight."

Makes Dead could not speak. An arrow of words had pierced his heart.

Falcon said with gentle pleading. "You who were once a man, give sorrow words. The grief that is not known, whispers to the overburdened heart and makes it break. Tell all, if you can tell truthfully."

Makes Dead's stunned voice begged. "My children too?"

"Wife, children, all near relatives of the household. All that I could find."

Falcon repeated. "That you could find?"

Makes Dead moaned piteously. "All this and I stand here, safely away! My wife killed too?"

The dead warrior could not meet Makes Dead's eyes. His voice was as dead as he was.

"All are dead."

Makes Dead wanted to doubt, to dispute it to the highest reaches of the sky. "Could it be nothing but a lie?"

"If there were a purpose for it, yes." said the dead warrior. "But I tell you this on my own. Makona's tongue is not speaking in me now."

Falcon observed. "He said all were killed, all he could find. Now that's a strangeness in the manner of it's saying. How are we to know you speak truly?"

The dead warrior looked downcast. He could not meet their eyes. His guilt was in his voice and helplessness. "I killed Makes Dead's wife," His voice went on in utmost despair. "And shamefully did also put all his children to the knife. All that I have done. I own and wear these deeds as rainments of inhumanness. I'm a curse on all that is natural!"

Makes Dead screamed like a man in a fire and drew his knife. With a roar of anguish and anger, he attacked the dead warrior. The victim of his onslaught made no move to defend himself. Makes Dead stabbed him in the chest.

Then sorrow and overwhelming grief overcame him and Makes Dead dropped to his knees, the knife slipping out of his hands, his rage gone. Makes Dead was a broken man and he sobbed.

The dead warrior looked down at the knife in his chest. He said. "It would be justice if I were really and truly killed by your hand. But you forget in your grief Makes Dead, I am dead already."

The dead warrior pulled the knife out of his chest and offered to hand it back to Makes Dead. Makes Dead was too distraught to accept it.

The dead warrior said. "Here. You may have need of this in a better body than mine. I am but the weapon. You can not kill the weapon. You must kill the man who sent it to its prey."

Falcon took the knife from the dead warrior's hands, accepting it on Makes Dead's behalf. He asked. "Why have you come with these words for us?"

"Unknown to Makona, I bring this gift, the knowledge of these deaths and by whose hand they were shaped. Makona's nature is explained to you. You can make powerful medicine of your great revenge to cure Makona's deadly visitations of grief."

Makes Dead moaned. "All my pretty ones! Did you say all? All? All my pretty birds and their mother in one fell swoop!"

The dead warrior understood Makes Dead's harmed heart and appealed to the warrior in him.

"Left to you to avenge it like a man."

Makes Dead swore as tears streaked down his cheeks. "I will but I must also feel it as a man. I remember such things that were most precious to me. Did the sky world look on and not take their part? Cowardly Makes Dead, they were killed in your place! Now Makes Dead is nothing! They were slaughtered not for their own faults but for mine! Safely dead, at least they do not know my shame."

Falcon exhorted. "Makes Dead, let your anger sharpen your knife. Make your grief into rage, so that your warrior's heart is not blunt but sharp edged."

Makes Dead vowed. "Before I sleep next, my knife will make a nest in Makona's ribcage. Like the black crow that likes shiny things, I'll pluck his kill-bright eyes for ornaments."

The dead warrior incuriously touched the new knife wound in his chest. There was no blood or pain. It was just a rent in his dead flesh. He bowed at Falcon and Makes Dead.

"I must leave you in this way," he said with heavy irony. "and hurry back to tell Makona that

he is loved to death by all who know him."

Falcon spoke for them both. Falcon's voice rang with the authority of a Great Chief.

"Out of your words and deeds, dead warrior, Makona is ripe for shaking. Even the earth now would tremble at the path we are taking."

CHAPTER THIRTY TWO

Kalaw shrieked and whirled about her bed chamber like a thing maddened by a scorpion's sting. She careened off the rear wall. Her arms swept Makona's weapons from their hanging place on the wall and they crashed to the hard floor.

The dead warrior, hearing the resounding clatter of weapons, rushed into the room.

Expecting enemies, he was amazed at the state in which he found Makona's wife. Kalaw's clothes were half undone. As she moved about, her breasts were revealed and then obscured and shown again as her unfastened garments swirled about her.

Her eyes were red streaked. One cheek from eye to chin was yellow where she brushed against a pot of war paint. A white blotch of war paint stained the hem of her night dress. Several wisps of cornsilk were stuck in her hair. But these indications of disarray paled in comparison to the look on her face.

She eyed the dead warrior with overt hostility.

"How dare you enter my bedchamber, you loathsome thing!" she raged at him.

"I heard the stone clash of weapons against weapons. I thought you were under attack!"

"Nightly. Only nightly am I under attack," said Kalaw in a coy whisper. "By day, I am safe but day never comes. It is always night!" She acted as if she were betraying a close held secret.

There was an edge of hysteria to her confiding speech.

"I see no enemies."

The dead warrior stared at the room. The floor was littered with things that had been tossed upon it. Clothes, weapons, gourds, baskets spilling their contents were a jumble in the center of the room. It had the torn apart look of a bear ransacked granary.

"Are you not well?" asked the dead warrior.

"I am a woman in the full blush of Spring. I have skin like moonlight. I am so pretty, flowers weep in envy if I pass by them," Kalaw giggled in a manner meant to be like that of a young girl but it was insincere and false. She caressed her face with unconscious fingers. "I walk so deeply in beauty, that cacti are afraid to stick me. It is my spines that pierce them. So beware to all men who fall to my charms. Sky He Sees is such a man. He found me fair and found that I am prickly."

"You are much troubled," said the dead warrior.

"What concern is it of yours, graveyard carrion?"

"I have been given a charge to guard you against all harm."

"Then you fail me in the most wicked of ways!" protested Kalaw.

"How have I failed you?" asked the dead warrior with inhuman patience.

"If the dead can not protect me gainst the dead, then I am lost."

"Has someone entered this room? Who has made trespass against you?" said the dead warrior.

"I stood ever outside in watchful stance. Except for your stirring around, I have heard no one enter. And none passed me by as I sat by the only door."

"They walk through walls," she whispered.

"Who does?"

"Someone who isn't anyone!" she cried.

"I do not understand."

"He has no name."

"It is beyond my reckoning," said the dead warrior.

"He had a face. It is more hideous than a name."

"Gory? Blood spattered, decayed or born to some defect?" asked the dead warrior whose curiosity was much provoked.

"No. It is a sweet face, a perfect child's face. Lit by love and untouched by the evils of life."

Kalaw went to the window and stared out at the night.

"The sun is too bright for eyes like mine."

"Night is full upon us," said the dead warrior, fearing her senses were not with her.

"The sun is a fire. It burns me. I see too much. If only the dark could get darker!" She put her hands over her eyes. She turned suddenly, making her hands into claws. "Should I rip these fires out of my head? Would the child stop even then?"

"What child?"

"Makes Dead's dead one!" Kalaw laughed. "Don't you see him? Perhaps I have misplaced him," She pretended to search the ground at her feet. "I know I have a dead child around here somewhere. Where did I put him?"

The dead warrior was alarmed at her discomfiture. "You must rest. You are not well."

"Rest! For one such as me! There is no rest! My heart chases me like a howl hurled at the moon. REST! I dance on the head of a drum each waking minute. I am an anthill amove with strange life."

"You are overburdened."

"I am womanly delirium, ungentle sex, chaste vileness, all things with edges and nothing soft. I am a woman with all the delight ripped out. I beckon like the mother of a grave."

"What has put you in such a fearful state?"

"It was me that put me here. It was guile. It was poisonous intent. Or was it a feather that I wore in my hair?" She shrieked suddenly as if stung by something. She cried in a voice full of self-mocking sorrow. "Oh it was hardly anything!"

Her hand went up in horror at something she saw outside the window.

"He comes for me!"

The dead warrior, armed with a knife, leaped to her side, facing any danger that might come for her through the window.

"Where?" His eyes struggled to pierce the concealing gloom of night. He was able to make out nothing but shadows.

"There!" She cried and seized the dead warrior's shoulder and tried to push him closer to the window so that he might see better. "There! He walks this way!"

"Who? I see no one."

Kalaw shoved him aside with rage. "Fool! Do you think to hide him from me! Vileness itself would not lie in the face of such a sweet sight!"

"I see only shadows."

"Its fitting. You are the idiot child of a shadow!" said Kalaw. "Go away from me."

The dead warrior stepped back deeper into the room. He did not leave. His eyes were still alert to something that might come through the window but he closely studied Kalaw so that he might know better what assaulted her, real or imagined.

Kalaw moved in front of the window. She bared one breast and offered it to someone.

The dead warrior moved forward.

Nothing moved outside the window. Whatever shape that was revealed to Kalaw's glazed eyes, came from her mind and not the surrounding night.

"Oh child! You beg so sweet for the milk that flows in me!" crooned Kalaw and she bent down and seemed to embrace a small child. But no child was there.

Her arms closed over something and she drew it to her breast.

"Poor bloody boy! A mother's kisses will heal your knife wounded chest."

Kalaw turned and saw the dead warrior. She held out one hand to him imploringly while with the other she continued to hold her imaginary child.

"Oh are you not moved to tears! See how the child wants me and forgives me! I only did murder it yet it wants to suckle at the mother in me. It forgives and accuses and its lips will drink all my kindness back into it."

She moved her hand as if she held a tiny head to her milkless breast. "See! It thinks I am its mother. Why else would it come for me, night after night, bloody hands raised, with gaping chest and loving eyes?"

"You are feverish, lost in the mind," said the dead warrior. He was much taken aback. Kalaw was madness itself, staked out on an imaginary anthill with honey dripping down from the buzzing hive of her own mind. Ghost ants feasted on her flesh, tearing away all good kindly thoughts.

"I have secrets in my chest," She whispered in a voice soft with confession. "There is magic in motherhood. I can murder in the day and then the dead come to suckle me and live again at night."

The dead warrior moved forward and tried to take her hand.

She shook it off. She took an even more protective stance, as if fending off a blow.

"It is my child! You shall not have him!"

"Come with me. Lay down your burden. You must come with me. You have been too much alone."

"I am not alone. I have my child. See how I use my loving hands to stem the blood flowing from his chest. The fame of my sweet nurturing will shake the sky! So greatly do I give maternal love!"

The dead warrior recoiled at the depth and depravity of her madness.

She saw the look on his face and accused him. "You are jealous of my love!"

Before he could deny it, she spoke again, her face changing with a new thought, no more rational than the last.

"No wait. That empty look could mean only one thing in a being like you!" She smiled at him. "You have been so busy being dead, you've had no time to eat. You are hungry for what I have!"

Kalaw tightened her grip on the thing she pressed next to her chest. She made a tearing gesture as if she was ripping something asunder. She offered it to him.

"Here. I've saved a piece for you. Eat! Young flesh is tender and sweet."

The dead warrior backed away.

