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KONKI

SONG OF THE EAGLE

Rock-Face jutted out high above the evergreen forest painted in bright oranges by the blazing sunset. Its glory held little Konki's soul. His eyes reflected its change into gold. As the great Fire Spirit descended into his forest domain and rested in his sacred cave to the west, he sent his arms of purple and violet up into the sky and lit up the night with countless sparks from his hair. Konki noticed that not all the stars were white, but there were red ones and blue ones and one for each color of the great bow that sometimes rested upon the rain. All these stars reflected themselves in the wet blue of Konki's eyes.

Konki's vigil was a sleepless night. The night held so many wonders that sleep had fled from his eyes like a wild man being chased by a ghost. There were many ghosts of men, many ancestors ghosts too, and many animal spirits in the woods this night, waiting Konki's choice. Konki could hear their chanting and wailing songs. He saw many shadows flit past him in the dark. None of these scared him so much as the one that was close by and lasted all the night long. Sometimes it faded into the dark, sometimes approached so close he could feel and smell the old man right behind him, sending shivers up his back. But to turn and look or to run would be to be out-cast. Many had been before, he was told, and their restless souls now roamed the forest and howled for fear in the night, as he heard this night.

Old Wey-cho-kay approached him again and again with his chant

throughout the night. He froze each time and broke out into a cold sweat.

Konki's vigil stretched out into days and nights, suffering the heat of the day and the icy chill of the night. He was allowed not fire, not visitors, not food, not any drink, nor was he allowed the welcoming sleep that always passed with her arms open ready to receive him, but old Wey-cho-kay chased her away with his relentless chanting.

Feeling very small and frightened, all Konki could do was to peer out of his little tabernacle of sticks that surrounded his body. It sat in the mouth of the sacred bear cave into which only Wey-cho-kay could enter.

By the third day, Konki was dazed. For all his eight years, he had wanted for nothing. His father had always provided him with food. His mother had always kept him warm. Now, his legs were without feeling from crouching in that little tabernacle. His stomach was past aching. He didn't care anymore about the glorious sunrises and sunsets, the changing of the colors, the stars or the mountains and green woods. He didn't look at the blue sky and try to figure out the shapes of the clouds or listen to the chirpings of the birds and copy the different songs in his head. He looked at nothing. He cared for nothing. He only fed on the buzzing in his head.

Konki was slowly aroused by a growing fear coming from behind. His staring eyes began to blink, and tears began to roll down his cheeks. He felt a mean cruel darkness crawl up out of the bear cave. It pressed itself against his back. His teeth began to chatter. His bones started melting and shaking apart like the bones in Wey-cho-kay's magic cup. Konki knew that it was the grandfather of all grizzlies, a giant bear of pure hate. One swat of his paw, and Konki would be sliced meat, and everything he knew and loved would be lost forever. It was his death.

Prickly black fur pushed against the tabernacle, shoving it several times as if testing it. The prickly fur pushed against Konki like porcupine quills. He thought the tabernacle would topple over, but it remained firm, somehow. It was only twigs and branches, but it was magic. If he did not move, he knew it would protect him. He must not move. But the pressure increased, and it seemed that he was being pressed hard against the branches of the tabernacle so hard that he couldn't breathe. The giant bear pushed and pushed until, the tabernacle, not giving way one bit, Konki was pushed straight out the wall, through the branches. Konki suddenly and magically popped out of the tabernacle unharmed. He rolled onto the ground, got up, and looked back. He was still in the tabernacle, but he was also outside it! The form of himself in the tabernacle was dark and still chattering and shaking with fear. It was Wey-cho-kay's magic.

The giant grizzly stood up behind the tabernacle, grunting. It was ready to come after the new Konki, but Konki just looked at it as a curiosity. He knew that nothing could hurt him in his new and shining form. The bear moved, but not to come after him. It started dancing around the tabernacle, twisting and turning, until it started growing feathers...or perhaps, it shed its

skin, Konki couldn't remember. It was really an giant eagle with a beak as long as his arm, dancing around the tabernacle. It was singing a joyful song. The simple joy filled Konki's heart. The song filled his soul. He couldn't help himself. He began singing and dancing along with the eagle. The chanting was laughter, a joyous laughter.

Konki realized that he was still inside the tabernacle, but he was gleefully, singing his song as taught to him by the eagle. It was his song, and the eagle was now his animal spirit guide. Konki was singing the song of the eagle. It had been the Great Spirit.

As he sang, Konki saw Wey-cho-kay dressed in his eagle feathers and eagle headdress with his wings spread out, dancing around the tabernacle, singing Konki's song. They were a blend of oneness. They were singing in harmony.

"He giveth power to the faint;
The Great One reneweth strength;
They shall mount up with wings
As eagles, they that wait for him.
They shall walk and not be weary;
They shall run and not be faint;
They shall climb up on high;
As eagles shall they fly,
They that wait for him.

Konki chanted and chanted his song until he fainted into a deep sleep. He dreamed that the giant eagle swooped down and grabbed him with his talons and took him up into the heavens. The eagle tossed him into the air, and he landed on the back of the giant eagle. He looked down over the left wing and saw his village. They went higher, and he could see the whole world with all of its forests and mountains, rivers and valleys...the big ocean to the east, and another to the west.

Konki wondered if the eagle would drop him or if her brood would eat him. He gathered courage and asked, "O wondrous eagle of my fathers, what is my fate? Am I to be eaten?"

The eagle answered, "I am taking you to the cave of the Great Fire Spirit."

"Am I to be his meat?" Konki gulped.

"There, you will be given a feast, and you will eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Giver of All Life."

Konki's dream came to an abrupt end as he was yanked out of the tabernacle. He was surprised. Life had been given to his limbs. He still carried that floating sensation as though being carried upon the wings of an eagle. He stood before Wey-cho-kay.

He was so proud of himself now. He had returned from his vigil with his song and his dream.

The old buzzard yanked Konki's arm again, almost tearing it from his

socket. He seemed quite upset.

"Tell me your dream!" he demanded.

Just then, Konki's older brother who was a full fledged warrior appeared on the trail and watched. Konki noticed and smiled at him. But the old man yanked Konki again, trying to shake him back to reality, demanding again that he tell him his dream.

"I am to be taken to the cave of the Great Fire Spirit to the west," replied Konki, now sober.

"What do you do with my brother?" demanded his brother Wey-not. "Shall I not slay the eagle and save my brother?"

"Slay this eagle, and he shall rise again, but you can have this one, he is but a dreamer." And Wey-cho-kay threw Konki towards his brother.

"I will slay this one if he does not live up to the code and the honor of our tribe, becoming a good provider for camp," Wey-not said as he grabbed his brother.

"I will not be a provider, but a healer," Konki heard himself say.

"Then you will be banished from the tribe!" both Wey-not and Wey-cho-kay exclaimed.

As the two brothers left the cave of the Great Bear, Wey-cho-kay set fire to the little tabernacle to purge and purify the cave entrance, for only he was allowed up here. He stared back at Konki. Here was the next Keeper of the Path, but he had not chosen the Great Bear, he had chosen the Great Eagle. The path the tribe will take in the future will change because of this small runt who would except no responsibility for the tribe, who day dreamed his life away. The tribe surely will follow Konki to the west. It will be a sad thing.

Wey-cho-kay had known this instinctively and had set Konki on a rigorous path to make him into a man. He would have to be banished from the tribe. They would sing the song of death. And by the mercies of the Great Spirit, Konki should come back a man.

Konki ran ahead of his brother, anxious to tell his mother about his song and his dream.

"Hey, Little Woman," called Wey-not, "wait up. Don't leave your escort, it will bring you bad luck."

"Why you call me Little Woman?" Konki called back.

"Because that is your name from now on. That is what everyone is going to call you as you leave on your quest to become a man."

Wey-not caught up to his little brother and put his arm around him. He was proud of him. There was a tear that wanted to come out, but the long years of training didn't let it escape.

"Wey-cho-kay put them up to it," Wey-not said.

"This is the most important day of my life, and they call me Little Woman?" Konki was quite puzzled.

"When you leave us and come back as a man, that will be the most

important day of your life. Then the tribe will be proud of you."

"I will leave on my quest and come back as a man," Konki said with pride and ran on ahead.

"What makes you so sure?" Wey-not called. He ran to catch his brother. He knew the heart-ache that was in store for him. Nothing he could do or say would prepare him for that. He had been told that they would sing the death song for his brother.

Konki ran on through the underbrush to take a short-cut. Wey-not had to dodge the branches slapping back at him from his little brother's passage.

Wey-cho-kay had sung the song of the Great Bear, the Deer, the Turtle, and many others, and finally the song of the Great Eagle. Konki had responded and sung a song of his own choosing. He had chosen the spirit of the Great Eagle. All the other boys of the camp had sung songs of the hunt or songs of war, but Konki had sung the song of medicine. He had chosen to be a healer. But a woman cannot be a healer, and Konki, though a boy, had lived the life of a woman. He cared not for practicing with the bow or the spear, had not shown any interest in hunting and providing for the tribe. He made pottery with his mother and had woven cloth. He had painted pictures to tell of histories. He had played with the animals instead of killing them for food. How was this woman going to become the spiritual leader of the tribe as the Great Bear had spoken? How was he, a little woman going to be the keeper of the ways? He would have to kill that little woman so Konki could become a man. He would fight the woman in Konki with Power. And so now it would start, Wey-cho-kay, the old buzzard chuckled to himself. Konki would have a surprise when he reached the bottom of the mountain.

Konki's family had camped at the foot of the mountain that night. They had sent their eldest son before sunrise to fetch Konki. When they heard Konki's song whispering through the trees, they chanted their own songs of trial, strength and growth. Konki's mother Uno-kay-ti couldn't stop the tears from flowing when she heard her son's harmony blend with her own tongue. She looked forward to catching a glimpse of her son. She would never be able to see him again until he came back a man, but she could peer through the bushes. She would not dishonor him with her presence. She was a woman and could not participate in manly rituals, nor sully them with her presence.

"Hey, Little Woman, wait for me," Wey-not called. "Have you forgotten you have not eaten in three days?"

"I am Konki," the little woman called back. "I have flown with the Giant Eagle whose head is like the great fire in the sky. I am no longer a little woman." He felt as though he were still flying as he descended the mountain.

"You have not yet come back from your quest. You are not a man yet. You are still a little woman!" Wey-not teased. He had a hard time keeping up with his brother.

"I am going to visit the cave of the Great Fire Spirit in the west," Konki said without equivocation, jumping over rocks and swinging around trees in his path. "...the one who rides along the sky and settles down in the west."

Wey-not laughed and teased, "Little Woman is going to the Fire Spirit...Little Woman is going to the Fire Spirit...Little Woman is going to get burned by the Fire Spirit," he repeated over and over in a sing-song voice, laughing at all the energy his little brother had acquired.

Konki saw his father waiting for him in a clearing at the foot of the mountain. Then the unexpected happened rather fast. All the boys from the camp ran out of the woods and got between he and his father. They rushed at him, each one carrying a grass whip. In a glance, Konki saw his father turn and start chanting the death song. Konki turned and ran. He never reached the green woods. The boys were on top of him, whipping him and stripping him naked and shouting, "Little Woman, Little Woman. How are you today Little Woman? Aren't you tired of woman's work Little Woman? When are you going to be a man Little Woman? When are you going to be a man?" All the while, the dry grass blades cut into his flesh, stinging him.

Konki became so wet with blood that he was able to squeeze through the flailing arms and kicking legs of the renegade mob. They ran after him, through the woods and over the rocks until he was far from the camp boundaries. They formed a semi- ring and heckled him as he ran further into the forest. The echo of an insidious laugh came from the direction of the Great Bear Cave.

Konki ran on as with the wings of eagles. He only stopped when his body collapsed by itself, spent of all its strength. He fell into a stream bed. It was cold and comforting. He covered his body with its cool mud to take away the sting and pain. But his heart was broke. His mother's sobs could be heard on the wind. He climbed up the bank and collapsed. When he awoke, it was dark, and he felt so sick. He felt a bubble of nothingness rise from within his soul, trying to escape out of his open mouth...a silent scream.

As a bubble rises to the surface of the water, so Konki crawled back the way he had come. His heart led him back to his village. On the way, his hands found roots and berries on their own without thought or feeling. The roots and berries stayed his hunger, but nothing could stay the hunger he felt for his family, especially, his mother. He managed to crawl over an outcrop, a ledge that overlooked his village of dome-shaped, bark-covered lodges. The flickering night fires outlined the lodges. He could see tiny figures milling around. He heard as a whisper, his father's chants of the death of his son, Konki.

Chills engulfed Konki, and then sobs...deep throated sobs of a broken heart. He was out-cast...for some reason unknown to him. He was out-cast, but he would, he swore, return as a man. All human contact had been taken from him. He was unwelcome by man. He was fully alone now, naked and cold. He shivered. He got up and hobbled into the

forest where the only welcome he knew was evident. The forest spirits welcomed him. His trial of manhood had started.

CHAPTER TWO

Konki had looked around in the dark for his leggings, but one of the boys must have taken them. The thought of sneaking back to the village to steal some flicked through his mind, but he would never dishonor his family by doing that.

The first thing he needed was shelter from the cold night air. Even in this evergreen forest, there were trees whose leaves were changing to red and gold. The time of snow would soon be upon him, and without clothing and shelter, he would not survive. Tomorrow, he would have to figure out a way to make himself a coat. A coat meant killing a bear, which meant making a bow and some arrows. He didn't really want that much meat right now. He could smoke it, and look for some salt, or keep it in ashes.

Konki yawned. He had better find some shelter. From tales other boys had brought back, he knew there were plenty of caves to sleep in. Any one of the trails would lead to one. It was hard to see in this moonless blackness. He didn't want to scrap or cut himself, so he had to be cautious. It was frightening to be alone. He had always been attached to the village. There had always been people around. When he did stray, his mother scolded him. Now, they didn't want him. He was forced to be alone. He shivered. His mud started cracking and falling off. That made him feel colder.

Stars covered the sky like a long gleaming blanket. His eyes were adjusting, and he could see more of the trail that seemed to lead to nowhere. It must be really late. The stars had already started to move. He rubbed most of the mud off, trying to keep warm. He had seen no sign of a cave anywhere. Konki came to a rocky clearing as the path moved upward. The swath of stars inspired him, and he remembered his mother having spoken to him of the Great Spirit who lived in the sky. He had created the earth and all living creatures on it. The stars were his eyes, she had said, and he watched over all his creations. She told him that if ever he needed any help, to call upon him, and he would give it. He had never needed anything until now. He would call upon him. The Great Spirit was high enough to be able to see where a cave is better than a little lost boy. But, he had better climb up to the top of this mountain where he might be able to hear him.

Climbing up through the darkness, the trail became thin, and he was continually scraping his already sore limbs and back against the bushes and trees and rocks. He wasn't expert in this because he had grown up with the women, never associating with the boys that mocked him always.

Coming to the top of a knoll, he could see the jagged edge of the black mountain against the blanket of stars. Just then, he heard a rustling over his left shoulder that sent chills up and down his spine. It must be a forest spirit,

he thought, so he bowed to the earth and asked, "Great and kindly forest spirit, I am looking for the Great Spirit who made all things to ask him for help. Do you know a sacred spot where I might pray? A spot high enough where he might hear me?"

The phantom didn't speak, but moved off slowly, making noises like the crackling of dry grass and the breaking of twigs, the rustling of bushes so Konki could follow, and that, Konki did. Konki followed to a rocky ledge overlooking a vastness of stars. The sky was bigger here than anywhere he had seen. He thought, surely, this is where the Great Spirit lives, for I can see all the heavens. He turned to thank the good forest spirit, but it was gone, sending more chills up Konki's spine.

Putting his right foot forward and raising his hands, Konki faced the heavens and spoke.

"Oh Great Spirit, I am thankful for all this greatness I see before me, and I am thankful for the strength and the protection. I am thankful for the forest spirit who guided me here."

The kind forest spirit had been old Wey-cho-kay who had watched him ever since he had been driven from the camp. He wanted to see what a little woman in the guise of a boy would do.

"And thank you," continued Konki in tears, "for my song and my dream, for my successful vigil. I have such great desire to fulfill my dream and visit the Cave of the Great Fire Spirit to the west, but tonight, I am freezing and I need a cave to sleep in and food to eat in the morning and clothes to wear in the coming snow, or I die, but if I die and come back to thee as my mother said I would, I thank thee for that too, because my mother said that I should be thankful for whatever you give."

Wey-cho-kay thought to give a gift to such a good mother when he got back to camp. He would pay this mother for this boy. He had been taught good, even though he was a little woman.

Konki folded his arms and shivered, bowing his head against a cold gust of wind. Maybe the Great Spirit didn't hear him, maybe he did, but now, he had to go find a cave. He turned and saw in the distance a faint light coming from the rocks. He followed it and found a cave! The Great Spirit had answered his prayer! He entered and saw to his surprised a freshly cooked rabbit above the fire and a warm black bear's coat. He grabbed the rabbit with one hand and the bear coat in the other, thinking what a great blessing from the Great Spirit. Then a fierce gust blew out the fire!

Great darkness and fear grabbed Konki. It wrapped around him like a great coat and choked him like smoke. His eyes bulged, and his teeth chattered. His bones shook as the bear coat rose up and stood with its paw around his throat. He knew it was the Great Bear Spirit. It was shaking him. He dropped the rabbit and let go of the coat that had come to life. He heard Wey-cho-kay's voice speaking to him.

"You little thief! You come into a man's cave and steal his fire and his

food and take the coat off his back! You will be banished forever! You will never be permitted to go back home!"

When Konki heard this, he ran from the Cave of the Great Bear screaming. The terrors of his three day vigil were back.

Bear Spirit pushing
Bear breath laughing
On the heels of Konki flying
Over rocks fleeing
Bear Spirit striding
Bear teeth gnashing
At the back of Konki dashing
Through tangled bushes
Up rocky passes
Scared running making
Doing maddening dashes
Up rocky passes

Within a spark of time, Konki found himself behind a bush and wedged between two rocks to hide. He panted like the deer fleeing the puma. His lungs burned for want of air. They were on fire. Surely, this was death, and he was in the place of fire for stealing. He would be forever punished.

The Great Spirit rumbled in the heavens. The night grew suddenly darker. A flash of light and thunder boomed and echoed in the mountains. The Great Spirit had come to punish Konki.

A deafening CRACK
And a flash of fire
Exposed a man-bear
Fleeing for fear
Dropping his coat
No longer a bear
And into the night
He disappeared

Old Wey-cho-kay ran scared down the mountain path. Where the evil spirit had been was now a fiery flaming tree. A comforting warmth engulfed Konki. The Great Spirit had not come to punish, but to save, for, in the last flash of light, the crack he was wedged in lit up. There was a cave inside. There was fire for him from heaven, and there was the bear coat on the trail. He would gather that up, gather up the fire, and sleep for the night. He felt safe. He could trust the Great Spirit, just as his mother had taught him.

In a few moments, Konki had a slow burning fire at his side in a cave just the size for a little boy and a bed of black fur to sleep on. He would worry about food and clothing in the morning. A heavy rain cleansed all of nature outside, washing away all thoughts of fear in Konki.

CHAPTER THREE

Upon awakening, Konki remembered dreaming...of having been flying with the eagles, and there had been a strange pale man with golden hair with the color of the blue sky in his eyes, the color of his own eyes. (It was his eyes that had brought on the ridicule from the other children and caused him to play by himself.)

Rising up, Konki felt weak and faint. He leaned upon his elbow for a minute to catch his breath. He looked around upon the darkened cave as memories of the previous night returned. Just more dreams it seemed to him, that, and the days before. He let it pass.

The fire had gone out, but there was a warm beam of light shining through the crack in the wall. It shone on the overhead roof that slanted down towards him. Konki crawled over to the ashes of his night's fire. They were as cold as his memories. He had not awakened to put on more wood, or maybe the wood was too wet from the rain. Anyway, the bear coat had kept him warm.

Squeezing out of the crack in the rock, he heard the splashing of a spring, and he squinted at the sun. Following the sound of the water, he found a crevice in the rock up ahead with a little water fall and a stream that ran down the mountain-side. There was evidence that during most of the year, the stream was much larger. The water in the stream bed only trickled over the rocks.

He had forgotten how thirsty he was. He cupped his hands and dipped them into the cold water and drank again and again several handfuls. He found some watercress and mint which he stuffed into his hungry mouth. There was some sweet grass which he feasted on, and looking around, he found some sorrel, lilies and other grass-like plants that had crisp and tender roots which he ate ravenously. He also saw some blackberries further up. When he had eaten several handfuls, he was stuffed and couldn't eat any more.

Following the stream bed down the mountain, he came to a little marsh which had wild rice growing. He took the rice, and using stones, ground it up, storing it in a little pouch he made using some wide leaves. He twisted the leaves of the grasses together to make a semblance of twine to hang the pouch across his shoulder. He thought he would go back up and gather some berries to put with the rice.

Twine...the thought came to him how he might make himself some clothes. Having stayed close to his mother, he new about making twine for bows and using that skill to weave twine into a rude cloth, as well as making baskets and pottery. He wasn't very skilled at making or using a bow and arrows, not having the inclination to kill his beloved animals of the forest.

Konki spent most of the day stripping grasses and making twine and weaving that into cloth. He made himself some leggings, a loin cloth and a vest. These proved to be very uncomfortable. He thought of cutting up the bear coat, but that would be too hot, and he would need that for when the snow came.

He thought of using bark since they made their lodgings and canoes from bark...but that would be too hard. He was not a turtle. He could not live in a bark shell. Then it struck him that there had been a slave of his aunt's that used to take the thin strips off the inner bark of the white trees and pound them together with a rock. She would make a soft cloth that way, paint some design on it and put it down her clothing next to her heart.

Konki spent some time examining several barks, both of live trees and dead ones. He finally came upon the same white tree that the slave had used. He got a sharp rock, stripped the bark and started hammering the pieces together. He wound up with a skirt. He laughed at himself. They would surely have cause to call him little woman now. With the sharp rock, he cut the cloth into a loin-cloth and leggings.

He still had no moccasins. That would take deer skin. He would improvise though; he would take some bark for the bottom of his feet and wrap his feet with the wide leaves of swamp grass.

By the end of the day, Konki was tired and hungry. Tomorrow, he would fashion himself a vest and a coat. Now, he would visit the fire tree to see if any sparks remained. When he climbed back up the mountain, he discovered there were no sparks remaining. Last night's rain drenched the tree completely, washing the fire away. The Great Fire Spirit was entering his cave to the west. Why not ask him for fire as he had seen others do? So he knelt down with his hands raised to the sky and spent many long minutes asking. His supplication was not forth coming. He saw no clouds gather like last night, no lightening or thunder, not even in the distance. At last, he got to watch the sunset. He wasn't going to because of his hunger. But he had to watch the great beauties of Nature which always inspired him. He was no medicine man, for sure. He could not make fire come down out of the sky. He would have to work for it like everyone else. He knew that fire was held within the rocks and fine dry wood or bark. He was wearing some, and the mountains were full of flint, the fire rock.

It wasn't long that Konki, upon striking two stones together along with some of his bark loin-cloth, got a fire started. He found some dry twigs under thick bushes, and used the sap of evergreen needles to aid his fire.

He needed a bowl, so he got some clay from the spring and formed a bowl and fired it in the embers of the fire as his mother had taught him. After that was done, cooked his rice and berries with some water and ate that. Being well satisfied, he gave thanks to the Great Spirit, took fire into his cave and crawled up in the bear coat and went fast to sleep.

Konki woke up choking on the smoke from his fire. Someone was

slapping him on his back, driving him out of his little cave. He squeezed out the hole quite dazed. He wasn't fully awake when he went to the spring. He splashed water in his face, ate a few roots and berries and drank lots of water to get rid of the smoke. He still felt dazed. He couldn't wake up. The mountain-side seemed but a dream-land.

Konki chanted his dream-song as he descended the mountain. He was oblivious to his surroundings. He stepped over stones and fallen branches without stumbling and without making a sound. He walked through the undergrowth and around trees without touching them as if he were a ghost. Something inside him had snapped. The world had changed, or the way he had before seen the world had changed.

Old Wey-cho-kay had found his lost bear coat. The Great Bear Spirit had led him through the Great Bear Cave, through crevices and through holes until he came to a hole above Konki, and there it was, keeping Konki warm. A little trail of smoke climbed up to Wey-cho-kay, giving him an idea. He went back the way he had come, dropped some dried medicine plants onto Konki's fire. They would keep Konki in the dream world so the spirits could guide him to man-hood. He dropped himself down as Konki started coughing and started hitting Konki on the sensitive points of his soul to get him to wake up to the guiding spirits...ones that would lead him to power.

Konki's younger life had been one of harmony with the land and all the forest spirits. He had talked to the deer and the bobcat and the wolf, to the rabbit and the turtle, and all the animals of the forest, learning their ways. The deer would follow him, and the bobcats and wolves would play with him. He had talked to the plants and the rocks to find out all their special properties of healing or of poison or what to use in crafts, and his face was always directed towards the sky as if talking to the Great Spirit.