He was a horror who had met a greater horror.

CHAPTER THIRTY THREE

Lonewolf and the dead warrior stood a lonely vigil outside the house of Makona. Darkest

night had fallen. Coyotes danced in silvery light atop the high hills and howled ancient wisdom at the moon. Desert winds from distant mesas blew icy cold with old remembrances of winter.

The dead warrior guarded the house of Makona. It was his nightly duty, for he was a man who so forever desired sleep but never slept. And those inside the house, found his presence more comforting out of it than in it. The cold winds did not bother the dead warrior but Lonewolf shivered beside him in the bitter cold.

Lonewolf beat his arms against his sides to warm himself up. He said. "Two nights I've watched with you dead warrior but can see no truth in your tale of her. When was it you say Makona's woman last walked?"

"When last the moon was full," said the dead warrior. "I saw Kalaw rise from her sleeping robes, and dress in clothes of mourning. And then take from her medicine box, deer skin and paints, and draw hideous pictures, pictures sprung from a mind gone from the world. Then she folded the skin and wrapped it round her chest like a magic to turn away a blow. Only then did she return to her sleeping place. Kalaw did all this in my presence but was asleep through it all."

Lonewolf marveled. "It is a great overturning of nature, to get at once the benefit of sleep and behave as though awake. In this sleep vision, besides her walking and other movements, what in that world between waking and sleeping, have you heard Kalaw speak?"

"Those things that no one would believe, coming from my lips. The living do not trust the dead so I am once unbelieved. Makona is my master and on that count I am twice twice unbelieved," said the dead warrior. "I brought you then to this place to witness for yourself what she says."

Lonewolf insisted. "You may say what she says to me."

"Not to you or to anyone. I am not all of myself."

The door to Makona's house opened. The tall figure of a woman lit by the flaming torch in her upheld hand appeared in the doorway. The dead warrior did not stir at the sight. Lonewolf however crouched lower in his place of concealment even though he had been assured he could not be seen by the sleepwalking woman.

The woman stepped outside the house. She walked stiffly. The arm that held the torch was rigid. Her eyes stared straight ahead but seemed to look at things past the world she walked in.

Kalaw moved almost directly toward them.

The dead warrior said. "Look Lonewolf, here she comes! This is her night manner and see, she is fast asleep! Stand close by her, see what I have seen!"

Lonewolf was perplexed by her appearance.

"The moon is full and lights the land. If she is fast asleep, why does she carry that torch?" he asked.

"It seems she now fears the dark of both night and day. She has a torch with her always."

Lonewolf marveled at the sight of the woman who now was almost upon them. "Her eyes are open!"

"But her senses are not," said the dead warrior.

Lonewolf gasped. "What does she do now? Look how she rubs her hands!"

"She often seems to be washing her hands of something. I have seen her do this for a long hour and another hour again."

Kalaw stood in front of them but did not see them. She whispered in a voice tainted with fear. "Yes. Here's the spot!"

She held one hand out and gazed into her palm.

Lonewolf was moved by the sight to mutter. "She speaks!"

Kalaw almost screamed at something she seemed to see on her hand. "Get off me! Red betrayer! Do I need a river to wash you off!"

"She is in a nightmare," observed Lonewolf.

Kalaw started as if she had heard Lonewolf's words. She looked all about fearfully as if something were about to overtake her. She looked up at the sky as if something up there spoke to her. She turned and looked behind her at the outer walls of her house. She stared at it as if it was a place she had never seen before. She seemed lost and forlorn. Such qualities were in her voice when again she spoke.

"Spirits of the air, is the bird of night flown? Sky He Sees has lived too long. There is a knife," said Kalaw staring at her own hand as if a knife was in it. "and a hand that knows how to hold it. Then it is time to do it! The night is confused with death!"

"Such things she speaks of!" said Lonewolf. "I scarce believe my own ears!"

She was like one who heard voices or spoke to a being visible only to her.

"What? A warrior and afraid?" Her voice was scornful. "Why should we fear that anyone will know what we do? Who will see our hand in it?" Now her voice was almost a scream of defiance. "No one! Heed me Makona, whom I love and hate. Oh yes my husband, I hate you for being nothing like my dreamed conquests, for being merciful where I would have savagery! Makona! Too brave in war and too cowardly in intrigue! I embrace you for being a generous giver of death in war and cast you from my bed as a guilt plagued doubter in all else!"

Now her voice dropped until it was scarce a whisper. "But who'd have thought the old man would have so much blood in him!"

Lonewolf shook his head. He had a stricken look on his face. His feelings were roiled and plagued by unexpected darkness. He said. "Do I hear what I hear?"

Kalaw went on with her ranting. "Makes Dead had a wife once. But where is she now!"

She seemed to implore an unseen speaker.

"They were all once so full of blood. More pours out on me! Will these hands never be clean!"

Kalaw moved suddenly. She stood directly in front of Lonewolf. She saw him as a man but in sleep she did not see him. She cast the torch down at her feet and reached for Lonewolf. The torch hissed and sizzled on the ground.

She seized his shoulders roughly and lifted Lonewolf forcefully from his place of concealment. He stood transfixed in horror in her stony grip.

Kalaw gathered Lonewolf into her embrace. Her arms were hard as stone as she held him close to her.

"Sweet husband!" she whispered in Lonewolf's ear. "The murdered child drinks my milk and his blood flows white with what is in me! If the dead child did not ask me to be his mother, I could live. I could live!"

Lonewolf tried to break free but she held him with the strength of a great tree whose roots go to the center of the earth.

"No more Makona!" She thrust Lonewolf away from her violently. So sudden and swift were her actions, that Lonewolf hit the ground with a bone jarring crash.

Kalaw's eyes were bright as the sputtering torch at her feet. They were lit by the fires of madness. She hissed at him. "Makona! I can not live!"

Kalaw turned away and stared at something only she could see. The man she had mistaken for her husband was no longer in the world with her. "Makona has fled my most welcoming embrace," she exclaimed. She laughed bitterly.

"He is elsewhere courting the spirit's favor when he should most be seeking mine. Unsexed husband! The spirits have no heat. Between my legs, I am the sun that burns for you."

Lonewolf on his back in the dust, stared up at her with dull horror. The memory of her unwelcome embrace, the tilting cant of madness that soiled the very touch she made upon his skin, rankled and festered and Lonewolf felt unclean and sullied.

The dead warrior leaned over and offered his hand to Lonewolf. He helped pull him back up to his feet and then said, "Now you know what you should not know."

"Only the darkness should know the things she knows. She is the child of night," said Lonewolf.

Kalaw held one hand to her face. Tears streaked down her cheeks. "Here's the smell of blood, all over me! The scent of sage, will not sweeten this hand! I am ruined in all that was a woman in me! I die to not be me!" She sobbed and her shoulders shook convulsively.

Lonewolf despite his horror was touched by something that was so broken in her. "What grief is there in her! Her heart is heavily burdened."

"I would not have such a heart in my chest. It would offend even my rotted flesh," said the dead warrior with a cynical smile.

Lonewolf averred. "I have seen too much."

He began to walk away but the dead warrior took hold of his arm and kept him from leaving.

The dead warrior insisted. "But there is so much more to see."

"I have known those who walked with evil in their sleep who did later die wakefully by their own hands. She is as lost as that," Lonewolf said.

"Is it right to see so much that is secret in another human being?" asked the dead warrior.

"In sacred ways, those human walls are not for us to pass."

"But listen!" insisted the dead warrior. "See she speaks again. There is more darkness."

Kalaw cried out. "Wash your hands Kalaw! No one pursues you! Builds Fire's dead and buried. He can not follow you from the grave!"

Her voice had the rasp of a crow, her eyes the unwinking gaze of a snake.

She shook her head from side to side so that a black cloud of hair made her face seem the center of a storm.

The dead warrior pulled Lonewolf back towards Makona's wife.

"Do not squander your human pity. Look at her seductive face. She's more a scorpion's sting than a woman's kiss."

Kalaw shrieked shrilly. "To bed!"

Her voice sank to a seductive whisper. She encircled an unseen presence in a loving embrace.

"To bed. There's a knocking at the Pueblo gates! Come, come, give me your hand. Let me lead you to my embrace. My blood's afire! Passion will explain our wakefulness!"

Lonewolf gasped. "She murders and loves all in one breath!"

"Some spiders mate and eat the one loved after love is done. Such a one is she," observed the dead warrior.

Kalaw raised a cautionary hand, as if giving warning to someone who traveled with her on her night journey. "What's done can not be undone!"

She screamed like a being writhing under the harshest torture.

"To Bed! To Bed!"

She became still, the fire that raged, extinguished, drowned by other thoughts. She looked lovingly at the night.

"Push the dead out and make room for us in the bed!" Now her voice was soft again, sexual.

She whispered again. "To bed."

Kalaw put her arms out again as if embracing an imaginary body. She seemed to caress it and her face was inflamed by desire. Her right hand rose from the back of the imaginary body. Suddenly it took the position and attitude of a hand that held a knife. Her face contorted with rage and she plunged the spectral knife downward into the back of the body she held.

Kalaw's sex-suffused face had the look of passion sated.

She turned quick as a deer, and fled. She did not look back at those she had never seen. She vanished inside her silent house, like a moth pulled to a distant flame.

Lonewolf asked. "Does she return to her sleeping robes now?"

The dead warrior nodded. "As if she had never left them. If she does what she always does."

Lonewolf was a burdened man. The world sat so heavily within him it threatened to crush him. He said. "Foul whisperings are in the night. Unnatural things bring unnatural troubles. An infected mind trapped in a night of waking sleep has emptied its secrets."

"She is the wife of a man. What she has, he has in having her," suggested the dead warrior. "Does that not make you wonder about Makona? What is it that he has?"

"It is not Makona that looms in my thoughts," admitted Lonewolf. "It is this pitiable woman, who seems the hatchery of plots, the mother of murders. She needs the help of the spirits and not the hand of a healer on her. She is past the help of men."

"You have compassion that is too much a man's kindness when it thinks of women. This is not a woman as you know them," warned the dead warrior.

Lonewolf was not to be talked out of his heart's nature.

"Guard her against herself as you serve Makona. In her grief that is not proper grief, she may do herself a killing injury."

"Lonewolf, having seen and heard what was so, now where do you go?"

Lonewolf looked troubled. He had the aching heart of a man who has lost his way in the world.

"No where. And it seems, I have already arrived at my destination."

CHAPTER THIRTY FOUR

There was a stirring in that part of the desert where evil grows.

In the rifts between worlds, down in the rock-ribbed ravines where flash floods sweep all before them, something began to move. It was a shadow without shape, a gathering of dispersed and displaced things. It was the reappings of a whirlwind, the dark eye of an inhuman storm. It grew a body and came to earth and walked upon two legs. It became Sky Thunder Kachina and close behind, her two night sisters journeyed into her presence.

Sky Thunder Kachina spoke her welcome to them. "I hear the distant horror of a war drum! Those who follow Falcon this way come! And some in battle approach, led by Makes Dead."

Black Wind Kachina drew her dark robes about her. Her voice was tinged with smoky ardor. "What brings this sweet kiss to our lips? The sex of battle comes with red reward. Who brings us this feast? What fans the flame?"

Sky Thunder licked her sere lips with a lizard shaped tongue. Her blood raced with unnatural excitement, her words gushed forth from a heart of smoke.

"Revenge burns and smokes like a fire in the head. The cause which provokes this attack would wake the dead!"

Black Wind Kachina fondled a loathsome piece of rotting meat, a talisman of a once

consummated love. Her memories of the world were long. She was offended by all human happenings and forgave none. Her voice was revenge itself. "Near the desert's edge we'll dance a dark dance for them. They won't see us but we'll be everywhere, like a poison in the night air. There's a river of blood this way coming!"

Fire Kachina stood atop a sandstone outcropping of rock. There was smoke and sparks where her feet bruised the rock. She called down to her sisters. "Does Diving Bird travel with his brother? Have we caught them all in our web?"

Sky Thunder Kachina shouted up at her. "He has escaped us. I know all the moving faces. There is Little Siwa whose father rules the far Pueblos and many smooth-faced warriors yet to taste their first taste of battle."

Black Wind Kachina swooped to pluck a hapless lizard from the rocks at her feet. It wriggled with silent screams in her claw-like grasp. Its mute appeals for mercy were silenced when she bit down and snapped its spine with her yellow teeth. She loosed her fingers and let the dying reptile fall at her feet. Her eyes glittered and there was inhuman joy in her speech and manner. She said. "Fire Kachina, safely hidden in Makona's Pueblo, night-seeing eyes seeing all in a doomed day, how goes the world for our dark child, Makona?"

Her sister Fire Kachina breathed fire into the morning air and assured her. "Makona's own pueblo is strongly prepared for battle. All warriors are called forth. But some say he is mad."

Sky Thunder Kachina offered a different view.

"Some say he is full of valiant fury."

Fire Kachina insisted. "But more say Makona is so swollen with his own ambitious disease he can not fasten his knife to his side."

Black Wind Kachina agreed with that sentiment. "His cause is so evil he can not wear the

calm of a man who knows he is just."

Sky Thunder Kachina prophesied in an eerie singsong voice. "Now Makona feels his secret murders sticking to his hands. Treachery like his treachery surrounds him. His fevered brain sees himself in everyone."

Black Wind Kachina continued the chant. "Those he commands move only by tribal duty, not in loyalty's love."

Sky Thunder Kachina spread her arms as if embracing the sky. "Oh my sisters, now he feels the robes of Great Chief hang loose about him, like a thunder giant's war shirt on a child thief!"

Black Wind Kachina predicted. "When all that is within him, condemns itself for being there, then Makona makes war inside himself!"

"Blood! It will rain blood!" cried Fire Kachina her face lit by fires within.

"And we'll be there to drink it!" said Black Wind Kachina, licking her age-ruined lips at the sweetness of the taste yet to be.

"We are so planned, man is so easily led, that man has but to think it, and we are fed," said Sky Thunder Kachina. She held her hands out to her dark sisters. They moved toward her, dancing in the dust of the ravine. Sky Thunder Kachina exhorted her sisters. "Death rises in the East! We are called to a feast!"

The shapes of the drear women swirled in a wind of their own making. They danced among the stones and drowned the world in an inhuman song. If rocks could fear, those they capered over in their human killing dance, would shrink beneath their feet.

Then they vanished like extinguished sparks flying up the smokehole at the top of the world.

Only the memory of their evil remained.

CHAPTER THIRTY FIVE

Deep within the sunless gloom of his house, Makona stood with his back to the wall, awaiting news. He stood like a man buffeted by a great wind. There was an air of world weariness about him, as if he had journeyed past his strength.

A figure appeared in the doorway. A faint odor of the grave seemed to follow the dark shape into the room.

The dead warrior addressed Makona. There was a note of misplaced triumph in his voice. "It is as I have said, and seen coming from the East."

Makona closed his eyes with the backs of his hands. By this means he avoided looking at the being who did his bidding. He seemed tired of life itself. "Bring me no more words! Let them rot in silence."

"Is Great Chief Makona afraid?" There was mocking insolence in the dead warrior's manner.

Makona denied it with great vehemence. "'Til the Great Desert itself moves against me, I can not be infected with a coward's fear! Falcon! That child of a boy! Was he not born of woman! The spirits that know all things of the night have chosen me for this protection. 'Fear not, Makona. No man that's born of woman, shall ever have your death!'"

Makona motioned for the dead warrior to leave him.

But the dead warrior showed no sign he meant to leave.

He said. "There are things worse than death. I am proof of it."

Makona opened his eyes in sudden wrath. "I did not in sorcery make you to spit words at my face! The mind I rule by and the heart I carry, will never walk upon the ground with doubt or fear! I am Makona! Great Chief! Shaman of Kawdor! Shaman of Ga-Mis!"

The dead warrior observed wryly. "'I was once something myself. You see how that goes."

Makona vented his displeasure.

"May the spirits damn you, you snow-faced coward! Even dead and made to walk for cowardice's sake, you still wear that coward's heart!"

"But I've seen a thousand thousand..."

Makona interrupted. "Geese? Flying backwards to avoid discovery?"

The dead warrior continued as if Makona had never spoke.

"Warriors. Faces turned to the light. More than can be counted."

Makona said contemptuously. "If you could count beyond your fingers, you would not be where you are now. Go and paint your face for war so I can't see it. You begin to stink with fear and death's decay."

"I'll go but my words still say the far Pueblos rise against you."

Makona laughed.

"And snow falls upward. See that you do the same."

The dead warrior took his leave of Makona. As he passed out of the room, another came in.

Makona recognized him and was content to have him in his presence. "Lonewolf! There's my shield in the shape of a man! My good friend, I am sick at heart! All who come round me, contend with me!"

Lonewolf stood in front of his Great Chief. He bowed with respect but there was a wary edge to his manner. Lonewolf was a man who held fast to sworn loyalties even when his heart knew reasons that suggested a wiser man would do otherwise.

"I am sent for and answer to it. What is your wish, Great Chief Makona?"

Makona voiced his complaint which he would not concede as a fear even though it was.

"My way of life has fallen into winter."

Lonewolf made polite denial.

"Not so. It is summer and can be felt in the air!" Not sure his words resounded with conviction, Lonewolf added further solace. "When you've won the coming battle, you'll be cheered forever."

Makona smiled but he was only half convinced.

"That's a good sounding lie. I'd rather have a good sounding truth."

Lonewolf considered his words carefully. He was a man who moved through life with great caution. He tried to reassure Makona.

"Give no thought that this battle may unseat you at the great fire."

"Why do you stay beside me Lonewolf when so many others have left me?"

"This is the house of my fathers and their fathers before them. If history judges you rightly or wrongly, the land does not change. I would defend my home even if vultures wore the robes of chief."

"Do you say I am a vulture?" Makona was slightly amused.

"You are Great Chief Makona. As such, I have sworn my loyalties," said Lonewolf simply. His face was troubled and thoughts that moved in him caused him obvious grief. But he spoke of none of this.

Makona was pensive. His gloomy thoughts tumbled out in an uncensored stream.

"Lonewolf, I have lived long enough. That which should reward old age, tribal honor, family love, remembered glory, and war friends to guard against the night, it seems I must not look to have them. Instead I reap curses not loud but deep. In mere words, I am honored by the mouth and not by the deed."

Lonewolf was on surer ground here. For much of what was transpiring had been made known to him.

"If it is truth you want, then let me carry it for you. The far Pueblos have all sent men against you. Too many hands hold weapons against you."

"If they fight, they are too few," said Makona with scorn.

"If they all must be killed, they are too many."

Makona in an instant was the proud warrior he once had been, driven by the raging heart of war. He vowed in thunderous tones. "I'll fight 'til the flesh is hacked from my bones! Give me my war shirt!" His body trembled with the need for action.

Lonewolf put his hand on Makona's arm to steady him.

"It is not needed yet. The enemy is not yet upon us."

Makona insisted. "I'll wear it now to show my heart. Go about my Pueblo, find those that talk of fear and kill them! Fear is the enemy! I'll kill it in me and in everyone!"

Lonewolf stared at Makona. He saw things in Makona's face that no man who would give friendship and loyalty should see. This was not the Great Chief Makona that Lonewolf had sworn fealty to serve but some other man with base instincts that danced in his skin. Lonewolf considered his words lest they betray the dark thoughts he harbored.

"I can not kill that many in one time," said Lonewolf, his patient answer overturning and rejecting the task. "Your wife asks for you Makona."

Makona asked. "Is Kalaw well?"

"Not so sick as troubled with night fancies that keep her from rest."

Makona seized his friend by the shoulder. He implored him. "Cure her of them! You are a healer and can make magic to a mind diseased."

With great gentleness, Lonewolf loosened the hand that held him.

"It is not so easy to pluck a rooted sorrow from memory. To pour the water of forgetfulness on the troubles of the mind, might darken all that should be light."

"If the mind is beyond touching, can you bring good medicine to the heart?"

Lonewolf shook his head.

"When it's the human heart, the ailing one can only heal herself."

Makona was suddenly contemptuous, as if Lonewolf had failed him.

"Then you can heal nothing. Of what use are you? Help me put my war shirt on! Give me my spear, sharpened for war! If you could truly heal, I'd have you read the entrails of the nation, find her disease and purge it to a purity that knows my name."

"Such I can not do."

"Have you no medicine to cure my enemies of themselves?" asked Makona.

"None. They have their own medicine," said Lonewolf.

"Bring my war shirt and weapons! They are medicine enough!"

"I will do as you ask," said Lonewolf. "But Makona, have you no fear for your own life?"

"The Three Kachinas born with the dead have given sight to see what's ahead and what lurks in the mortal tree. I can't be killed until the Great Desert rises up against me! I am the eternal eagle in the air and all whom I meet are my mortal prey!" Makona's blood already raced with the alarm of the battle yet to be. He stormed out of the room like a nation moving to the attack. "I go to paint my face for war!"

Lonewolf stood in the darkened room, staring at the retreating back of Makona.

Under his breath, Lonewolf expressed his doubts.

"Why should the spirits love Makona and not the nation?"

CHAPTER THIRTY SIX

There was a gathering of warriors in the great desert east of Makona's Pueblo. The incessant rhythms of war drums, the clash of sharpening stones against spear points were everywhere.

Falcon stood on a rock and surveyed the tumult of men preparing for battle. He raised his hands and chanted to the sky above.

He asked the Great Spirit to look down in favor on what they were about to do.

When he had finished his invocation, he turned to face his men. He called out in a voice loud enough to carry through out the warcamp.