When other little boys started playing with bows and arrows, playing war games or playing hunting by shooting their miniature arrows into birds or chipmunks, Konki would chide them, but they would only laugh at him. Konki loved the animals and didn't want them to be hurt. He would rarely eat meat. When he did, it was in the time of snow. He seemed to know what plants to eat, which ones were for healing, and which ones hated man. Wey-cho-kay watched all of this.

As Konki grew, a deep rift opened up between him and the other boys. He spent more time alone or helping the women make clothes or build their lodgings. What he liked best was making pottery and decorating them. He liked decorating the leather clothes with beads and shells. He was often found writing on the rocks, making up stories for passers-by. He would get scolded for not telling the truth.

Other boys became proficient in the tomahawk, the spear, and the bow. They laughed at and jerked and pushed Konki, calling him a girl, just because his talents didn't lie in the same paths as theirs. The boys liked to gather around the men who told war stories and chanted gruesome songs of

blood and gore. They liked to help torture prisoners taken in battle. He was chided and shamed for not doing so. He was not one of the brave ones.

He knew it wasn't right to maim or to kill. He was taught this by his mother and the other women who suffered when their men were killed in battle or lost their sons to war. Women could not go out and hunt like the men. But for the most part, the widow was taken care of, and if she was still of child bearing age, was given to the brother of her husband (unless he had enough wives already). Konki took all their sufferings in, and all their religion in the stories they told. He knew of the pride of men and their cruelty caused by the hardness of their hearts caused by war and war-like games. He also knew the ways of their ancestors, of the different allies of animal spirits, and of the creation of their people and the structure of their society from the stories, of why there had to be war and hunting. It was all set up long ago, and if they changed their ways, the animal spirits would leave them and not help them anymore, and they would starve and die off.

Wey-cho-kay watched Konki. He had written the history of Konki on the palm of his hand. If Konki would not become a warrior in the sense of going to war with other tribes, and if he refused to join the hunt to provide for the camp, then there was only one path for him. He would have to become a warrior of a different kind. The spirits had chosen Konki to take old Wey-cho-kay's place, and that meant that he would have to become a warrior for the souls of men. And in order to do that, he would have to do battle. If he wouldn't fight others, he would have to fight himself. He could die in the process...then good riddance. We don't need a woman in a man's body, thought the old man. But if he lives, he will have the power to heal and to guide the people.

Konki had never liked old Wey-cho-kay. There was something sinister in his eyes. They looked out from the mouth of the Great Bear he kept draped around him. They were surrounded by giant teeth and always glared at Konki. At times of story telling when all the children gathered around the old man, those eyes reflected the camp fire which pierced Konki's soul. They melted Konki's bones, and he would retreat, silently slipping away from the group. Whenever he was scraping hides or making pottery and old Wey-cho-kay would walk by, he could feel the staring eyes sear the back of his neck, and he would slip away, leaving the chore to someone else.

Wey-cho-kay glared at Konki, peering at him from behind the rocks and trees as he followed Konki down the mountain. As a giant grizzly bear, the old man stalked in silence, looking out from the soul of the grizzly. He was the guardian of the land and of the people. He could not allow this misfit to live. He sought the opportunity to kill him, at the right spot where power would change this misfit into a warrior. Then and only then could he become a contributor to the people. Only a hunter or a warrior contributed to the people. If he could be tricked into fighting ...He would trick the boy into thinking he was being killed and trick nature or the great mother to rescue

him and give him an ally, a guardian spirit. The boy would have to fight for his life, or the great mother would have to fight for him...all the same thing. But all of this could only be done in a place of power where the Great Spirit manifests itself. The Great Bear Cave was such a place as was the place of prayer where he had led Konki the other night.

It would take a long battle to turn this little woman into a warrior. Even if it meant killing the boy, he would keep the ways of his people safe.

Little whorls of light that surround a body could be read by the old man. He was watching Konki to read the symbols in the light that surround the boy. He watched carefully and closely and knew that Konki was dreaming and rethinking his whole life. When he was done with this, he would present the boy to the Giant Eagle either to be eaten up in death or to be spewed out of his mouth to live. Only then could he teach the boy the way of the warrior. Either the boy would fit into the Bear Clan or take old Wey-cho-kay's place as Guardian. The old man would sacrifice his place to save his people.

Konki dreamed as he found his way down the rocky slope. He dreamed of a sacred spring his mother had led him to. She said that one of her ancestors who came across the great waters to the east had worshiped his gods at this spring.

"His name was Gwaynna Mac Konki," she had said quite reverently, "... a great warrior with horns on his head, holding the great circle in one hand and a long knife in the other. His hair was golden like the sun, with hair to hide his face so that you only saw his eyes which were the color of the sky, like yours, and his nose which blew like the fierce wind. He struck fear in the hearts of all our warriors, for he was a giant, and he came across the great waters in a giant canoe."

She had on her wrist, an amulet made of golden hair. She said that it had come from his head before he died as the great warrior that he was.

"I have dreamed of men like this," he had told his mother.

"There was a time when we lived in the north countries that they lived among us," she said. "But there was a war between our people and theirs. They fought valiantly, as we hail them in our songs, but at that time, our people were many ... too many for them, so they left and never returned."

"Why has not my father told me of these things?" Konki had asked.

"He is a warrior," she had explained. "Warriors do not talk of the dead. It would steal their strength when it is time for battle. Only the women can talk of such things."

"Mother," Konki had asked, "am I a woman?"

She had held Konki to her breast. "I think not, my dear child. I think not."

"Will I be a warrior then?"

"I think not," she had replied. "...not that either."

"What then will I be?" he had asked quite bewildered.

"Only your death will tell. Only when you face your death will you know what your life will be, my dearest son. Your eyes of the sky color tell me you are very special." Then she held Konki out at arms length. "Promise me you will never tell this to anyone except your children. Promise me."

"I promise, mother," he had said. "Mother, if I die, how will I tell my children?"

"Only your death will know."

"Mother, is that my trial of manhood?"

"Yes. It is that," she had said quite frankly.

Konki visited that spring often, so often that the boys of the village spied on him, following him to it. They didn't know that it was sacred to his family. They only thought to taunt and tease him for his strangeness. As he worshiped at the sacred spring, he sang:

Spring of bright waters
Waters brought together
Waters lapping our shore
Waters bubbling forth
From under the ground
One man holds you both
One man alone
One water in each hand
One man alone

Then the boys started chanting:

Little piss woman thinks he's a bird
Little piss woman sing us a song
Fly away home little piss woman
Fly away home and piss on your mommy.

And the boys started peeing into the spring, chanting "Piss, piss, piss!"

Konki yelled in anger as he woke from his dreaming. His yell echoed off the mountains as an arrow pierced his back through the shoulder. It pierced his frail torso and lunged him forward into blackness over a steep cliff. Wey-cho-kay had taken careful aim and shot the arrow into an important spot of power on his back, a place of a little whorl. The chasm into which he fell was called by his people The Chasm of the Warrior's Fate, a spot of great power where warriors of the soul were born or killed. Now it was up to Konki's death to choose him or to spit him out.

Konki fell through the blackness. He was conscious of falling, but he couldn't be sure he wasn't falling up instead of down. He fell for a long time. The blackness was everywhere, and it seemed to him to be tight about his shoulders and head like bands that wouldn't let him move. Slowly, there arose a red horizon which grew brighter and brighter, like a band of blood before his eyes. The more he looked at it, the more it looked like the crack in an open giant beak that was as big as the world. As he concentrated, he found that it was a black eagle head as broad as the sky with soul-piercing

eyes as big as the ocean. He could see many people entering his mouth. He was eating the dead. He saw the eagle look at him. Konki screamed! His cry was the cry of an eagle.

Konki's descending cry was answered by another eagle. Konki's cry became faint. The cry of the other became louder as it arose from the canyon floor up the steep cliff. Wey-cho-kay stood breathless at the entrance to the Bear Cave as he heard the cry, its shrill splitting of the air, and the beating of giant wings. The beating of the wings became a deafening roar of the wind coming up against him, beating on his chest and face.

Wey-cho-kay trembled and dared not look down over the cliff. The screaming and roaring wind blew him back. He gasped in his trembling to see coming up over the edge, up and up into the sky, a giant white headed eagle with a golden beak as big as a man, looking at him boldly, defiantly, as he carried in his talons the limp body of a boy with an arrow in his back.

It was the Great Spirit Himself, thought the old man. So he began to sing and dance to the old song of the eagle.

He lifteth up upon wings of thunder
He lifteth up upon wings of thunder
He lifteth up upon wings of thunder
the soul of a man reborn.

He taketh the soul to above the sky
He taketh the soul to above the sky
He taketh the soul to above the sky
to save him from the raven.

He looketh down upon the weakness of man
He looketh down upon the weakness of man
He looketh down upon the weakness of man
and bears his heart to Heaven.

...and bears his heart to Heaven.

Death had rejected the boy. The thunder bird who rules the sky took the boy. The boy's father was of the Bear Clan. The boy was now of the Eagle Clan. The old man would go and tell the boy's father. A new Guardian of the Land had been born this day.

Konki awoke from the black sleep of no dreaming only to find himself in a dark cave. He lay upon a bed of straw. Terrible pain shot through his chest and back. He could only breath in short gasps of pain. Anger flared his nostrils. It had been old Wey-cho -kay! Why did he try to kill him? Now, he was dead and in no place. He realized that he was in the Cave of the Great Bear, no place for Konki to be. He tried scooting his body to lean up against the cave wall. The pain was like fire. He breathed in little short gasps. He finally was sitting up when he heard mocking words from Wey-cho-kay.

"So, you want your mama now?" he yelled. "Why, you ungrate-full snorting pig! After I have saved you from death, after I have given you your life, you want to go back to your mama! I will get rid of you!"

With that, Konki felt something grab his arm. Everything went black with pain as he thought he was being thrown into the air. Everything was black again, and then he thought he was floating or flying through the air.

Konki was dreaming his dream again. He was flying with the eagles, soaring over the land, beholding all the green and snow capped mountains, the rivers and valleys and plains below. He could see the whole earth, that it had no corners, but was rounded everywhere. The sun stayed in one place while the earth turned below him, showing different scenes continually.

Konki went into blackness again and knew of the pain. He thought he was back in the cave being kicked around and mocked by the old man. "Oh, you are crying? You want your mama?" went the taunting. Somehow, he managed to get out of the cave, falling down the rocks into a ravine. He crawled over stones, smearing them with his blood, blacking out from the pain again. He dreamed he was an eagle.

Konki woke up crawling over the stones and jagged rocks. He sang his song:

He giveth power to the faint
The Great One reneweth strength
They shall mount up with wings
As eagles, they that wait for him.

He felt the earth give him strength. He went on, mountain after mountain, crawling, sometimes walking, but always flying. He seemed to be having two dreams. In one dream, he was an eagle, flying overhead, looking down upon himself, watching over a little boy who was quite bewildered and in great pain. In the other dream, he would look up and see an eagle watching over him. That also gave him great strength to go on searching for a path he knew must be there, a path he knew he had to follow. He had forgotten where he was supposed to go, but he would follow the eagle overhead, and he would take him there.

Konki hadn't imagined that his trial of manhood would be so difficult...just go out and live by yourself for a year or two, learn to provide for yourself...get good enough at hunting to provide for your family and the village...get to know the forest spirits who would help you in your hunt, and then return home where everyone would welcome you and admire your necklace of bear claws or puma teeth, or admire your buckskins. No one would call him Little Woman anymore, and his mother would be proud of him... his mother...Oh! how he wanted the comfort of his mother right now...

"So!" came the mocking voice of old Wey-cho-kay. "You want your mother, do you?"

Warriors can never go back to their mothers. A man must leave his father and mother and become a father himself. He would have a wife some day, and children to take care of. He had to live for them and for the village. He had to be responsible from now on. He had to finish this quest...he must

live to finish this quest...he loved his mother. He would never forget his mother.

He remembered the times when he would bring home pets from the forest...a fawn, a skunk, a bird with a broken wing...she would help care for each one of them. He remembered that after his father had been away from home many days on a hunt, she would know exactly when he was coming back. She would have a meal prepared for him and comfort him and rejoice with him. He remembered her teaching him how to make pottery and how to make buckskin for clothing. She thought it nothing strange in this, treating him like a girl, father would say. But she would laugh and tell him that such things would come in handy some day. Father could never demean her or strike her. Her smiles and laughter and good sense always overcame him.

Old Wey-cho-kay could never make him forget his mother or make him stop loving her or stop listening to her words of wisdom.

Konki was hot with fatigue and fever. If there were nights, he was not aware of them. If he had been dropped or eaten by the Great Thunder Bird, he had not known it. He did notice the fragrance of mountain meadows and flowers and fresh air...and his need to sleep. It seemed to him that he had reached a place of peace. There was a crop of large pine trees he could smell. He didn't see much with his eyes. They ached too much. Everything ached too much. He would just lie down on a bed of pine needles and rest. Then he would get up and search for his path. He just needed to rest, just a few minutes. He would search for his path then. He was tired...he lay down, slept, and dreamed.