"Clan brothers! I hope the day is near at hand when we all may sleep again without fear of being murdered!" Falcon's great sorrow made his voice husky with emotion. He had to pause a moment to regain his composure. When he was himself again, he said. "I have asked the Great Spirit to guide us through this day. If he above has favor to give, my heart which is one with the heart of the Pueblo, knows his blessing will fall like rain upon the seeds of our wishes. I give thanks that you have chosen to follow me. Today is a good day to die! But let it come for our enemies!"

Men fell silent at his words. No voices rose to meet his thoughts but their faces were alive with the glimmer of hope his words evoked.

Falcon stepped down off the rock. He turned his back on the warriors in the camp. He stared off to the West in the direction where Makona's Pueblo lay. He had the air of a man who carries

too great a burden, a man whose sorrows equal all the other things in him. He had as a son always been a proud man but things in living had humbled him. He had as a man been given to loud voiced opinions but things in dying had given him a smaller, unsure voice.

Those changes in a man that must be made to make him a man, were born in Falcon. Still he was disheartened. He was in a black mood. Remembered horror was a map of his mind and the traces of old hurts burned in him.

The young son of Falcon's great friend, Little Siwa came to stand beside Falcon. Little Siwa was a boy tall and grave, with all the sun's warmth aglow in his skin. Little Siwa's father, Siwa was a man whose heart gave itself to honor.

Of all the men who followed Falcon, it was Siwa, that Falcon most trusted with his life.

The boy put his hand on Falcon's grieving shoulder. He understood his moods and reached out to him with the artless affection of the young.

"For the honor of my father's Pueblo, I come to follow you to bright victory," said Little Siwa. "I have come into this land with you, to make it so."

Falcon put his hand over the hand of Little Siwa and squeezed it with returned affection. "It is good to see you boy. You have the look of your father about you. Little Siwa, with a strong young heart such as yours, how could we fail? The blackness that is Makona, can not stand the light of you."

"My father sends his love. And me to take my place in battle beside you until my father can join you. He travels from afar but will arrive in time to singe Makona with his fire. I am sent to say that to you."

"As great as the gift, you presence grants me," said Falcon. "You are too young and too precious to me. I would rather see you behind me in battle, awaiting your father's coming than

risk you in war beside me."

"You were this age when first you went to war," said Little Siwa. "What was your right is my right."

"I can not deny you. But my heart aches to surrender such youth to the treachery of war." Falcon knew all too well the price war could exact on the young and the fair. It was one ache among many in his heart on this day.

Siwa looked around.

"What place is this?"

Makes Dead came up behind them. He answered for Falcon.

"We are on the edge of the Great Desert, in tradition, sacred to the now profaned Pueblo of Makona."

"It seems the very edge of nothing," said Little Siwa. "I have never seen so desolate a place."

"It matches the spirit of Makona. It is fitting that this place of ruin should be the birth of Makona's ruin," said Makes Dead. He turned to Falcon. "Are preparations set for the coming battle?"

Falcon shrugged. "When one readies for war, one is not ready till the first dead are fallen. Only then do you sense the wind you need to know."

Makes Dead offered. "It must please you Falcon that so many have left Makona and flocked to our cause."

"Only Makona dead pleases me. All other thoughts are unkind," said a solemn Falcon whose spirit could brook no joy.

"Still, it is an auspicious sign."

Falcon gazed upon the assembled warrior's with a distracted air. He noted their numbers and

was not displeased. Still there was a wary edge to his manner.

"I have a battle plan Makes Dead. It came to me as I stared at the distance we must travel to reach Makona. I can see for miles and miles so featureless is this place. And what I can see, others with harmful intent can see," Falcon counseled Makes Dead. "These are my instructions to you. Take them from me and tell all in our warcamp. Let every warrior cut down sage brush and desert shrubs and hold it as a shield before him."

Little Siwa protested.

"We have shields enough."

"But those can be counted and we want the dark one surprised. With these withered growths, we'll shadow the numbers of our men. And make those who see our coming, not know how many we are."

Makes Dead approved.

"A good thought!" said Makes Dead. "Makona must not run from the flood of our overwhelming vengeance 'til we've tasted his traitor's blood."

"Makes Dead will pass the word," said Little Siwa with boyish enthusiasm. "And I'll see that every warrior does it."

Falcon smiled at something he did know that boded well for them all. He said. "Our spies say a strangely confident Makona has not fled his foul nest. With spirits conjuring on his side, he plans to withstand our siege."

"Help from the dark? Is that his main hope?" asked Makes Dead.

"He has little else. Warriors, great and small, any with a mind of their own, have joined our cause. Those who serve him now are captive beings with no hearts of their own, forced to do as they are told."

Little Siwa's face was triumphant and matched his childish outburst.

"Then the day is ours before we start!"

Makes Dead smiled at the boy's eagerness. He cautioned. "Let's await the outcome before we prophecy it. Mag-Way-Ya had such sentiments but where is he now? The wind can always turn."

Little Siwa was not to be dissuaded.

"Our hands upon our weapons are what make the wind! Let us storm!"

CHAPTER THIRTY SEVEN

Makona stood on the roof of his Pueblo. From there he could look out over the scene of the coming battle. He called down to the crowd of warriors in the plaza who awaited his battle orders. "Carry our battle shields forward so that the sun can see them. The cry is still. 'They come!'"

Lonewolf pushed his way through the front ranks of Makona's warriors. He hailed Makona as he ascended the wooden ladder to the heights where Makona stood.

"There's not enough warriors to carry the shields of the fallen!" cautioned Lonewolf, as he stepped onto the roof.

Makona stared at Lonewolf as if somehow the news he brought was his own doing. He boasted. "Even if I had fewer men, our Pueblo's strength will laugh this siege to scorn."

Lonewolf shook his head. He was worried. "Messengers have brought word to me. The enemy is on the move. They come quick."

Makona brandished his war spear.

"And will stay quicker. Here we'll let them lie, until the insects that clean the bones of death,

have feasted on them all!"

"It's said they are well reinforced with warriors that were meant to be our own."

Makona said with quiet rage. "Those who fight against their own house, will give birth to the wind!"

Makona was like a great storm. Winds of war gathered in him, lightning ached to bolt from his spear arm, and thunder deep inside willed itself to crash among his enemies.

From somewhere deep within the Pueblo walls of Makona's house, came the plaintive scream of a woman.

Makona started and turned in alarm.

"What was that?"

Lonewolf was calm where Makona was not.

"The scream of a woman, Great Chief."

Makona said. "I had almost forgotten the shape of fear. Go and see what troubles my house. If it was Kalaw who made such a sound, I would know what she screams against. Hurry to her side!"

Lonewolf scrambled down the ladder and hurried in the direction of Makona's house. Makona stared at his warriors thronging the plaza. This was a time when he most needed to plan, to hold to a great strategy that would win the battle and the day but his mind unbidden, traveled to other things.

His thoughts turned inward. Makona could feel the world's hatred and loathing burning through all his veins. It twisted his guts with arrow piercing intensity. So deep it touched his bones, an awareness coursed through him that insatiable thirst from a thousand thousand throats

clamored for a drink of his life's blood.

Makona was overcome with strange tides, currents of thought which washed over him and threatened to pull him under.

There was a time he thought when my senses would drown in ice to hear such a night shriek! And just the thought, that something threatened my woman Kalaw, would send me running with all my strength and speed. But I stand here like a man whose bones are more stone than the holders of flesh. What is Makona becoming or unbecoming?

And to hear a woman scream as if killed, the part of me that is a man and would defend all women against it, where has that fineness of feeling gone? Is Makona that black pit from which no light or life escapes?

My heart had once been such, that my hair would rise up on my scalp as if it had a life of its own, did I hear such a shriek! But I have lately feasted so full with horror, slaughter's screaming is now too familiar to shake me.

The woman screamed again. Makona turned toward the sound. The scream stopped abruptly as if a hand had clamped over the mouth and stilled the shriek.

Makona shuddered.

All was not well in his world.

CHAPTER THIRTY EIGHT

Kalaw had been keeping herself hidden in the cool, concealing darkness of her house. But it was not only the walls of her house that surrounded her. Kalaw had passed into a shadow greater than any she knew.

Kalaw's Kachina haunted face was streaked in the moonlight. The light of the flaring firepit chased shadows across her face.

Kalaw's hands clenched convulsively. Her long claw-like fingers seemed to seize upon something and crush it, like a spider gripping an even darker increment of legend. She kept one hand hidden behind her back, holding something in it.

Her throat ached, from the scream that had been torn from it, invoked by something dire that passed through her and now was gone or not immediately visible.

Kalaw moved one armed into the embrace of something unseen. She stood there, not moving, surrendering to some dark spawn of night, terror seizing her heart and making it its own.

Something, a sound or a shadow, some wary omen, caused her to turn and she saw the dead warrior in the shadow of the doorway. She made a wary move to further conceal whatever it was she held behind her back.

The dead warrior saw Kalaw's flaming eyes, lambent and absolutely wanting in reason. He had no doubt she was the source of the scream. Prompted to come find its cause and cure for the sake of Makona, the dead warrior was shocked to see the state she was in. At Makona's insistence, Kalaw's safety was the dead warrior's most urgent concern.

Kalaw seemed lit with some strange radiance that beckoned.

Kalaw whispered to an invisible presence, her tongue darting within the burnt darkness of her throat. Her face was an ancient mask, conceived by a shadow-sharpened mind and cursed in its making.

The dead warrior knew in an instant that he was terrified of her. He found himself awash with a grim strange dread, nameless and inexplicable.

The dead warrior meant to flee with all haste but could not.

Her flaming eyes would not let him.

She spoke. "They swore upon their honor not to retaliate."

"Who swore?"

"Those who let me kill them," said Kalaw. "Though their voices are sweet as honey, they lie."

"I heard a scream, coming from this house. Have you been disturbed by the presence of intruders?"

"Who would dare enter my house? A being as loathsome as I would repel all who might think to enter!" She stared at him as a cougar stares at a freshly killed deer. Her eyes were obscene burnt copper moons.

The dead warrior sensed there was no remedy for this sickness that devoured her insides.

Kalaw stood there, swaying in an imaginary wind, turning her moon pale face toward the dead warrior. It was a face not good to look upon for all that was human had fled from it.

A strange expression passed over her face. She seemed much confused.

"Who are you?" she demanded. "By what right do you enter my house?"

"I am that which used to be someone," said the dead warrior. "I am sent to do the bidding of your husband Makona."

"Do I have a husband? Or do I have blood red lips that taste meat with each secret smile?"

Before he could answer, Kalaw went on.

"Oh yes. I am married. You have caught me in that web Makona. Tell me husband, am I still good to look at? Do you find me pretty?" She stared at the dead warrior with rapt fascination.

"I am sent by Makona. Do you not recognize me?"

"I know you all too well. I see my husband who comes late to my bed. Do I no longer please you?"

"You are much confused," protested the dead warrior.

"No. You wrong me Makona. Have I ever denied you what marriage asks of a woman? Did I ever give look or thought that said I was not Makona's woman?"

The dead warrior shifted uncomfortably in her presence.

"Did I demand that you keep me in unreasonable splendor? Was I not willing to bring forth your children in pain and sorrow?" She moved toward the dead warrior, her face flushed with inner passion.

There was something menacing about the way she kept what was in her hand, hidden behind her back. Although she moved about, she shifted it so that it was ever concealed. Her face was a mask of dark sensuality.

"I am not Makona!" said the dead warrior, stepping back in alarm as she drew near him. He entreated her. "Look at my face. I am the ruin of what once was a man, not your husband!"

She strode up to the dead warrior boldly. He backed away but she moved with him. It was a kind of weird dance, the dead warrior retreating, all emotion dead, Kalaw advancing, with all senses aflame. The rear wall of the room stopped them. The dead warrior thrust out one arm defensively, trying to fend her off. Kalaw did not stop until her chest pushed against his outstretched hand.

Kalaw's own hand rose in a sleepwalkers gesture. Her sharp nails traced the outlines of the dead warrior's twitching face as though trying to draw his image. The dead warrior recoiled in horror at her touch.

"A woman's destiny is to remain mated to a creature, half Kachina, half child. Men are not worthy of such sustained love!" The look she gave the man she thought to be her husband was lit by love and desire. Her eyes flared orange red, almost the color of flame. "Oh Makona, if only

you could know what it is for a woman to love! In us, it is a kind of glory. But even as we give all that we have, we wonder if a man even has a soul."

She moved to put one arm around the dead warrior's neck.

He shoved her aside roughly. His fear of her drove his arms and she was almost thrown to the ground with the violence of his movements.

"You are mistaken. I am not Makona!" he cried.

Her eyes flashed and passion changed to venomous anger. She backed away, as if her hand that had touched the shape of his face had been seared on a hot coal.

"Makona no longer loves me!" she accused.

"Makona is not in this room!" insisted the dead warrior but there was no reaching her. His words did not seem to penetrate the strangeness that had seized her mind. He scuttled along the wall, moving away from her best as he could, edging towards the doorway.

"I have the cure for the disease that I have become," said Kalaw, her ravenous eyes following the dead warrior's every move. "I sense in you Makona a rising wind that taunts me with a sound like laughter."

She moved quickly, bringing her concealed hand out into the open. An obsidian bladed knife gleamed in the firelight. Its hard flaked edge was wickedly sharp. She put the edge alongside her own throat.

"I conjure a revenge only a grave born thing might conceive of, wishing for a doom more deadly than death," she said in voice that had dropped to a whisper.

"Put that knife down! You must not harm yourself!" cried the dead warrior in alarm.

She turned on him in sudden rage. The knife nicked the soft skin of her neck. Tiny drops of blood beaded on the edges of the knife's black blade. "You plead for me now! But Makona

spurns my embrace! He does not love me!"

"Makona loves you!" cried the dead warrior. "But I am not him!"

"Makona loves no one! And I shall die of that truth!" The nick in her neck deepened as she pressed the knife harder. Blood dripped from the handle.

The dead warrior in desperation, tried a stratagem, a ploy to stay the hand that held the knife.

"I Makona, for the love I bear you," he said, finding the lie uneasy in his throat. "command you, to put down the knife! If you love me, you will put it down now!" He tried to make his voice ring with resolute authority that brooked no refusal.

"My husband commands me to put down the knife?" Kalaw's voice was soft and sweet and seemed full of tenderness.

"Yes," said the dead warrior, sure that he had prevailed.

The doorway behind them darkened with the figure of a man. Lonewolf had arrived. He paused there to catch his breath.

Kalaw asked again. "Shall I put down the knife?"

The dead warrior still pretending to be Makona nodded a heartfelt yes. "It is your husband's loving wish that you do so."

Kalaw seized the knife two-handed and plunged it into her heart.

Her eyes flashed with pain. Her voice hesitated and then she gasped. "I have... put it down..where..where it will do the most good."

Lonewolf burst into the center of the room, panting from the long run that had brought him there. He had witnessed Kalaw's actions and stood there transfixed in wide-eyed horror.

Kalaw was still on her feet, the deeply thrust knife sticking out of her breast. Blood stained the front of her dress.

She collapsed suddenly and fell backwards.

Lonewolf and the dead warrior rushed to catch her but she hit the floor before they could get to her.

She lay on her back, eyes staring up at them. She was mortally wounded, quickly fading from life.

Her eyes swam toward an ocean of night. Her lips moved. Lonewolf and the dead warrior bent over her, putting their faces next to hers. She was almost gone.

With the last of her breath, her eyes on a man who was not in this room, she said.

"Makona...you will hear me always...in the wind and rain."

Kalaw drowned in the sea of her death.

Lonewolf and the dead warrior were helpless watchers on a distant shore.

CHAPTER THIRTY NINE

Lonewolf came into the room where Makona had retreated to plan his final battle. So absorbed was he in his devisings, Makona had not waited on the roof for word of what had befallen his wife.

Lonewolf had the manner of a man who has seen too much but is yet moved to speak about it. His eyes were downcast. Pain moved behind his eyes, and so large was his grief, that it was in every part of him.

Makona saw the emotions at play in Lonewolf but himself was unmoved. There was a frozenness to his manner, a coldness that colored Makona's thoughts. He seemed a man cut adrift from his own kind.

"Great Chief! Your wife, Kalaw, is dead! In some grief of her own, she died by her own hand."

Makona somehow had come to terms with this expectation. His face was grave but markedly untroubled. There was no quickening within him. He said calmly. "She has not been herself. But still this is most unexpected, most unwelcome. She should have picked a more convenient time to die."

Lonewolf was shocked. He protested. "Is your heart seized by winter? It is a mad thing to say. Makona! It is your own wife!"

"No! Not mad! Just so numb from the accumulated horrors of my life. All desert me in my time of need!"

"You are not yourself!"

"I am too much myself. I am every part Makona and that's the trouble. He is a man who owns sorrow in every inch of him. If I act cold now, its the only suddenness of her death when so much presses against me. I will mourn and grieve when enemies no longer have hold of my throat."

Lonewolf could in a small way understand Makona's distress and strove to be comforting.

"There will be a later time for grief."

Makona muttered. "That is all time is for."

Lonewolf went on. "Now darkness has its way with you, but tomorrow when battle is done, this black cloud may lift."

Makona turned on him with sullen rage.

"There is no tomorrow! Only a Kachina's leering breath, reeking with misplaced desire, that pretends to be a man's future."

"Do not dwell on it and be lost in dark thoughts," said Lonewolf, striving to bring comfort to a man who resisted all reassurance.

But Makona went on as if Lonewolf had not spoken. All the doubts of a man who had tasted the fire of the world's scorn was in him. The hard edge of ambition rasped against his bones. What he dared in life, was like an arrow that had flown back toward the bow that had given it flight.

The bitterness that was the quicksand of his life was in his voice.

"The fire of my life flares with a light not my own. My dreams are drenched in no hoped for sun, but creep about and show me only the dark in which I live! Where is Makona's place in the sun? Every word of hope the Kachinas gave voice to, had a knife in its tongue. Where are they who promised me promises greater than those I imagined for myself?"

"You have greatness that you may yet win," said Lonewolf.

"Makona means as much to the world as if he had never been in it!" said Makona. "His name hereafter will be used to frighten children, to make them behave lest they become like me!"

A man passed into the room while Makona's words still echoed.

Makona turned at the sound of his steps and saw the dead warrior. The sight of him made him suddenly angry.

"Makona! I have hurried here to say what I saw!"

"You come to use your tongue. Use it loathsome one and then vanish forever from my sight! It can't be good, whatever it is you have to say."

"I know what I know but I can not explain what I know," said the dead warrior.

"There's no wonder there. You have a head, empty as a rattle gourd. Say what you think you know."

"You sent me to watch for your enemies."

"A task simple enough for an idiot like you," said Makona with scorn.

"I climbed the highest mesa and looked out over the Great Desert, where they are bound to come."

"Go on, don't stretch it out, you infuriating piece of dead meat!"

"As I crouched there, I thought I saw the Great Desert begin to move."

"Maggot-filled Liar!" cried Makona. The dead warrior's words filled him with sullen fury.

"Kill me complete in anger, if I have not said it true. Look for yourself. Beyond the rim of the mesa, you can see the Great Desert, moving this way."

"If you speak false, I'll cut you to pieces and not let the pieces die!" threatened Makona.

"But if I speak true?" said the dead warrior. Makona's threats instilled no fear in him. No promised punishment could be worse than the one already visited upon him.

"Then you carved the same horror for me, as I now hold you in! I begin to fear the trickery of the spirits who lied me a truth. 'Fear not Makona, until the Great Desert moves against you.' What treachery! For now it moves!" Makona felt betrayed. His eyes began to take on the aspect of a hunted thing.

"And moves fast and will be on us soon, Makona," offered the dead warrior. "Release me Makona! I have done all that can be done for you and earned my oblivion."

"Coward! Even hell won't have you! As long as I am Makona, Shaman of Kawdor, Great Chief of the nation, you will follow in my dust. For now, get your rotting face out of mine!"

If a look could kill, then the malevolent eyes of the dead warrior would have withered Makona on the spot. The dead warrior swallowed the rest of his plea for oblivion. He bowed to show his acquiescence to Makona's wishes. The dead warrior went from Makona's presence.

Lonewolf tugged on Makona's arm. "I am to remind you of your duties."

"Are not my duties to dance in the dust until I become it?"

"You must give word to your warriors. They need a final heeding from you, some word to fix upon ere they rise in battle."

"Go tell them warriors, arm yourselves! String your bows with the tongues of women. Paint your face so that the enemy can see you. Sharpen your spears against your own throats. The earth itself moves against us. If we are to die, we die fighting!"

"You must tell them that yourself. It is not right for me to say it or for you. These are not the words of a Great Chief on the eve of battle!" Lonewolf's sensibilities were affronted.

"I will say no more!" said Makona. His face had the bruised sullen look of a man much put upon.

"You must control yourself, rein in these dark unwelcoming thoughts!" insisted Lonewolf. "This bitterness is not good for the nation. Give them some cheering word, some exhortation that will make their blood race and their hearts the strength of the Pueblo."

"Bring the body of my wife outside for all to see. Tell them she is the first spear hurled for the nation."

Lonewolf stared at Makona with shock and dismay.

"Tell them he who fails me in battle, will have a wife like mine. Womanly and dead! And he who fails and has no wife, at spear point will marry mine!"

Tears began to form in the corner of Makona's eyes. He turned away from Lonewolf so that his face was hidden.

Lonewolf was moved to speak but did not. What words of comfort he knew, could not reach

this man, this poor tragic Makona.

Makona dwelt in darkness and no words could bring him out of it.

CHAPTER FORTY

On the day of battle, ancient fog, a gray clinging mist, fell from distant mountains. It crouched upon the land like an avaricious animal that greedily drank poisoned water from alkali springs. The air took on the color of the desert.