The eagle above looked down on the little boy and guided him. He followed in a dream. When the pain was too great to bear, Konki became the eagle, looking down on himself, guiding and protecting him. He liked being an eagle, for he was free, and he hurt no more.

CHAPTER FOUR

Morning brought a surprise. Bright warm sunlight had slowly awakened him, and he appeared to be in *another* cave. But *this* one was *different*. It was not *dark*. It seemed to be as bright and cheery as the morning itself. He felt well and rested. He could breathe easier, and there was no arrow in his back! He was laying on a white fluffy woolen skin on a raised bed and covered by a soft tightly woven material that was thicker than skins. It was decorated by different colored squares. And he was naked underneath. (He knew that tree bark wouldn't last.) His shoulder was bandaged in a soft woven material unknown to him.

His nostrils quickly caught the smell of a meaty and oily broth to his right. Looking over his bandaged shoulder, he saw a white shinny table supporting a bowl also white and shinny. He could see the vapors arising from the bowl. It smelled like home. Beside the bowl was a container, probably a water pot, white and shiny with a long skinny neck. Next to it was a container of water made of clear crystal. The ladle for the broth was flat and silvery like the moon. There were also two polished blood stones on the table. It must be for magic, he thought.

Looking around the room, Konki saw that the source of the light was giant crystals hanging from the ceiling, reflecting all the colors of the rainbow. He seemed to be inside a gigantic earth egg.

There were other tables supporting different types of sand colored pottery holding dried herbs, flowers, grasses and pods of differing shapes and sizes. There were displays of polished stones as if cut with a knife which had mountain scenes and sunsets in them. All of this spectacle was too great for Konki. He would have closed his eyes in horror if it had not been for his intense curiosity.

Around the sides of the crystalline walls were differing sized holes...not of darkness, nor showing the outside. He could see the outside clearly through the main entrance to this magical cave. No...the holes showed different scenes of mountain and forest and some with stone huts with people around them. The people were pale, yet beautiful with sun colored hair and eyes the color of the sky. Some of the stone huts were not huts at all, but the size of mountains with huge feathered snakes coiled up around the base. He thought, surely, these are the guardian spirits of the cave, for they were white like spirits. These spirits were valiantly still and watchful. One even had horns coming out of his head holding a bright shield and brandishing a long knife reflecting the sun. He must be the chief spirit, thought Konki.

Eying all these images, Konki's eyes caught hold of a life- sized image. He quickly changed his mind as to who was the chief spirit of the cave. He was all white. His hair flowed down and rested on his shoulders; his skin and

his full length robe were all white, so he knew he was a spirit. His face was smiling and seemed very kind. His jaw was square and firm, his nostrils broad and his eyes were not slanted like his own, but they were sky blue. He wore no leggings or moccasins, but had only the bottoms of shoes tied to his feet.

This lovely man was quite disarming, but when he moved towards Konki, Konki's hair stood on end and his eyes grew quite round. But the man stopped, showed him the palms of his hands, and speaking in a deep resonating voice, reassured Konki that no harm would come to him. His countenance whispered peace. Even though, Konki would be on guard, for his eyes had a fierceness in them which could look into your soul. Yet, Konki could feel the joy and happiness in the man, and that made Konki giggle.

"I see you are in a good spirits this morning," said the man, stooping down beside Konki. "You must have just awoken. You have not eaten your broth."

"Are you the Great Fire Spirit?" Konki quickly asked. "Is this the Cave of the Great Fire Spirit? Are you going to eat me?"

The man slowly laughed.

"The Great Eagle who brought me here said that he was taking me to the Cave of the Great Fire Spirit."

The man smiled and said, "My name is Aaron. I live here inside the womb of the Great Mother. I found you sleeping outside under the that grand old pine with an arrow in your back. You have suffered much," the man said with a tear running down his cheek. "It is time for you to rest and regain your life."

"You mean you will not eat me?" asked Konki with increasing hope and courage.

"It is time for you to eat at *my* hand," and the man started feeding Konki the warm tasty broth.

Konki nodded his head towards his bandages.

"Yes, I applied medicine while you slept."

Konki took another sip of the warm broth and asked, "Are you the Guardian of this magical cave?" waving his left hand pointing to all the things he had seen.

"I live here in this cave by the grace of the Master."

When Aaron had said the word "Master," Konki felt something warm in his heart and felt that it must be good. But then he noticed something funny that made him screw up his face and giggle.

"Oh, is my broth that terrible?" asked Aaron.

"It's not that," said Konki. "I have noticed that you are not talking in my native tongue, yet, I can understand you."

"That is because the Great Spirit, the Spirit of the Master who created all things tells you what I say. It is a gift to you. He likes you."

Aaron spooned in a few more bites and the broth was gone.

"And you know all my thoughts," replied Konki with some amusement.

"The Great Spirit knows all things."

"The Great Spirit?" asked Konki. "The one my mother taught me to pray to?"

"Yes, I am sure," said Aaron as he put away the dish and ladle somewhere out of sight. He started walking away when Konki sent up another question about the cave of the Great Fire Spirit. Aaron held up his hand and said, "There will be plenty of time for questions later. Don't trouble your mind so. It has to concentrate on healing your body."

Konki looked around. Aaron had disappeared as if the cave had swallowed him. He waited to see if he would come back, but he didn't. The day seemed to stand still, and even though Aaron said not to trouble his mind, the thoughts came anyway of their own volition.

Konki's thoughts took him back to the time of his vigil. It was to have prepared him for his hunt for manhood. He thought that this hunt for manhood would be about hunting and fishing, making his own shelter, making his own clothes...playing whenever and whatever he wanted. He had imagined that now, he could do whatever he wanted and not be ridiculed. He would go on an adventure and relate it to everyone when he returned like he had seen the older boys do. Return...that was a word that stuck in his throat. Going home now didn't seem like a possibility...nor did he want to...not back to all that ridicule. He thought that perhaps when he brought back some tokens of bravery that no one would call him Little Woman again. But now, it seemed for sure that he wouldn't be bringing back tokens. He would be bringing back totems...tokens of a spiritual path. He hadn't realized, and he hadn't prepared himself to think of his hunt for manhood as a spiritual journey.

He first noticed it when he was going back towards the village looking for his leggings. He had fed himself without really knowing what he was doing. He had been grateful for the roots and berries which the earth had given, but it had been as though his hands did it without his direction...without him actually doing it...as if his hands had done it on their own. There had been a separation of himself and his body. His body had known where to dig, where and what to pick all on its own without him having to think about it. He was totally disconnected from the whole affair...as if his body had a separate intelligence. He concluded, not really thinking all of this in words, that his body was quite knowing.

Another time his body had acted on its own was when he was scared completely out of his mind. The Great Spirit had led him with such trickery to the Cave of the Great Bear, had presented him with old Wey-cho-kay's nightly meal and fire and a warm bear coat, only to have that coat turn into a bear and chase him out of the cave. He was so scared, even when he found out from the lightening that it had only been the old man dressed in a bear skin, that what he could call his "self" fled and was no more. At that

time, his body took over and in complete darkness ran along the cliff ledge and hid under a bush that covered the entrance to a little cave he could call his own. One moment he was being scared by the Great Bear...the next moment, he was under the bush. It was magic. His body had made no mistakes. His body was all knowing.

Konki's mother had taught him to trust in the Great Spirit. Surely, thought Konki, it had good reason to trick me and scare me. Maybe he was only trying to teach me of the knowing of my body. And when I was most frightened, that was when I was the most safe and had a perfect knowing of what to do...but not I, something bigger than me...inside of me. It is a lesson, he thought, that I shall never forget. He thought also that during his vigil, when he was really scared out of his skin, he really *was* out of his skin, and that was when the magic of old Whe-cho-kay happened. That was when he gained his vision and song. It puzzled Konki's little mind that he had knowledge he knew not of and complete safety and magic when he was most frightened.

Konki wondered at his own worth. If his body knew how to get along without him, what need did his body have of him anyway? He wondered if the Spirit of the Great Bear had come and taken him away and entered into his body and done all that for him. Then the Great Bear was his friend. Or did the body actually fend for itself? And what was he anyway? Was he not now soaring in the sky above? Could he not blink his eyes and see now with the eye of the eagle the land below? It was a steep mountain gorge opening up into a blue peaceful sea. The green pines were ancient and tall. He could see through the opening in the woods the entrance to the cave. One of the trees next to the cave was the grandfather of them all and radiated peace. It had the feeling of being the one he had slept under before Aaron had found him. Another blink and he was back inside the cave on his bed. Perhaps his body had already known of this cave, and, never telling him of it, had come here on its own to be healed. Yet, there was the Great Thunder Bird who had rescued him twice...once with lightening and once when he caught him as he fell over the edge of the cliff, carrying him up above the earth. Where was the understanding of it all? The more he thought about it, the more he began to believe that the Spirit of the Great Bear was his body knowledge (they were one and the same), and the Spirit of the Great Eagle, the Thunder Bird, was his sight and protector, and these two were his totems or spirit guides introduced to him by old Wey-cho-kay.

He had hated old Wey-cho-kay. He had been scared of him. Now, he saw the old man in a different light. He was hard on him, but maybe he had to be. And then there was the shame. He had no honor with his people and Wey-cho-kay had used that against him. The boys had shamed him, calling him Little Woman. Old Weh-cho-kay had shamed him by offering him food, clothing, and shelter, only to accuse him of stealing. The temptation had been too great. He was outcast already, but to steal meant never coming

back home. The Great Spirit would have told everyone in the tribe of his theft, just as surely as his mother always knew when his father was coming back home from the hunt. His mother had taught him these things, and he had changed his mind just as the Great Bear arose. It had just been a teaching moment to test his heart and soul. Now there was a soft spot in Konki's heart for the old man. Still, there was the pain of the seeming hate the old man had for him. It was confusing.

Konki thought back on his life and all the pain and suffering that other people had caused him. He had only tried to love everyone and all the brothers of the forest. All of his life experiences culminated in shame. The effect of this shame and the heartache together with the magic of old Wey-cho-kay had opened up a door or a pathway. The arrow that had come into his back had caused the pain in his heart to become unbearable, so he had left through that door following that path, leaving his body to fend for itself.

He concluded that no one had ever cared for him, not really. His mother had loved him, but there was a limit to that love. He wasn't like his brother who could hunt and fight and trade and bring honor to the family and to the village. His parents bestowed honor on his brother. His father only tolerated him. He was so different from the rest of the people. He didn't fit in. His eyes were blue like the sky and his nose was like the beak of a bird. If they didn't call him Little Woman, they called him Beak.

After a moment's thought, he realized that only the Great Eagle had cared for him...and then, there was Aaron, a total stranger who had picked him up and took him in, dressing his wound and giving him strong medicine, this magical cave. Surely, he was the Great Fire Spirit, and this was his cave.

Aaron was like the Great Eagle. It had been the Great Eagle that had saved him from old Wey-cho-kay. It had been the Great Eagle that had decided not to eat him. It dawned upon Konki just as much as the day-dawn itself beamed forth to break away the night that it was the Great Eagle who loved him...the same eagle that hovered above in the sky at this precious moment to ever guide him and protect him. He and this eagle were one. Did he not see out of the eye of this eagle? He would worship this eagle all the days of his life.

Konki pondered all of this. He folded his arms across the snowy soft blanket. His heart pounded in his little chest, and he began to grow faint. This light-headed feeling grew into a feeling of floating, not as the eagle above hovered, but he thought that his body started floating into the air. The light in the cave seemed to come together as the sun shines down through the trees in the forest. It came together to shine on him, and he had the sensation of floating up into this light. He thought that he was floating up into the Great Fire Spirit in the sky, passing right through the ceiling of the cave. It didn't hurt his eyes, and he was filled with the joy of it. He seemed to be in another room now, filled with light as bright as the sun above. He was aware of wings beating and a man stood before him whose countenance

was brighter than the sun. The man wore the garment of the eagle whose feathers were beams of light. All was clean, peace, and love. He had never known such tremendous love...a melting love as the man reached down and lifted Konki to his breast. The feathers of his wings gently caressed him as the man lifted him. Konki looked onto his smiling face. He wore the headdress of the Great Eagle with its giant beak over his forehead. His eyes pierced Konki's soul, and he fainted. When Konki awoke, Aaron was bringing him another bowl of steaming broth. The smell of the tangy, meaty broth made Konki's mouth water. His stomach growled in anticipation. Konki's face was beaming.

Aaron saw a brightness in Konki's eyes he had never seen before. He handed Konki the broth. They both smiled at each other, but Konki's smile was more eager as though he wanted to say something very important. Aaron knew then that Konki had seen the Master. It made his heart feel glad. He smiled with such reassurance and light, that Konki knew that he knew. They didn't question this knowing...they just accepted it as a way of life...Konki's new way of life. The Great Spirit had revealed it. They beamed at each other for a moment and then Konki spoke.

"Aaron, why do I feel so comfortable here?"

Aaron sat cross-legged by the bed feeding Konki ladles of broth. "Go ahead," he said.

"I mean, why are you here?"

"To take care of *you*," was his simple answer.

"Why is it that I feel no shame here? I mean, the old medicine man in our village gave me food, clothing and shelter before I came here, and I felt great shame. If I had taken what he had offered, I would have been a thief, and I felt great *shame*. I don't feel that shame when *you* feed me and take care of me." He pause in thought. "I don't feel like I'm stealing when I take *your* food. I feel like I'm a home."

"This is the Master's house. He invited you here. And when the Master of the house invites you in, this is your home. When I first came here, I felt as though I had always been here. It is true that we all lived with the Master before we were born," Aaron said wistfully.

Konki suddenly remembered something his mother had taught him. It was a story that said the same thing as Aaron had said. "Yes," he said, contemplating. "This is just like one of the stories my mother told me." He sat up, placing the bowl upon the porcelain table and began squirming and rooting his little bottom into the bed as though he were about to make a big jump into something grand. His words built up in his throat, and he was ready to take off like a charging buck.

"What is this tale?" Aaron asked, almost laughing.

"It is the Tale of the Old Woman Who Went in Search of Her Death."

"Please tell me before you pop."

"I will!...There was this old woman

who was all dried up and wrinkled.
Her hair was as white as the snow.
She knew that it was time to leave this world,
but she didn't know where to go.
Her village would not feed her;
They told her to go away.
She left all her things to her people,
For she had better not delay.
She moved as swift as a turtle
down the old crooked trail.
There she met a man of the Turtle Clan.
He put a girdle on her body and said,
"This is for your protection."
It was for her protection when
she arrived in the Land.
For all the Heavens, she did not know
what to ponder, only to wander,
To wander through a mist in the land.
Coming to a clearing, she met an eagle.
She met an eagle coming down to greet her.
She surely thought it would eat her
and leave her bones to dry.
But he left her with a feather, and said
this would protect her when her soul
would someday rise into the sky.
She put the feather in her hair,
And down the trail she hobbled.
Down the trail she stumbled;
Down the trail she came. Her courage
failed her, and her strength waned.
That's when she met the wild lion,
That's when the big bear came.
They found her crying,
They found her dying.
They found her slain.
The lion gave her courage.
The bear gave her strength.
The lion sat her upright,
The bear carried her the length,
Down the trail to a spring,
To the clear water flowing,
To the life's blood of our Mother Earth.
Too old to gather, too old to drink,
She sat there pondering

the clear crystal spring.
There walked a man who shone bright,
He lite up the darkness like daylight.
He dipped his hand into the spring.
Three times she drank from his hand
until she realized it was a man.
But before she could thank him,
He whispered as soft as the breeze on a limb,
"I am come to take you home again."

"That's what he said, isn't it," exclaimed Konki, "...to take you home again."

"Yes, that is true," Aaron said reassuringly.

"And Aaron...is this the Master's home?"

"Yes."

"I thought this was your home," Konki said quietly. He got the courage to ask again, "Are you not the Great Fire Spirit who wanders across the sky each day and comes down to sleep in this beautiful cave?"

"The Master is born inside his mother. As you regain your health, you will rise from this womb of the Great Mother and become a man, or I will eat you," and Aaron roared like a bear and burst into laughter and tears. "I live here and you live here," he said. "Is this place my home or yours?"

"I think it is the Master's home. I think he greeted me," Konki yawned. He was getting very tired.

"That is right."

"I love my mother," Konki said, going off to sleep. "Where has my shame gone?"

"From now on," said Aaron quietly, "Where ever you go, you will be a guest. People will feed you...will take care of you, or try to kill you. But don't worry. You are under the Eagle's protection. You have nothing to be ashamed of..." and Konki fell asleep as Aaron said these last words.

Konki dreamed. He had his arms around Aaron, and Aaron was carrying him outside into the sunlight. He hugged Aaron about the neck. He kissed him on the cheek. When he went to look at Aaron again, he had turned into the likeness of his father who smiled at him proudly. A warmth and a strength flowed from his father...a gentleness that tore at little Konki's heart. He had never felt such love and security from this man before, and he wept. Next, he was visited by all his family. His mother's shining face he loved the most. And then there were the animal spirits of the forest making a circle around them. He dreamed that he was an eagle next, flying high in the sky overlooking evergreen forest and rocky mountain and ocean surf beating up against the rocks.

CHAPTER FIVE

Konki didn't know when he stopped dreaming, he only knew that he was flying high above green forests on rocky mountain beaches and ocean spray. He flew down and squatted naked on a rock overlooking the little cave where he had been before he slept. He could see the cave on the opposite shore high above the salt-washed cliffs. It sparkled, reflecting the sunshine. He sat there pondering his dreams of home feeling very homesick. He wanted to go back, but he knew that it wouldn't be the same. By the time he could walk back across the continent, he would be grown, and so would all the other children. No one would be the same. Everyone would be changed. The children would have put on adult faces, and the adults might be old and wrinkled. His brother wouldn't know him, and he wouldn't have a baby sister anymore. One thing may not have changed, though...he may still be outcast. His father would not speak to him. He would not acknowledge his presence. He could never show affection towards him as he could to Aaron. His father had sung the song of death for him that night after his vigil. Konki's heart tore remembering it. In his father's heart, Konki had died. Surely, the *boy* Konki was dying, never to return. Maybe there was yet hope if he returned a man. Maybe they would accept him as a man.

Konki desired to walk the land of his people. Even if he was still outcast, that's where he belonged. But then there is Aaron. Konki had never felt such love from a man before. His mother loved him, but so would a mother deer love its fawn. His brother tolerated him, and his little sister looked past him, never knowing him. There was a rift between him and the rest of the village. They didn't understand him...yet, he longed for their company...but he couldn't leave Aaron.

Half asleep, he felt Aaron's strong arms embrace him, and he was carried at once across the waters and back into the cave. He would think on this more tomorrow. He now had to sleep some more. He was not yet well.

When Konki awoke, there was another bowl of broth which Aaron helped him drink. He went to sleep again only to wake up to more broth. There seemed to be only this dream of waking up and eating or being taken out by Aaron so he could piss and then go right back to sleep again. He remembered being terribly hot one night and Aaron bathing his forehead with cool water. At one point Aaron had put oil on his head and said something about the Master. He was just numb for a long time from sleeping and waking and sleeping until he just got tired of sleeping. He woke up one morning very hungry and restless just as the sun came through the cave entrance. He looked at the sunlight. It turned into Aaron. He knew then that Aaron was indeed the Great Fire Spirit and this was his cave...but he wouldn't say anything to Aaron about it.

Aaron walked out of the sunlight and said, "You are healing fast. Are

you hungry for some solid food?"

"Yes," he replied. "I could eat a bear!"

"Good. I will go and get you some good meat and roots."

Konki enjoyed his feast as would a wild and ravenous beast. He had never eaten meat that was so fit for man and that satisfied his hunger so...and the roots and tubers were sweet and tender. When he was well satisfied and full, he sat back against the cave wall and gave a good belch and smiled. He wiped his face and hands on a wet cloth Aaron had given him.

Presently, Aaron came in with some skins still dripping with blood. Konki placed his dish on his little table to his right and stared at the skins. The drops of blood turned to drops of sunlight as they hit the floor. Konki's belief that this was indeed a place of powerful magic was confirmed.

With great reverence, Aaron said, "The eagle brought this for you."

"I will get up and prepare it," Konki said, wanting very much to get up and do something.

"It will be an honor, Konki, for me to do this for you," said Aaron. "You will have many times to make your own leggings. I will not always be with you to have the honor of serving one so great."

Konki could not think of anything to say. He leaned up against the sun-warmed wall, held his knees and thought for a long time about what Aaron had said. He loved Aaron.

After what seemed forever with nothing to do and getting anxious, worrying what he should or could do to spend his time, Aaron returned with a garment which contained both leggings and shirt all in one. Aaron held it out for Konki to see. He saw that it would cover his whole body. What a peculiar thing, Konki thought. Aaron handed it to Konki who stood upright on his bed and reached for the garment. Aaron withdrew it a little way to teach a lesson.

"I want you to remember," he said earnestly, "that this sheep gave his life for you so you could have this garment. And if there had not been a shepherd, that is, the Great Creator, there would have been no sheep. So, whenever you put on this garment, don't you think you should show some sign of gratitude?"

Then he handed the garment to Konki, whereupon, Konki held up the garment to the four directions, shaking it each time and sang his song of gratitude to the Great Creator, to the sheep, and to Aaron. But as he did so, he noticed the bead work on the front and on the back. There were spirals, circles and crosses, and on the back, a sun circle...a circle with a cross inside, the cross touching the circle from within...the four directions ... completeness.

As he slipped on the garment, tying the tethers in the front and attaching the loin cloth, Konki asked, "...and what are these markings on the front and back?"

Aaron picked up a red stone from Konki's small white table and

dropped it. It fell swiftly to the floor.

"When you drop a stone from your hand, it goes straight," he said, emphasizing the thought by shooting his flat hand straight ahead of him towards Konki. "That is the law. Keep that law that is written on your garment and you will go straight."

Aaron pulled out a leather sling from his robe near the opening of his chest. He picked up the stone from the floor, and putting it inside the sling, twirled it around and around, making it go faster and faster. He then pulled the tether through his left finger and thumb, making the end of the sling carrying the stone move in ever smaller circles until he had pulled the stone into his hand. Konki was ecstatic. He loved seeing tricks.

"The stone cannot escape," Aaron explained. "It is pulled into my hand. Such is the law. The pulling and the dropping of the stone...it is the same. Which law you use is a matter of choice...a matter of the way you see things.

"Now, let us go outside. Do you feel strong enough? or shall I carry you?"

"I feel good."

So out they went from the cave into the bright sunlight...but the contrast in lights was not that great, and Konki didn't have to squint. They came out through the archway of the cave and stood on the ledge in front. Aaron swung his sling and let the stone go. It went in a straight course over the waters below and over to the next hill.

"Why did you throw the blood stone, Aaron?" Konki asked, putting his hand over his brow to look over to the next hill.

"Can you find the stone and bring it back?" Aaron asked, not wanting a yes or no answer.

Konki understood. He blinked his eyes. Now, he was high above the forest looking down with the eye of an eagle. He saw a small dot of red, swooped down and grabbed it with his claw. He blinked again, and he was standing beside Aaron. He opened his hand, and there was the blood stone.

"How far, Konki, will you go in search of Truth...in search of the Great Spirit?" Aaron asked, putting his hand on Konki's shoulder.

"My mother taught me to always pray to the Great Spirit...to thank him...to ask him for what I need," he replied.

"Are you a man of your word? Do you keep your word? How strong are you at making promises and making sure you do what you say?"

Konki studied Aaron. What was he asking? Would he ever let anyone down and bring shame to them or to himself?

"You will have to know the answer to this question before you can become a man," Aaron said very solemnly so Konki knew that it was very important.

"I can keep my word," Konki replied with some pride.

Aaron smiled. He knew there would come a time in Konki's life in which

that statement would be tested.

"That will do," Aaron said, motioning that Konki should follow him.
"Now come, we will go meet the sheep."

Konki looked around as he followed Aaron. Sure enough, there was the great pine tree that looked older than all the rest, right in front of the cave. He hadn't noticed before how huge it was. It would take ten men to circle it with their arms outstretched. That was where he had curled up and slept so peacefully...and not so since his vigil. He also remembered that he had never seen the night with its bright blanket of stars since sleeping inside the cave. He must have always been awake in the daytime.

Walking along the trail, Konki noticed other great pines and that the forest wasn't cluttered up with a lot of underbrush which he was used to in his own land. There was occasionally a young pine or a bush and a continual bed of pine needles. The smell of the pines invigorated him.

Interrupting the smell of pine was the smell of meat being smoked. Konki's mouth watered, even though he had just eaten. There in a clearing was the carcass of a large ram already dressed and laying on a bier with a smoking fire underneath. He could tell it was a ram because next to the fire sitting on an old stump was the ram's head staring straight at him.

"Afraid?" asked Aaron.

"No!"

"Come. I want you to meet him."

Aaron lifted the head of the ram by its curved horns. Just one of its horns was bigger than Konki's chest.

"This is the sheep that gave its life for you. The Spirit of the Eagle is in this sheep."

Putting the head back onto the stump, Aaron took his knife and sliced off a piece of the meat from the carcass and gave it to Konki.