War drums echoed strangely in the lowering whiteness. The shrieks and screams of battle, the cries of victory and defeat, ripped from dying men's throats, sounded ghostly and inhuman. Like a woman it obscured the world with modesty and then as the wind shifted, it revealed all in a tempting flash, only to hide it again. When the eye could just make out the shapes and placements of men in battle, it roiled and confused and took all vision away.

It was a strange interloper, a fog out of season, and it cloaked the world of battle in weird costume. Some whispered it was sent by spirits. Some held it was the very breath of the spirits. Makona held it an omen that signaled he was a man upon whom supernatural favor was visited. And sent his men into battle with promises of spirit-borne aid and comfort.

Makona shaped a world in the darkness of his thoughts.

He stood behind a mound of dead warriors. He wiped the bloody end of his spear against the fallen body of an enemy. His eyes were not on the dead at his feet but on the distant tumult of battle. In the place where Makona stood, there was temporary calm, like the eye of a great storm but elsewhere the battle raged and roiled, and to his keen warrior's eyes, seemed lost. Everywhere his men were being pushed back and overtaken. They fought valiantly those warriors who followed him but died all the same.

The dead warrior drenched in the gore of the dead and dying, stood at his shoulder. He had already sent many of Makona's enemies into their graves. Though he was sheathed forever in a coward's sunlight, the dead warrior now seemed heroic because he could not be killed. He was stabbed and speared and struck with weapons uncounted, yet the dead warrior raised his weapon and smote. Flesh was hacked off him. His face was so gashed and ripped it did not seem quite a human face anymore. None of his rips and cuts bled. His bones showed white through his largest wounds. He fell upon Makona's enemies with abandon until he was wreathed in mist and human suffering and pity's ashes and innocent blood.

Makona spoke to him.

"It's true! The Great Desert moves against me! How can it be? Have the spirits ruined the very mind of the world? And now it stops, as if by command. What do you make of it slave?"

The dead warrior lifted up his hand. One finger hung by a strip of flesh and the bones rattled against each other when he moved his hand. He turned incuriously from this examination of his ruined self and faced Makona. He gave his considered opinion.

"Sagebrush and dry shrubs uprooted and held by warriors. My eyes see it as camouflage to hide their numbers."

Makona raged. "A trick with Falcon's bastard color to it!"

The dead warrior whose dead eyes seemed to see farther than the living eyes of men, looked out and observed. "They are as many as stones in a river, a thousand times more than you command. Even the mist can not hide their numbers."

Makona exclaimed. "I am Makona! Great Chief! Shaman of Kawdor! In battle I'll give birth to river of blood and wash those stones away!"

The dead warrior laughed. He offered mocking counsel. "My advice is to do half of what I

once did. Flee for your life but not get killed in the doing of it."

Makona turned and stared off into the distance, looking almost with longing in a direction from which battle did not come. Makona conjured a seductive vision of flight from the unbearable. He could feel the heat of the momentary desire to start again in some far place where none knew him well enough to contend against him. The way to the West was clear and even Makona could think such thoughts. A man could go into that vast distant place and soon be lost from the sight of all men. The desert was an ocean of sand where a man might sail until he was gone forever.

At last, with a heavy sigh, Makona spoke. "I am tied to a torture post by my name. A Great Chief does not flee!"

The dead warrior offered another interpretation, calculated to sting.

"History may judge that you Makona, could not be so described."

Makona mused. "What have I to fear? Is any man not of woman born? I have only that to fear or nothing."

The dead warrior was a bitter hurting thing, an ache that walked, a dead leaf drifting under an empty sky.

He warned in a voice tinged with sorrow.

"I've tasted it. Nothing is a fearful thing."

A knife slashed warrior, blinded, stumbled toward them out of the mist. He wore the colors of Falcon's clan. He held up a spear in front of him, as a man cradles a baby against his chest. He staggered and almost fell. He was weak and could barely walk.

He came toward Makona. There was no fight left in this poor blinded man.

His strength was waning, his spirit dying with each gush of blood from his wounds.

"Help me!" he cried in a voice so weak it could scarce be heard over the sound of battle.

The dead warrior put his knife down and held out his hand to him. Perhaps he meant to help ease him to the ground for the man was on the verge of falling. But before the dead warrior could touch the blinded one, Makona thrust his spear through him. The dying warrior groaned and fell backward, dead in an instant.

"They die so easy," said Makona. "But there too many of them."

The dead warrior stared at the man impaled on Makona's spear with genuine sorrow. "He could have been left to die on his own. There was no mercy in hurrying him out of the world."

"Makona speaks a language which has no such word."

The dead warrior suggested. "If you have no mercy for your enemies you can have none for yourself."

Makona put his foot on the man and tugged the spear out of his chest.

Another figure rushed at them. It was Little Siwa, grimly holding a bloody spear. He had been separated from his father's warriors in the betraying gloom. He tried to carry himself like a man but the horror of war made him seem even more a boy.

Makona glared at him as if his presence were an insult to him.

"Is Falcon so desperate he sends children against me?" said Makona. He turned to the dead warrior. "Brush this fly speck away. He is too small for my spear. There's not enough skin on him for me to stick him."

The dead warrior turned away. It was plain he had no wish to kill this child. He just shook his head no. This further enraged Makona.

Little Siwa flushed with anger at Makona's words.

He cried "I know who you are Makona. You have the name of the man whose death I seek!"

Makona merely looked annoyed.

"Run child. It is a name that kills."

Little Siwa brandished his spear and swore. "If the spirits had a word for it, your name would only be Makona, who is about to die!"

"Makona, who is about to kill!" countered Makona.

Little Siwa advanced.

"No one who walks the earth wants you alive. I'll have you dead on my spear!"

Makona did not raise his spear. He studied the spear in his hands casually as if he had all the time in the world. He had the superior air of a man who is above the task that is set before him. He said in a voice loud with sarcasm. "Those that want me dead, shouldn't do it by talking me to it. Your tongue is too short a spear."

Little Siwa lunged forward in a wild rush, thrusting his spear at Makona's heart.

"Die Makona!" cried Little Siwa. "This one's long enough!"

With deliberation and icy calm, Makona watched him come. At the last possible moment, he stepped aside. Little Siwa's spear passed him harmlessly by. Enraged by Makona's belittling gesture, Little Siwa, thrust again at Makona with even less skill and caution in this second attempt.

Makona easily parried the other's thrust. His strength was a hill higher than the boy could even begin to climb. Makona's counterthrust almost dashed Little Siwa to the ground. Little Siwa shakily regained his footing and moved to attack again.

But before he could quite get his spear up, Makona made his own lunge.

With one quick snap, Makona caught his spear under Little Siwa's and twisted it away. The

boy's spear clattered on the rocks behind Makona.

Defenseless, Little Siwa stood motionless, unable to attack, determined not to run away. Tears of frustration edged the corners of his eyes. He began to bow, the first sign that he acknowledged his own defeat.

Makona's spear smashed into Little Siwa's chest. So hard was it driven, it passed entirely through the boy's body. Little Siwa, impaled and already among the dead, staggered forward, pushing the spear farther out of his back, propelled by human will that for a brief moment exceeded life.

Makona still held the spear. He smiled grimly into the boy's face, and drew him nearer by tugging on the spear that impaled Little Siwa. When the boy's dying face was almost against his chest he stopped.

"I seem to have something stuck on my spear," said Makona. His words were meant to match his savagery but they seemed to mock his own heart. It was as if he needed harsh words to match his actions, for fear, inmost thoughts might make him weep.

Little Siwa tried to speak but the wound was mortal. All the light in the boy's world fell out of the sky and Little Siwa died with his thoughts unspoken, eyes open to chase the light that had gone.

Makona roughly put his hand on Little Siwa's face and shoved.

The strength of Makona's arm, pushed Little Siwa back until the spear was free and the boy dropped to the ground like a boneless dead thing.

Makona stood over the body of the dead boy. He stared down at him.

"I should feel pity at a child's death," he said and it was not clear what emotion was behind his words. His face was a mask that hid his thoughts.

"You should feel shame," said the dead warrior. "A warrior of your certain skill could have wounded him without harm to yourself. Or taken his spear and taken his surrender. So that he might live to see better days in the land."

"I am sworn to kill all who set themselves against me! I swore it!" raged Makona. "And that is my path on the warrior's way! I keep my vows!"

Makona looked over the body of the dead boy to the carnage beyond. The battle was beginning to shift, men were beginning to stream toward him. Some were his own warriors, falling back, hard pressed on all sides. But more were those who wore Falcon's clan colors. Makona was the dark center of the storm and the wind was shifting to blow toward him.

Makona stared at his bloody spear as if surprised to find it in his hands.

The dead warrior said in a voice as dead as the boy at Makona's feet. "If you feel anything, tis a lack of feeling. Makona's heart can not reckon."

Makona bent down. With gentle fingers, he closed the dead staring eyes of Little Siwa.

He spoke like a man who feels too much but keeps a face of stone to hide it.

"You are no longer the son of your father, Little Siwa. You were born of woman. And died to prove it. Spears I smile at, weapons are nothing to me when carried into battle by an enemy that's of a woman born."

The dead warrior gave his own eulogy to the dead boy.

"He sleeps the ancient sleep."

The mist swirled all around them so thick the world seemed swallowed up.

It did indeed seem to be the breath of the spirits.

Unnoticed the Three Kachina's passed Makona, so close they could have lain their sere withered hands upon him.

There near presence was a wind from the grave. They called out Makona's name. They spoke with the ancient voice of the great reptiles which no living man can hear.

The dead warrior, who had ceased to be a man, heard it. It pierced him like an arrow and filled his mouth with dust.

It made him ache for their promise of oblivion.

CHAPTER FORTY ONE

The concealing mist became a dark malevolence that moved before all men, getting between them and the light.

The battle raged but its outcome became most uncertain and confused. A white river of ground fog drowned recognition of friend from foe and men were deemed lost who stood uninjured only a few feet from their battle companions. The whole world was Kachina gray, the air so thick and cloying, it was like breathing in some unnatural breath of contagion.

Makes Dead had charged so boldly ahead, his own men were far behind him.

He strode unafraid in the blinding mist, intent on finding Makona and engaging him in single combat. His desire to kill Makona burned like the sun in him.

Makes Dead shouted through the looming fog. "Makona! Show your face! If you are killed by another, my wife and children's ghosts will haunt me forever!"

The dead warrior stood beside Makona, arm poised to kill any intruder. Only he and Makona survived from the group of warriors that had fought to protect Makona. The dead warrior heard Makes Dead's voice echoing ahead of them.

The dead warrior clutched Makona's arm, the better to secure his attention. He said. "Makes

Dead comes."

Makona swore calmly. "All who come, will die."

Makona's eyes tried in vain to pierce the gloom. His mind reeled with mindshapes, with vague and formless dreads, bitter in all their aspects. He stepped forward and thrust his spear savagely at a ghostly shape that bore down on him. His spear touched only the mist. The shape seemed to separate and get behind him. Makona whirled and moved to strike again, to attack with all his strength, but his enemy vanished mockingly, dissolved into concealing mist and unrevealing cloud.