"Eat of this meat and remember the Eagle and this Ram who gave its life for you so that you may have its protection," and Aaron pointed to Konki's clothes, "in the form of that garment. It is a garment of power. If you should loose it, you will not be man nor eagle, but a whimpering dog."

Konki gulped as he ate the delicious meat. He was not sure what was happening. He saw Aaron now with a ram's horn. He brought it close enough for him to see that it was filled with blood.

"Drink," said Aaron. "It is the life of him who gave you his life and protection. Always remember him, the giver of life, and you will always have a portion of the Great Spirit or the Spirit of the Eagle in you."

Konki took the ram's horn and drank from it. It tasted sweet like the fruit of the vine that grew north of his village. He felt a little dizzy.

"Hold!" cried Aaron. "A man does not faint."

Konki gathered his consciousness as hard as he could by taking deep breathes of air...cool, crisp mountain air...full of pine scent.

"Now," said Aaron proudly, "you are Eagle Clan. Take this ram's horn

and keep it with you always. It is a gift from your ancestors. It came across from the many waters where the sun rises to greet you each morning. When ever you need help, blow it. The Great Spirit will come and your ancestors will come and send you the help you need."

"The Great Spirit?" asked Konki.

"Yes...the same spirit which is in the cave."

"Is it the Cave of the Great Fire Spirit?" Konki asked, not understanding yet, and wanting to have that question finally answered in the affirmative.

"It is your cave, Konki. It is the cave of your healing. Whenever you need it, it will be there...here, there...wherever and whenever you need it."

Konki raced back to the cave entrance and blew into the ram's horn. A little toot came out. Aaron was still by his side as if he himself didn't run, but was just there.

"What are you calling for little one?" Aaron asked with a smile.

"I want to call the Great Spirit and thank him for all of this, and for you, Aaron."

Aaron knelt down beside him and said with affection, "I see you are quite well. It is time for you to leave."

Konki looked at him quizzically.

"Aaron?"

"Yes, little one?"

"Aaron? Are you leaving, or are you staying here?"

"I have other errands to run for the Master, for I am his servant. So, yes, I will be leaving."

Konki hugged him gently, and, looking around, whispered in Aaron's ear, "Aaron, are you going to take all your people with you?"

"My people?" he asked, somewhat surprised.

"Yes, the ones guarding the cave. The ones living in all those holes in the walls of the cave...especially him!" Konki referred to the picture of the big warrior having horns and brandishing a long knife.

"Oh, them!" Aaron laughed. He just realized his mistake. Konki had never before seen photographs...something which wouldn't be invented for many centuries...but the Master let him have these valuable visual records to show to Konki.

Aaron got up and took Konki by the hand, took him inside the cave and presented these people to him. "These," he said with a sweep of his right hand, "are pictures of your ancestors."

"Let me introduce you to Wayne Mac Konki who was washed upon the shores of your homeland from the waters of where the sun rises."

"They look," said Konki with reverence and awe, "so real. I thought they were holes in the walls, and that they were outside the cave looking in. But when we went outside, I didn't see them. They stood so valiant and still, I thought they were the guardians of the cave."

"In a way, they are, but more important is the fact that they are *your* guardians, as they are the spirits of your ancestors."

Konki stood looking at the one with the horns coming out of his head and the great amount of hair on his face. Chills went all over his back and shoulders. He felt proud that such was his ancestor, that he was such a terrible looking monster, and that he was his guardian spirit.

Aaron looked at him placing his hands on the top of his head where horns might grow. He let out a little laugh. "No Konki," he said. "You will not grow horns. That is only a cap or a head-dress that shows his authority and prowess as a warrior."

"Is he not a monster then?" Konki asked with his eyes wide open and staring. "Look at all that hair!"

"No...he is just a man as I am. You see, the people that live across the east sea are just hairy people. And the people of the west sea," and he pointed to the sea that could be seen outside the cave, "the lands where our people came from are not so hairy."

Konki continued to stare.

"This is your Great-Great-Grandfather, who, finding himself in a strange land took to wife one of the daughters of the land, his people, having given him up for dead."

"Oh!" Konki exclaimed. "Is he the one I am named after?"

"Yes, Konki. Now let me show you some of your father's ancestors."

Aaron showed Konki people living in great stone buildings, saying that they had lived to the south where the sea east came near to the sea west at a narrow neck of land called the land Bountiful. This people had been divided into a white-skinned people and a dark-skinned people, and they had many wars in which the dark-skinned people overcame the white-skinned people. Those that had believed in the Master were killed, and the others joined the dark-skinned people and became like them.

"Your mother is descended from Wayne Mac Konki. Your father is descended from these white people," Aaron said.

"But you have not been killed, Aaron," Konki said, trying to take in all this wonder.

"Out of the mercy of the Master..." Aaron said reverently, "so I can help others come unto him."

"Who is this Master you keep talking about?"

"You have already met him in a way that you could understand, and you will meet him again when you are ready to see him as he is. But first, you must experience many things."

"The Great Eagle?" Konki asked, astonished.

"Some people see him that way. In time, he will reveal himself to you. You must be patient. Now," and he took Konki's shoulder to guide out of and away from the cave, "it is time for you to go."

As they were walking back past some of the pictures, there was one

picture in a little alcove they had missed. Konki looked at it. It made great emotions swell up from deep inside his heart to burst out of his breast. He couldn't understand the love he felt from that man. He ran outside the cave, grabbed his horn and blew loud and long to send his song up into the heavens. The deep treble echoed through the pine forest and between the cliffs.

Heart felt sounding 'round temples of green,
Ground thundering unseen the sounds of Konki's horn.
Spirit shining close, answering sobs enclosing
Konki's heart rejoicing kissing Konki's throat.

Konki wrapped himself around Aaron and wept for joy for things yet unseen and not understood.

There was a braying heard and a high-pitched snarling. Play-mates came romping and looking about out of the woods. Aaron laughed to see such a cat and little bear appearing looking bewildered and wondering if anyone really cared.

"Look what your blowing has brought you," he cried.

He turned Konki around to spy the play-things that paid them never-a-mind but just went about looking and poking their noses into everything as one supposes they might see to what trouble they could bring.

Konki was so delighted that he let go of Aaron and went to the little bear cub and the mountain lion kitten, hugging them, having an arm around each one of them. They three pranced around the trees together and wrestled and held each other until sleep finally overtook them and night came. The sun returned to the depths of Mother Earth sending up oranges and reds then purples and grays into the cloudy sky above. Konki dreamed of the Eagle beneath the old granddaddy pine. It told him to go home to where the sun rises out of the east sea.

Konki woke up to the sun beating down upon him. He rubbed the sleep out of his eyes, wondering why he wasn't in the soft bed in the cave. Instead, he was the guest of the great granddaddy and on a bed of his soft needles. He looked around. Where the cave had been was now an out-crop of orange glassy rock. The cub and kitten were no where to be seen, neither was Aaron. Perhaps, he thought, I have just been dreaming of everything...until he looked at the strange leather garments he was wearing and the ram's horn strung over his shoulder. He felt these to check reality. He put his hand up to his shoulder and chest. There was no pain. He saw in dusty trails near the out-crop small animal tracks...a small bear and a small cat with big feet. The pine needles had been greatly messed up as if someone or something had been thrashing on the ground.

He went to the place where the cave had been. "Aaron! Aaron!" he cried, placing his hands upon the rock in disbelief. He then felt the burning spirit within the cave as if it were in his own heart...as if it had been a voice, a burning voice within. Thoughts welled up into his mind from his heart.

"The cave is hidden from the eyes of mortal men until a time when you will need it again."

Konki hugged the mountainside, called, "Aaron, Aaron," weeping softly, wetting the orange quartz rock.

"I will see you again. But now that you are healed of old Wey-cho-kay's influence, you are to return home to the rising of the sun. The eagle will guide you." The voice faded as if going back, deep within the cave. "Stay close to the Spirit," it said almost inaudibly, just a faint whisper.

With a heavy heart, Konki started out for the sunrise. Not long after, a braying and a high-pitched snarling came up from behind him. He turned around. There was the little bear cub and the mountain lion kitten trotting out of the woods towards him. They didn't look at him; they were too busy playing and looking around and prancing about, looking for trouble.

"Oh!" cried Konki, "Bearcub and Cat! I thought you had gone away back to your mamas."

Konki grabbed each one by the neck and hugged them. They squirmed to get away.

Bearcub stood on his back legs, pointed his snout into the air and cried, "Mama!" in his deep braying voice. Cat sat on his haunches, threw out his chest and said, "Yeah!" pulling back his ears. Cat nudged Konki with his nose and started licking his face. Bearcub put his front paws on Konki's chest and pushed. They all three fell over and wrestled on the ground, Konki, laughing, saying, "*I'm not your mama! I'm no squaw!*" He laughed some more, and they cried and grunted...he roughed up their pelts, got up and started running. The playmates chased him, fully attached to their new mama.

CHAPTER SIX

Konki had been running for several days through mountains and forested valleys. He was anxious to get back home. Bearcub and Cat had kept right with him. Now, they had come to the edge of the forest, and Bearcub and Cat hesitated. They had come to a desert place. There would be little game or water there. But wanting to explore the area, Konki wanted to go on.

"Come on, you two. Let's see this strange land," Konki called.

"No-o-o," said Cat with his lips puckered up, sitting on his haunches with his nose pointing to the sky.

"Ugh-uh," said Bearcub standing on his hind legs, shaking his head.

"What's wrong with you two?" asked Konki. "Are you cowards or something? We have to follow the sun, don't we?"

"Better," Bearcub wailed.

"Way," Cat snarled with his ears back.

Then Bearcub and Cat pranced back into the forest like little play things.

"Wait for me!" cried Konki.

Konki thought that perhaps he could trust his body to follow his two friends and let his vision explore that desert place through the eyes of the eagle. All he would have to do is to blink. But something was wrong. He blinked, and nothing happened. Aaron had said that he was now free from the influences of old Wey-cho-kay's magic. Was this what he meant that he couldn't be an eagle anymore? He couldn't force his awareness in any way to be one with the eagle. It was not an automatic thing as it used to be. He kept running. He was disappointed, yes, but why think about it? He needed to get home.

Running, Konki started daydreaming. His body ran on without him while he was deep in thought, thinking about that desert place and how it might look. His awareness gradually drifted away, and he was dreaming he was an eagle again, though, his body kept on running north. He never decided to become an eagle as he used to, he just learned to let go. Running home was the only important thing now, and he trusted his friends not to go into the desert...but he could dream about it.

Konki learned other things too. He learned how to fish, but not as himself...as an eagle. Somehow, in his dreams, he connected with the eagles who lived near the lakes and streams. Dreaming he was an eagle, he watched the other eagles, watching them swoop down and pluck a fish out of the waters of the lakes. As if he were born to it, Konki, on a dreamy day, sitting underneath a pine tree by a small mountain lake, dreamed he was diving down from the blue heavens. He had spotted a fish feeding near the surface of the lake. He swooped down and caught the fish with his powerful

talons. It was as thick as his neck. He ate it and went back for more. He caught three more fish and dropped them down to where a little boy was sleeping. When Konki awoke, he was holding a big fish as thick as his neck. He saw Bearcub and Cat devouring their own. Deep down inside himself, he had learned to connect with the animal spirits, but especially, the eagle. He could now provide for himself and his friends. He never decided to...it had become instinctual. He ate his fish roasted.

Konki got used to the new way of being an eagle. As his feet fled northward, he dreamed, and the more he dreamed about the desert, the more it became a continuous reality...flying above the desert as his body ran with Cat and Bearcub. Konki flew over a succession of mountain ranges. The only trees he could see were scrub oak and cedar with a few dry pines on the northern slopes. At the end of this desert area was a vast white plain and then a great salt sea governed above by white sea gulls. He could smell the salt.

Konki was told by the high flying gulls that the sea was too salty to support any life. Only in ages past was it full of fish. Their ancestors ruled over a much vaster domain that had covered most of the desert. The rivers and streams and some small mountain lakes had plenty of fish, and so does the fresh lake to the south, but that is a different domain. He thanked them and flew on.

Using his eagle eyes, Konki surveyed the land below, picking out the tiny details. One detail caught his emotions like a hook. There was a bright sparkle on the east shore of the sea. He circled down to investigate. The closer he came to the form, the more it glowed from within itself. He felt that it was a place of the Great Spirit. He didn't understand the form at first, then he noticed that it had four corners and was made of crystal, like in that crystal cave he had been in with Aaron, but he knew from the Spirit, that this was a man-made cave. It had three spires like frozen trees on the west end and again on the east end, except the middle one on the east end was higher. As he circled around it, he stared at that middle pinnacle. It had a man of such radiance on the top of it with a horn set in his mouth. It was like his ram's horn, but uncurled and stretched out. The man glowed as bright as the sun, standing there, levitating before him. Konki could only stare.

Konki's peace was shattered by a blast from that horn more shrill and lasting than his own horn. The blast from the horn seemed to be words fierce and true: "You have left yourself unguarded in order to see a spectacle. Return to your senses. Do you think that a bear cub and lion cub can protect you from this band of warriors?" The words were as fierce as the cry of the Great Eagle, and the beating of his wings created a monstrous wind that blew Konki's soul back into his body.

Konki had run head-long into a band of warriors still wet with the blood of their enemies. They carried the heads of their enemies in nets. He was

caught by thick rough hands. Bearcub and Cat scampered up a tree. A roughian called out, "What have we here?"

Another roughian covered with lightening on his chest and streaks on his face with a head full of feathers answered, "It must be a ball!" And so, as Konki had rolled himself up into a ball to protect himself from grabbing hands, holding onto his ram's horn, they proceeded to kick him. They even divided into two teams to see who could kick the ball to the goal. Konki was only aware of pain after pain of being kicked and bumped onto the rocks. Only after the ram's horn was kicked into his mouth did he remember it. He took a deep and painful breath and let it all out into the horn. The blast startled the men. They heard the blast of the horn give way to the screech of the Great Eagle echoing off the mountain walls. Dozens of human screams joined the cry and chilled the air which beat with a fierce wind of giant wings. Konki felt himself being carried away by giant talons. The cries were softened only by the first snowfall that came like a thick white fog.

Konki was deposited on the eastern shore of that great salty sea near a mountain range covered with pines. He could hear the sea gulls fighting and quarreling over bits of food. He looked around. He recognized the place as where the glowing crystal cave had been...though, it hadn't been a cave, he thought. It had been a crystal lodge-house. It was where the spirits dwell.

The flight had been a swift one, and Konki was out of breath and hurting all over. He was bleeding from somewhere. He could taste the blood. He lay down on the warm salty sand bathed by the sun. The salt stung his wounds, but it didn't matter. He had to rest. He lost consciousness quickly. He dreamed of Aaron who was busy tending his wounds, sponging them with salt water.

"Ow!" cried Konki.

"Hold your head back a little," Aaron said gently, "yes, that's it, right onto my leg."

Aaron pinched Konki's nose to make the bleeding stop.

Soon, Konki was bathed, and his bleeding from several wounds had been stopped. As soon as Konki returned to his senses, he grabbed at Aaron's legs and cried his name.

"Aaron! Oh Aaron! I'll never do it again! I promise!"

But there was no Aaron. He soon fainted again and dreamed again.

Aaron asked, "Do what, son?"

"Go off like I did and leave myself unprotected. But I thought that Bearcub and Cat were there to protect me," Konki almost sobbed.

"They are only children like yourself," Aaron replied. "They need to grow before they have any real strength."

"But they said they knew the way," Konki almost whined.

"They cannot see as high as the eagle, but their way is safe enough if you know how to climb a tree," Aaron reprimanded. "Look at what your

eagle eyes have seen."

"There was this mountain-sized lodge-house right here," Konki recollected. "Now, it is gone."

"It is called a temple," answered Aaron, "and it will not be here for many generations. You saw from very high up."

"I was with the high flyer's." Konki pondered a moment and asked, "Aaron, it had a bright spirit with a long horn on top of it, and he blew the horn. It was frightening."

"He was trying to save your life," Aaron said softly as though it were a breeze. "You will meet him again someday."

"Aaron?" asked Konki tipping his head, and he knew he was waking up and leaning on his elbow. "Why am I not back at the Cave of Healing?"

Aaron's reply was a whisper on the salty breeze. "You can always go there again...when you are defeated."

Defeated, it was made clear wasn't what Konki was. He knew a storm was heading this way...it may take a couple of days. That would give him time to make some shelter, get some food, and make a winter coat. He looked around and wondered where Bearcub and Cat had gone off to and whether he would ever see them again. The mountains would be a half-a-day's walk from here. He didn't want to stay in this wide open valley. Better shelter would be up there...and he stared at a canyon that looked promising. Then he started loping along, wondering about Aaron...would he ever see *him* again.

Before Konki stood a mountain that rose straight up from the valley and the sea. He could see higher mountains beyond. There were mountains to the north that turned west, but to the south, the range went on without stopping. He could see them as far as the horizon. Between him and the mountain, there wasn't much vegetation. They were all scrubby plants that smelled very sharp and strong in the bright sunlight. He could see several varieties that all smelled the same. It was the smell of the desert. There was an occasional scrub oak, but these became more plentiful on the mountain, as did everything else. There was a crack in the base of the mountain where the canyon started. The scrub oak started growing in clumps there. He could see the familiar pine further up, near the top. That's where he would head. It would be more like home to him.

When Konki got to that first clump of trees, he could hear water running. It ran down to the salt sea in a little brook he hadn't noticed before. He looked at the sea...then at the beach where he had seen the temple. The thought came to him that it would become a place of safety to many people...out in the open? But the Great Spirit knew all things. His mother had taught him.

Following the stream of water up the narrowing valley, Konki found a mountain meadow with a small spring on the north side of the mountain. He saw other springs sharing their waters, making the little brook. The waters

cascaded over the dark rocks in the shades of the pines. There, he sat up camp, building a woven grass hut, for the meadow was filled with grasses.

Konki found a glassy flint in the rocks on the sides of the canyon. He made a fine-edged knife. He then set snares as he had seen his brother do. When later that night he checked his snares, half asleep, he thought he heard Aaron's voice talking about the creation and how the animals had volunteered to sacrifice their lives to save the lives of man.

"Because that man," he said, "had wondered off into the wilderness away from the protection of the Great Creator God, there were many of the animals who loved man that sought permission from the Great Creator to go down into this dark and dreary waste and help man survive. We need therefore, Konki, to thank each animal that gives itself to us in sacrifice until the day that the Great Creator himself shall come and save us all."

Konki ate well that night, remembering to give thanks to the squirrel he ate, as well as giving thanks to the Great Creator God who made the squirrel and the fire.

Konki didn't build much of a fire for fear of being seen. Rather, he built a pit, building just enough of a fire to heat up some stones and then put in the disemboweled squirrel with the rocks and covered it up. He watched the moon glide across the sky. When it moved one of twelve stones, as his mother had taught him, he dug up the squirrel, ripped the skin off and ate. It was delicious. Rubbing some of the coals onto the meat made it taste better, a little salty.

For several days Konki caught squirrels, chipmunks and rabbits. He saved their pelts, tanning them with brains and barks and smoking the flesh, always burying the bowels in the earth to feed the great mother. Leaving his camp, he went down to the salt sea and gathered up great handfuls of salt that had dried along the shore. Thinking this would enhance the flavor of his meat, he rubbed it on the little animals before smoking them. He also rubbed it onto the pelts. He thought it might help preserve them.

Konki knew that when he had a good supply, he would cross these mountains and head for home across the great plains. The snow was coming, and he would have a good coat of these pelts. He could have a bigger and better coat, but he couldn't see taking a larger animal's life. He loved to look at them and behold their grandeur. Besides...their meat was for families. He was only one.

Walking through the woods one morning after having eaten some of his smoked meat, he ran into some very tough spider-webs. He panicked and started running. Between every tree there was strung a giant spider-web with a giant flat spider in the middle of it. He batted at the webs and at the spiders as he ran. They were covering him, and the spiders were crawling down his neck! They were all over him! He ran right into the hands of an old woman!

"What are you doing?" she asked, shaking him. "You are ruining my

webs! You are running away with my sisters and killing them!"

"Who...who are you?" Konki asked, trying not to be afraid, but not being able to help himself. He had never liked spiders.

"I am Spider Woman," she answered. "And you are destroying my house. For this you will *wear* my webs."

Konki looked at himself. He was covered everywhere with spider-webs. Leaves like feathers stuck to him. He had to fight his anger and fear of the little creatures. They weren't evil. He remembered his mother talking about the spider woman. He looked up, and the old woman was gone. In pulling off the webs in great wads, he found some that would not break easily. As he pulled on them, they stretched into long cords, and he started giggling.

Stripping himself of the webs, clothes and spiders, he started dancing, laughing at such a thought. He would wear the webs.

"Here is cord," he cried, stretching the spider-webs. "Here is web. Here is the net I thought in my head to make a coat to keep out the cold. What a strange story to tell when I am old. What a bold and shining coat! What a bold and shining white coat! What a wintry bold and shining coat for the snow!"

Never before had Konki seen such a strong strand of web from a spider! Now, he was thankful for the spiders, and he thanked them and the old spider woman. He thanked his mother for teaching him how to weave. The tradition, though, looked down upon by the rest of the tribe, was handed down from Wayne MacKonki...one of his great great grandfathers. He had tried grasses before, but now, the Great Spirit had given him *such* a gift! He knelt down and thanked his Maker. He would be a maker tonight.

After gathering many many spider-webs, those that he could see were abandoned, winding them up on sticks, he had another brilliant idea. He went down to the beach and gathered into the chest of his leather suit the smallest of the sea-gull feathers he could find either lying on the beach or in the gull's nests. Originally, he was going to put these feathers on the outside of the coat he was to make, but by the time he reached camp, he was so hot with the feathers inside his suit that he had another idea. He would stuff his new coat with the feathers, putting them on the *inside*. They would keep him quite warm in the snow. That meant, the thought, that he would have to have two coats sewn together so there would be an inside.

Konki gathered up his sticks of webbing (there being several arm loads), and went to work making a primitive thread. It was similar to fire-making in which the stick was twirled in the hands. The fine strands of webbing were twisted off the top of the stick and fitted onto another stick. He had to use hands, feet and mouth to do the trick. All this was accompanied by his song he sang.

He worked late into the night. He hadn't counted on this taking such a long time, but it took him three days of twisting before the thread was

ready. He didn't eat much in those three days, nor sleep much. He was too excited. At the end of the third day, he made himself a belt loom in which the woof lines were tied to a tree. The other ends were tied around his waist. He made several belts of strong silky material. By the seventh day, after having asked a porcupine for some needles, he had sewn them together, having cut them into the shape of a coat of sorts. Sewing the pieces of cloth that resulted, he started stuffing in the feathers. By this time, the snow was falling.

Stuffing in the sea-gull feathers, he saw that they all sagged to the bottom of the coat. He laid the coat down on a flat rock. He thought a moment. Then he spread the feathers throughout the coat and sewed the inside to the outside at several different places a fist's breadth apart with cords so that the feathers stayed where he put them. He pulled on his white silky coat, patted himself on his chest and admired his reflection in a slow part of the stream. He was very proud of himself, but he raised his hands to the sky and thanked the Great Spirit. His mother taught him so.

Konki was so busy making his coat that he didn't notice that he was being watched. What the watchers saw was a tall lanky youth with a long slender beak for a nose. He had short cropped hair and blue eyes. He was dancing to a hidden song...in silence. This youth, they thought, must be lost and very far from home, for all the tribes around these mountains, even on the plains were shorter and heavier and wore their hair long...and no one they knew had the eyes of the sky color. And now they saw him do magic with spider webs and sea gull feathers. The five of them talked and judged that this must be a demon. But they would test the demon and see if the magic of his coat could withstand the magic of their arrows.

Konki was so tired that he was dreaming while he was awake. He felt so light headed and joyful and delirious. He was seeing himself dancing far below on the ground...in slow motion. He was flying with the eagles...many of them. And as in a dream, he saw dark figures in the snow hiding behind the rocks and bushes and trees all bending their bows, aiming their arrows at him. He called to all the eagles, screeching, to dive down with him and save this youth, this fool of a youth who didn't have the sense to hide and get out of the way of the arrows.

An arrow was let go in slow motion. It traveled towards the dancing youth in slow motion. Before it reached him, an eagle intercepted it with its body. Konki felt the numbing pain as if it were in his own body. He fell over, grasping his stomach. He turned around slowly to see an eagle fall at his feet and roll, feathered wings flopping. Another arrow sped through the air behind him. Konki received another shocking blow...this time, in his back as another eagle intercepted the arrow and fell to the snow behind him. Another arrow came, and another eagle intercepted...another arrow, and yet another eagle falling. Konki turned around to see arrows coming at him from all sides only to be intercepted by the eagles. They were letting themselves

be destroyed to save *his* life. They were taking *his* place in death. His heart broke, and he cried out, "Stop! You're killing the eagles!"

He danced around with both hands up trying to put a stop to this massacre. The five braves in ambush stared wide-eyed as Konki blew on his ram's horn. They shrieked in terror and fled. Konki dropped to his knees, crying and petting the fallen eagles, asking, "Why?...Why?...Why?" and not understanding. Unknowingly, the answer came in his own question. "Why has the Great Eagle sacrificed his life that I might live?" He wouldn't know that he had uttered this question until a long time later when memory would return to this event.