A stray breath of wind cleared the area behind Makona and the dead warrior. It lasted only a little while, just long enough for the dead warrior to make out the marching forms of Falcon and Siwa whose son lay dead at Makona's feet.

The dead warrior informed Makona of the presence of new danger.

"Now Falcon and Siwa whose son lies at your feet are at our backs," cautioned the dead warrior. "For them to be there, can only have one meaning."

Makona understood and was filled by bitterness and regret.

"That by treachery, the Pueblo has fallen. So be it!" swore Makona. "All betrayal aside, to my enemies I am the same answer. I am their death if they come to me!"

So quickly did the mist reassert itself, Siwa and Falcon caught no glimpse of Makona or the dead warrior. They stumbled on blindly, approaching that which they aimed for but not aware that the prize they sought was but a few steps ahead of them.

As they advanced, Siwa proclaimed to Falcon.

"My son is gone somewhere in the confusion of battle," His worry for his son crept in his voice but otherwise he was jubilant. "But all goes well! The

Pueblo, good Falcon is ours. Makona's best warriors went to our side, by death or conscience sent. Victory walks with us!"

Falcon was not of such a mind. Stark worries limned his face, and the concerns of the nation weighed heavily upon him.

"I fear if it comes, it comes almost too easy."

Siwa knew of the unsettling rumors that had passed through the war camp on the eve of battle. He spoke of them. "It is known that Kachinas have prophesied for Makona. Their dark hands may stir this mist."

"If Makona has the Kachina's favor," said Falcon grimly. "Our human desires may move with eroded hope. But we must not let our fear pull us down into ruin. Remember Siwa, true victory will not come until Makona's head is on a spear!"

They had advanced so far that Falcon and Siwa were but steps from their quarry, Makona and the dead warrior. Only the concealing mist, separated them.

"His death is our only worry," agreed Siwa.

"I also wish the faces of those not with us, safety," said Falcon.

Siwa assured him. "Some must take their names out of this world but as great a victory as this is worth great sacrifice."

Falcon's dark brows lined a hawk-like nose, in a face that was forged from human stone. That part of him that was to become a Great Chief, was plagued with doubt and worry. "This witched weather, this Kachina born blindness, troubles me. For I fear Makona will escape our justice!"

Siwa replied. "It shows no favor. It hides us as much as it hides him."

Falcon's worry was unrelenting. He spoke to it.

"Makes Dead is missing and so is your brave son, Little Siwa."

Makona turned to look in the direction from which the voices of Falcon and Siwa came. He had heard every word, so close had they come.

He laughed and the nearness of the sound startled his enemies.

Makona called out a taunting welcome.

"Falcon! Siwa! I recognize you by your voices. And by the clumsy grace with which you approach me. If warriors were lowing buffalo, they would make less noise than you!"

"Makona!" cried Falcon, peering into the mist. He could just make out the shadowy forms of Makona and the dead warrior.

"If you look for death, it has the name of Makona painted on it!" Makona's defiant shout echoed loud enough to reach the distant hills.

Another voice from another direction, answered Makona's challenge.

"Makona? Is it your voice?" Makes Dead shouted his question into a gloom his eyes could not pierce. He swore to himself in frustration. "This damned wind betrays all direction."

Makes Dead was confused by the echo and now turned to march in a direction that would take him away from Makona.

Makes Dead called out again. "If you're there, I and my ghosts have bloody promises for you!"

Makes Dead advanced, spear at the ready, on a path that would take him well past his enemy.

The mist seemed to thin and Siwa and Falcon stood revealed to Makona and the dead warrior. Now all were within striking distance of each other. They lifted their weapons, prepared to give battle.

Siwa was the first to recognize the broken body of his son at Makona's feet.

He cried out, with a heart suddenly broken.

"Who is this warrior who crows in triumph over the fallen body of my son?"

Falcon answered. "It is evil itself. Makona!"

The dead warrior stared at the grieving father, Siwa. The look on the man's face moved him to speak. He said most gently. "Your son has paid a warrior's price."

Siwa was so shocked, his reason was so affronted by the sight of the dead son that lay before him, he asked what he already knew.

"Then he is dead?"

Makona boasted. "He was when I killed him and he still is. I could bury you above him in the same grave if you fear rain would wet him."

Falcon swore with vehemence. "Only a black childless heart could say those hard words to a grieving father."

Makona reckoned with the forces at play in him and answered in kind.

"I ride an ancient thirst that invokes a strangeness so deep that though words touch me, I can answer only with the darkest part of my mind."

"It is a mind that needs to be ripped out of this life," said Siwa. His rage loomed so large in him, his body seemed to grow a new skeleton, all of its bones full of hate and the urge to kill. "I am the bearclaw of remorse that will do it."

"Makona's heart is not drowned in blood. Siwa's son only lived 'til he was a man. He proved it by dying like one. It is enough of a reward for a father," said Makona with a laugh that betrayed a touch of battle madness. Makona finished the thought.

"But let me add the death of the father to make the family honor complete!"

Siwa brought his spear to bear but yet he hesitated. The pitiable body of his son filled him with a father's longing, an inmost need to know how he came to such a state. He addressed the

dead warrior for he seemed a creature more likely to give him an impartial account.

"Before I gut Makona like a twisted fish, dead warrior, if witnessed by you, please tell an eager father the manner of his son's death. Did he fight well or was he taken by treachery?"

The dead warrior was moved to speak with irony but there was no cruelty that he meant to convey. The facts were cruel enough.

"Dead does not describe a fight well fought. But he fought brave but Makona fought better."

Siwa swore at Makona. "Makona you have made my life dark. If I die now and join the child of my heart, my spirit will follow in your footsteps. I will not leave this land but I will be in the rocks and in the winds and in the dry riverbeds and the stony walls of the mesas. Where ever you go, I will be with you. My spirit will speak with a voice like the voice of thunder, that will be heard far off, even to the ends of the earth. You can not escape me for I shall always come for you."

Makona laughed. "If the spear in your hand is no threat, why should spoken curses worry me."

Siwa held his spear with new found pride. He choked back the sorrow of his loss and proudly said. "If I had as many sons as I have hairs, I would not wish any of them a better death. When I've killed you Makona, I'll make a drum of your skin, and beat you after death."

Before the lightning in his eyes could flash a warning, Makona rushed forward at Siwa.

Siwa, taken by surprise, lunged belatedly with his spear.

Makona with one swift bold slash of his spear easily turned it aside.

Makona's obsidian knife, hidden by his other hand, flashed once, and buried itself in Siwa's chest.

Siwa staggered away from Makona, dying, the knife still stuck in his chest.

He fell dead across the bloody body of his son.

The dead warrior made a pitying observance.

"The tree is slain and so is the root. A future forest of sons goes into night."

Makona stood over the body of the dead father and son and crowed in triumph.

"Falcon! Do you hear it? My spear can talk! My knife has sung its sweetest blood red song!

Now my spear says your name."

Makona brandished his spear. He beckoned with it, inviting Falcon to attack.

"Pretty death waits for you!

Makona advanced on Falcon, who grim faced, stood ready to meet him.

But a hand found Falcon's shoulder and gently pushed him aside. Makona was so intent on Falcon's deliverance from this life by his own hands that he shifted, keeping Falcon ever in front of him. His arms were poised to strike.

"Falcon, he is mine! His death is all my mind can think of. Mine is the greater need!" cried Makes Dead who had found his way to them by the sound of their voices.

Makes Dead towered like a stone giant in the space where Falcon had stood.

Makes Dead raged at Makona. "Turn to me, you bastard child of night, turn!"

Makona turned to face Makes Dead, not fearful to see him there, but somehow not pleased to see him take Falcon's place in the order of combat.

"Oh here's a sorrier sight! Makes Dead, of all men, I had hoped not to meet you."

Makes Dead said with fierce longing.

"I am something to be feared."

Makona's face set along grim lines. His voice conveyed not his usual contempt for his

enemies but an unnatural sense of discomfiture.

"More pitied than feared. Bloodlust is on me. But even made terrible, my soul is too much stained with your family's blood. Must I kill every family member, each and every one! Stand back!" cried Makona.

Makes Dead proclaimed. "I have no words for you. My voice is my spear."

Makona was in the grip of some new emotion. As if the substitution of one enemy for another, was a tide that turned against him. He lowered his spear.

There was a sullen cast to his features now. The eagerness for battle seemed quelled in him, the fierce warring light dying in his eyes.

Makona said. "I begin to weary of the endless sun."

"Stand and fight. I'll give you a place where the sun can not shine!" cried Makes Dead, roused to a killing fury.

"No. I am a spirit-shaped man that none can kill," confessed Makona and the point of his spear touched the ground. "But I have reached an end, I can not kill the world entire. I'll go gladly now, to some dark cavern, to live out my lost days. Stand back! I have lost my place. You have the best of me. My nation is gone, my place by the fire, is filled with ashes."

Makes Dead would have none of it, this surrendering, that would rob him of what he most desired.

"And why would we let an evil go? You'd hide your black face from us but when first the wind turns treacherous, again the evil would grow!" cried Makes Dead.

Makona answered calmly, like a man immune to mortal fear.

"If you raise your spear against me, you will die. The spirits have promised me a charmed life. I may have been given defeat but not death. I can not be killed by any man of woman born."

Falcon spoke then, delighted with a knowledge that Makona did not know.

"Then despair even that magic. For Makes Dead was from his dead mother's birth womb, ripped!" said Falcon with a voice that froze Makona's overheated blood.

Makona recoiled in utmost terror. His whole body trembled as if seized with a life ending chill.

"Cursed is the tongue that tells me that!" moaned Makona.

The dead warrior observed the change in Makona and cried. "Look how my master trembles! Something in him dies!"

Makona stared about wildly. His eyes drifting in all four directions, seeking a solace that no wind brought him.

"I am betrayed on all sides! Two-hearted spirits! Faithless Kachinas! They've kept the magic of promise to my ear and broke it to all my hopes!"

Makes Dead moved forward, his spear at the ready.

"I am the end of your magic!" said Makes Dead.

Makona insisted.

"I will not fight with you."

"My master has become the cause that made me!" said the dead warrior with half-concealed mockery. "Makona will you make of yourself what you made of me, when you die?"

Makona wounded by the words, turned on the dead warrior with savage anger.

"Have I sunk so low that even my own slaves mock me? Stand back. I say I will not fight!"

Makes Dead advised him.

"Then drop your spear, coward, and live."

"Yes master!" said the dead warrior with a mocking laugh. "Do as I have done."

Makes Dead was full of pitiless contempt.

"And what a life you'll live! We'll give you to the women of the Pueblo," said Makes Dead.

"There is too little in life to amuse them. They'll dress you in their wedding robes and marry you to a snake. They'll strip your skin and hang it as smoked meat on the drying racks. And when you are hungry, they'll feed little torn bits of you to yourself and when you are thirsty, they'll find enough of your blood to wet your lips. They'll make of you the greatest blood spectacle the Pueblo ever will see."

"There's a shortage of deerskin whips owing to a scarcity in the season but women are clever and will make do," said Falcon, joining the chorus of scorn.

"If captive you are to be," said Makes Dead with a voice that pretended to sweet reasonableness. "First kiss the earth beneath Falcon's feet. They say the first taste of dirt, is sweet."

But Makona had heard enough.

"No. Better to die in battle than pass among my vanquishers, despised. I have no choice but a warrior's death. Nothing can stand the strength of disdainful mirth. You have me already dead by the spear of laughter. Give me an end as a warrior, not as a trophy for bored women. The Great Desert is upon me!"

Makes Dead challenged him. "Lift your spear. The man of no woman born, has your life in his!"

Makona lifted his spear. "Stand back. I need room to fight or die."

The dead warrior and Falcon moved back.

Makona struck first, rushing to attack. The suddenness and the great force of his first lunge, drove both men back, until they vanished in the betraying mist. They see-sawed back and forth,

striking and stabbing, and disappearing even deeper into the gloom. The constant clash of spear against spear, was the only way Falcon and the dead warrior could tell they still lived and that the battle raged on.

Falcon considered the dead warrior, a ruined, flesh-slashed being, a pale shadow of what once had been a man. For his part, the dead warrior had dropped his spear and showed no belligerence in his nature. He seemed without the inclination or intent to attack Falcon.

"We shall not fight?" asked Falcon, ready for a combat that did not seem to threaten him.

"I pose no further threat to any man," said the dead warrior. "I am an unending dream in which my legs move with a volition not my own. But like a thing detached, I am no longer commanded to do anything. And have no dream of anything but my own extinction."

"Can you not be killed?" said Falcon, wary of the dead warrior but alert to the sounds of struggle.

Makes Dead and Falcon battled on in the mist.

"That I have already had proved in myself. It is the ceasing to be that is the artifice that eludes me," said the dead warrior with mocking self-pity.

"I can not tell from the sounds, how it goes!" said Falcon. A man screamed as if wounded but whether it was Makes Dead or Makona was unclear. Falcon turned and considered the dead warrior. No part of him had not been hit by a weapon or was not covered in blood not his own. The damage he had sustained in battle would have killed a man thrice over.

"And you dead warrior. When will you ever have your peace?"

Another shriek, wounded or triumphant, carried on the wind.

"I seem to be an inheritance left to no one. I feel like a bird born in a nest for snakes," confessed the dead warrior.

Falcon's curiosity was aroused. For all that diminished him, the dead warrior had seen much of this human drama unfold.

"How did Makona's woman die?"

"Self harmed. She died from looking too deeply within herself."

There was a man's scream. It was sound that could have only one origin, wrenched from a human throat that was mortally wounded. Both Falcon and the dead warrior turned to look in the direction the sound had come from.

Falcon said. "Did you hear that and all it promises?"

The dead warrior understood it for what it was.

"The wind that made me, turns on itself."

A dark figure stumbled toward them, passing out of the gloom and into sight.

A blood-stained, unwounded Makes Dead marched toward them with weary triumph. His bloody hands, battle-fatigued, carried Makona's head impaled on a spear.

With shaking arms, Makes Dead held the gore drenched spear up for them to see. If revenge was sweet, it was not in his face. Makes Dead looked lost, adrift in a unkind wind.

"Hail Falcon! Hail Great Chief! An old head on a new body! The nation is freed of his evil and he in turn rides his new body well!"

For a man who prevailed, Makes Dead seemed defeated. His eyes clouded with tears.

"The old dead have the new dead to join them. I have sent Makona where he sent all my pretty dead ones."

Makes Dead's hands were trembling so hard with emotion he almost dropped his spear. Falcon seized it from his nerveless hands.

"I thought my heart would lift when I stopped his black heart from living. But the blackness

Makona stained the world with, is darker than any night I ever knew!" confessed Makes Dead in a voice that betrayed his broken heart. "There is no going back to what has been and if the approaching emptiness in my heart is any sign, no going ahead either."

"There will be a season to grieve and a season to forget," soothed Falcon. "Let me urge you to surcease and comfort. You have done enough for the nation and you must rest."

Falcon too was touched by a profound sorrow that seemed as encompassing as the unseen sky above their heads.

Falcon put a comforting hand on Makes Dead's shoulder.

"Come good Makes Dead, we have a nation to mend."

Makes Dead cast a wary look at the dead warrior.

"What of him?"

Falcon was full of mercy.

"Without evil to guide him, he's harmless. Pitiful being! The purpose is gone that shaped him. I'll make him a gift of his master's head. He hates it enough to make it his treasure."

Falcon laid the head and spear at the dead warrior's feet.

The dead warrior stood motionless before them, as if saw nothing, felt nothing, had become the heart of nothing. He was a shadow of a shadow.

Falcon embraced Makes Dead and together, arm in arm they walked off into the mist.

Falcon's voice floated back on the mist

"Come. The voice and cares of a once broken nation call us."

There was none to hear his voice, yet the dead warrior, slashed and cut and grievously wounded and abandoned by all who had used him, spoke.

"I do not grieve. I feel no pain twisting my skeleton, only the pain of feeling no pain. And is

that not the greatest of wounds?"

No spirit or human form moved in the mist to answer him.

Caught between life and death, the dead warrior had become an unheard question.

CHAPTER FORTY TWO

The Dead Warrior lifted up the spear and shoved the haft into the ground so that Makona's impaled head was on a level with his own. He turned it so that Makona's face looked into his own.

"Now look at us Makona!" lamented the dead warrior. "We are substantial as dead leaves drifting down an empty sky."

The silent head, eyes half opened, mouth in a weird semblance of a grin, had a curiously alert look to it, as if it hung on the dead warrior's every word.

"Everything I did for you, was done for the lie that you'd let me march into my welcome grave," said the dead warrior. "You lied and lied again but I thought justice would find me yet. I hoped your death would release me! How I ache for the mercy of dreamless death! But Makona, briefly known by men as Shaman of Kawdor, your sorcery still holds me. You graced the world by leaving it. Why then could you not have mercy for me? What you made, you could have unmade. Now I am twice cursed! Dead to life and alive to death! In all worlds, cursed forever to walk alone."

The eyes opened wide, the lips moved and Makona's voice issued forth.

"I am with you dead warrior."

The dead warrior backed away from the disembodied head.

"What Kachina spawned madness is this?" He gasped in fulsome fright.

Makona's ghostly voice went on.

"You conjured me as I conjured you. So entwined, together we'll walk into the night."

The dead warrior protested in utmost confusion.

"But how? I know neither magic nor sorceries! All I did was fear death so much I once fled from it, only to find it forever. I am nothing but an ache in the center of the world, that swallows my future!" cried the dead warrior.

Makona's voice echoed eerily through the still mist. "You were born in the purple dawn, in the dusk that outlines the shape of a man. That is the source of what little magic you had. Perhaps I had even less than that. We were the half aware mortal toys of the Kachinas. They puffed their cheeks with promises and blew our lives into shattered ruin. We were held in the same hand. I misunderstood the Kachina's gifts. You were conjured to comfort me, not to punish you."

"Is it us then? Together, the hater and the hated, forever and endlessly on?" asked the dead warrior.

Makona's voice averred. "In that loneliness that pierces the human night, there is another."

"Made by me or you or Kachina birthed?"

Makona's voice held the full measure of self-pity. "Self made. All of us are."

The dead warrior truly did not understand.

"And how did we make ourselves?"

Makona's voice was like the splintering of imaginary ice on a distant mirage made lake.

"We failed each in our own way. You and I killed the father in ourselves! My wife killed the mother in her!" There was an icy wind at the back of Makona's words. "That is how evil finds the

human heart and reason loses the center of the earth."

Makona's eyes looked upward, peered up through the swirling mist at a sky concealed. "My guiding stars fell one by one out of my night. Each of them, swallowed by a Kachina sky, diminished me, until I became a night without stars, a man going out into nothing."

"We are two creatures beyond the end of hope," said the dead warrior. "Kachinas of Fire, Sky Thunder and Black Wind, even you could not pity us now that go as ghosts in your grim night!"

A figure appeared in the mist. It moved gravely toward them, intent on reaching them.

"Someone comes!" said the dead warrior.

"She has been here before us and being here already, can not arrive."

"Do you know this spirit?" asked the dead warrior, seeing a ghostly figure appear out of the unraveling mist.

"I loved her once," said Makona.

"Or not at all," said Kalaw's voice. The spectral shape of Makona's wife came to stand beside the dead warrior and Makona's spear impaled head.

"I have loved you," said the remnant of Makona with remonstrating insistence. "Your beauty was ever like a song in the darkness of my heart."

"That is not what love is," said Kalaw. "But it does not matter. It is too late to talk of love. We are on the summit of ruin, our lives are a dead fire."

"Less than that," said Makona and his voice was dark with disenchantment.

"I know why I am here at your side my poor dead husband," said Kalaw, voicing a heartfelt complaint. "But why are we still troubled with the presence of this dead coward?"

"Death comes in so many disguises there are no names for some of them. He belongs with us, more so than with the living," answered Makona. "He deserves some consideration from us now,

who gave him so little in life."

"How does he see himself? My eyes grow dim and the world seems to fade," said Kalaw. "Is he a ghost or yet between the worlds?"

The dead warrior tapped his chest with one weapon destroyed hand. "I have a secret putrescence within me. It is my most becoming feature. But I do not rot fast enough to vanish and that is the pity."

"Is the light going out of the world?" cried Kalaw, clawing at her eyes. Terror edged her face.

"It is only the dark the spirits wove for us out of cloth the color of our hearts," said Makona.

Kalaw cried out in remorse. "No robe can be sewn big enough to cloak our shame!"

Makona's gentle voice held a note of reassurance.

"No. I say all the mercy and all the pity in the world, we can rightfully claim."

This was a thought beyond the dead warrior's reckoning. He exclaimed. "Madness! What reason would sway the universe to our side or prove that we are those that deserve to be pitied?"

Makona spoke of some charity visited upon them all that only he could sense.

"Everything that held us to glory," said Makona. "entitled us to pity."

Kalaw's pain and confusion were undimmed by the comfort in Makona's voice.

"I look at the night we find ourselves in.....and see such terrible things!" Kalaw said and tears coursed down her ghost white cheeks. "Tell me Makona, what could they be?"

Makona's eyes turned to look at her. His dead face seemed lit by a human love that had too seldom graced his face in life.

"You see us as we all are," he said gently.

His eyes turned up to the hidden sky and his voice was a crash of thunder, issuing from his dark throat.

"WE ARE THOSE TERRIBLE THINGS!"

The lament arched toward the sky, anguished and lost, echoing in their fevered minds long after it died out of time and mind.

The dead warrior spoke then.

"Evil as we were, good as we might have been, what made us be those terrible things?"

Makona had found a kind of truth that explained the night.

In a voice loud as thunder, yet mournful as anything born in man or woman, Makona proclaimed.

"WE WERE HUMAN BEINGS!"

THE END