Konki made himself an ax the way he had seen his brother do and set about making a funeral bier in the snow. Upon it, he tied all the eagles that had been slain in that little mountain clearing. As a memorial to them, he took one feather from the wing of each eagle and tied it to his coat at each cord that made the quilting. His coat was now covered with eagle feathers, and he started dancing and chanting the death song of his people. He stayed there all night in a vigil, building little fires, praying and chanting, trying to understand what had taken place and why he was so beloved. He slept dreamlessly in his hut the next day with snow falling and covering up everything. He never did make that fur coat out of the skins he had collected.

Konki awoke famished. He grabbed some smoked rabbit and ate more than he had planned. He ate the whole thing! He looked out at the snow from inside his little hut. It was still snowing. He thought that he had better work on some furry moccasins when he thought he saw movement outside. It was people. He stuck his head out of the hut and saw a circle of people...men, women and children. They stood motionless in the light snowfall. Most everyone was covered with blankets of snow-covered fur. When Konki stepped out of the hut, everyone stepped back. A little girl giggled somewhere in the crowd. He didn't know what to say, so he raised his arm in the square and said, "Peace."

An elderly man with many decorations on his shirt (which Konki could see through his open robe) and having many feathers in his hair approached Konki. He talked using sign language along with his speech which Konki couldn't understand.

He said, "Many warriors fight many battles...take prisoners. Prisoners talk of a Son of the Great Eagle. Other tribes talk of Son of the Great Eagle. These braves," and he pointed with the palm of his hand to the five that had tried to kill him, "say you cannot be killed. Come, tell me of your great power. Are you the Son of the Great Eagle? Come, I will give you one my daughters to wed. Come, live with us, and we will be prosperous. We will have plenty deer and elk for our lodges. We will have strength against our enemies. We will live a good life. Come."

Konki knew some sign language. He was a little frightened, but he

remembered the great love the Eagle had for him, so he talked.

"I cannot. I must return to my people. I have a long journey ahead of me."

The old man was wise. He made sense when he said, "Surely, it is a great hardship to travel in winter. Come. Live with us until the melting of the snow when it again is green and safe to travel."

Already feeling home-sick, Konki knew the old man was right. He should wait out the winter. It was old Wey-cho-kay's doings to trap him in the winter snows so he had a better chance of not returning home, but he promised himself and his mother that he would return.

Konki accepted the old man's hospitality and thanked him. The old man turned to the people and told them he would stay, and they all laughed. They laughed with the joy of knowing that Konki's magic would be used for them instead of against them. They accepted him as the Son of the Great Eagle.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Villages in these mountains looked similar to what Konki was used to. The difference was that the huts used by each family were covered with skins instead of bark. On the east coast, he saw several families living in one lodge, but he didn't notice any here. A lot of the huts were decorated with deer antlers. One, was decorated with human skulls...some with the hair and skin still attached, though loosely. It must belong to the medicine man, thought Konki. As he thought that, he saw the old man enter that hut. Medicine men could be tricky. He would watch that one. He saw the old man return and offering him entrance to another hut which was a little larger than the rest. It was decorated with eagle feathers as well as antlers. This must be the hut of the warrior chief, thought Konki. He always trusted the warrior chief back home, maybe this is the chief's home. So, he decided to trust the old man and entered the hut.

In the darkness of the hut little round faces giggled in the fire-light. One face had no expression except for the many deep wrinkles that covered it. She must be the grandmother, Konki thought. She said something and everyone made way for him. He was offered a seat by one of the girls. They were all girls. The old man behind him said something roughly in a grunt. Konki got the idea that he didn't have any sons. Maybe they had their own families by now anyway. He looked at the old woman again as he took his seat by the central fire. She was suckling a baby. One of the girls offered him a bowl full of forest roots and herbs. He was already full of smoked rabbit, but he had to be polite and accept. After he had eaten, he signed gratitude and water. They gave him a small cup of water. He signed gratitude and drank.

For a long time while the chief was gone, the girls (there were four or five of them varying in age) just watched Konki and giggled. Konki remembered that the chief had wanted to give him one of his daughters to wed. That started worrying him, for he was not yet a man in his own tribe. He could not be until he returned home with trophies of his long quest. When he returned home, he wouldn't have to marry one of these chubby things. He could marry a nice tall thin girl that looked like himself. But the more he looked at these girls, the more he worried, and the more he worried, the more he sweat.

Konki noticed that he was sweating a lot. It seemed awfully warm in here. There was a strange exotic smell in here that smelled like the desert. It would have been alright in the desert, but in here, it made the air thick and unbreathable. Looking around, he saw that the chief had arrived and that everyone was passing the pipe around. He had never smoked before because he wasn't a man, but he noticed that even the young girls were

smoking from the pipe. When it came his turn, he coughed after smoking the pipe. Someone gave him a small cup of a warm liquid. He thought that it was because he had coughed. It tickled his tongue. The girls were still giggling. The smoke filled the room. He got warmer and warmer. His eyes started watering. He heard chanting. Everyone was chanting. He didn't recall when they ever started. Konki began to get dizzy and feel very heavy. It was too strange in here. He wanted to be home.

Women and girls chanted and danced around Konki. They looked full of holes, and they quivered like the flames of fire. Their dark shadows rose up along the walls of the hut and looked hideous. They turned into weasels foxes and hares.

weasels foxes and hares
weasels foxes and hares
dancing, dancing and
chanting, chanting and
roaring like bears
screaming, snarling and
yelling like cats
in their lairs
their songs of
weasels foxes and hares
their chanting and chanting
their dancing and dancing
screaming, roaring and
frolic singing their songs
in their Indian lairs of
weasels foxes and hares
weasels foxes and hares
weasels foxes and hares
...and wolves...

A wolf had entered the den and was howling. Then a dog was barking outside and wanted to come in. Konki became very frightened of the dog. The dog barked and yapped and scratched at the door post wanting in. Terror struck Konki. His eyes grew wide. His heart clattered, and his teeth chattered, and he sweat profusely, looking at the door. Any moment now, the dog would come in. The dog! The dog! All Konki's fears and hates...all his resentments were in that dog!...all the hate and envy from the boys his age...all the nasty tricks...all the lying to get him into trouble...all the name calling...the ostracizing...all the loneliness...all the heartache...everything Konki had run away from was in that dog. The dog's scratching and yelping was saying that Konki was a woman. He could never be a man. He doesn't do manly things like hunting, fighting, torturing, playing war. It said, "You're a woman Konki who weaves and makes huts and pottery and takes care of the children. You are an outcast. You can't do practical things as a man to

feed or protect the village. You're head is in the clouds. You are not Bear Clan!"

At that moment Konki grabbed for his ram's horn. He was among witches, but he couldn't find it. He found that he couldn't soar up to be with the eagles. He couldn't concentrate, and he couldn't let go of the horror that had a hold of him. He tried to scream like the eagles to call the Great One, but all he could do was to yelp!

"I am coming inside," said the dog. "I am coming to devour you! Then your secrets will be known by everyone."

Konki yelped and yelped. He got down on all fours and ran around the hut among the dancing witches who chanted their magic in unison with Konki's heartbeat. Konki ran out the door, yelping, right into the mouth of the little dog who devoured him whole.

Inside the little wiry dog, Konki ran through the village yelping and yelping. Women, boys and girls chased him around the huts laughing at him and throwing sticks and stones at him. Those who caught up to him hit him on the back with sticks to make him yelp louder, and the louder he yelped, the more the hate leaped from his heart. Each time they hit him on the back, he yelped out his hate and resentment...all those wrong feelings toward those back home who had wronged *him*. When his energy was spent, he crawled back into the chieftain's tent and curled up by the fire. There he slept until he was himself again. The party was over. When Konki woke up, he saw the same round faces again, but they paid no attention to him. They only talked among themselves as though nothing had happened. He curled up again and slept through the night.

Waking up the next morning, he noticed that one of the girls was sleeping next to him. He remembered that the old man had promised to give him one of his daughters. When she opened her deep black eyes, he signed to her as he said, "I am not yet a man." She moved back from him with a face of disgust. She signed to him as she said, "That is right. You are not a man. You are a dog!" To his surprise, she was right. He blinked his eyes as he used to in order to become an eagle. But now, he looked out of the eyes of a little dog. All he could see was what was close to the ground. Great sorrow entered his heart. He could no longer soar upwards and be with the eagles high in the air. The witches! They had stolen something very precious! How precious was his hatred and resentment! Where was it? He could not feel it. There was nothing there. He whimpered. The girls muffled their laughter. The old woman looked at them hard and they were silent.

When Konki was fully awake, he wondered what he should be doing. Looking across from him, he noticed the old chieftain. He was wearing Konki's coat given him by Spider Woman. Konki gasped and quickly felt his chest and arms. His coat was gone! It looked funny on the old man. It was too small for him. He wondered if he had his horn too, but he couldn't see it.

"My land, my eagles, my spiders," signed the old chief.

Konki felt sorrowful for the loss. Those eagles had given their lives to save his. He loved that coat. It had taken a long time to make it, and now it was the old man's. He defiled it. It was meant for Konki. He wept. He started howling like a little dog. The old man threw a stick at him. He whimpered at being hit, and the girls threw sticks at him. Grief-stricken, he started to chant his song. The old woman threw a big stick at him that hit him in the mouth. He froze, letting the tears dry up.

"You ungrateful cur!" said the old man. "You are no longer Son of the Great Eagle. You are a Son of a Bitch!"

That was all Konki could stand. He started chanting his song again, but it sounded like a howl of a little puppy dog, and everyone beat him with sticks. He was compelled to be humble.

"You will be our slave," said the old man. "You will fetch us some more wood for our fire," and he kicked Konki out the door.

When he stood up, he found that everyone wanted more fire-wood. If he didn't act quickly, they beat him with a stick.

By nightfall, after doing everyone's chores, Konki was hungry and tired. He trembled he was so tired, but he wasn't cold. Working hard, he had warmed himself. Now what was he to do? Was he still a guest at the chief's hut? He went over there to see if he could get in. They wouldn't let him enter. A dark man walked up to him and bid him come. He knew that this man was the medicine man of the village. He motioned Konki to enter into his hut. He did so. There was a little boy in there. He giggled and threw leaves at Konki. Konki ducked and stepped aside to let in the medicine man. The dark man motioned to Konki to sit down. He gave him some meat in some broth in a small earthen bowl. He gratefully ate, thanked his host and curled up next to the fire and slept. The little boy curled up against Konki and slept.

Konki dreamed of the Great Eagle who chastised him for going off on his own and leaving Bearcub and Cat behind. "These I gave to you to protect you from harm. You have left them. I would have guided and protected you. Now you have allowed yourself to be captured by these mountain people whom I love also. Stay with them and help and serve them until the land once again becomes green. They will let you go and think well of you."

Konki slept well that night even though he felt chastised by the Great Spirit. He felt comforted.

In the middle of the night, the old chief came in to talk to the medicine man. "Rejected my daughter, he did. I rejected him. You have him. You feed him." That, the medicine man did. He knew that Konki was special. He would watch over him until it was time for him to leave. He would make sure that he would stay humble, though.

Winter was harsh that year. There was continual snow and wind and ice. The days of sunshine were little. Most days were gray. Konki spent the winter with numbed toes and fingers most every day. The mountain people

were not cruel, but they did treat him as a slave. After a month of diligence in their service, they gave him a coat and fur moccasins, each made of the rabbit and squirrel skins he himself had prepared before his capture. He would ask them why they didn't move down into the valley where it was warmer, but as a slave, they wouldn't talk to him except to give him orders. They would hit him whenever he tried to talk to them. Maybe his language seemed strange and funny to them...or maybe slaves weren't supposed to talk. Maybe if he tried to learn their language, it would be different.

Konki spent most of the time gathering firewood, making fires, finding edible tubers and medicinal plants with the medicine man, tanning hides and chewing them with the women who always laughed at him, repairing huts, and at night, he would sit and listen to stories and tales of animals and men and the creation plus warrior tales. In doing this, he was able to learn their language, because they would always use signs as they talked. These were not unlike what he had listened to at the campfires at home. One time he forgot and started to talk in their own language. This time, he was not hit with sticks but was simply told that dogs do not talk, and that was that.

Konki became Little Woman again because of his always working with the women. They kept him on a tether except when he was with the old medicine man. He explained they thought he had such power that they needed to keep that power on a leash. Otherwise, the world might fall apart and they all die. He was actually being worshiped, but for the bad treatment, he never knew that. They couldn't allow his pride to hurt the earth, so they had to keep him humble.

Young bucks and braves also liked Konki. They liked swatting him with branches, swinging sticks of firewood at him or an occasional stone. They made this their winter sport to see who could hit him. Being raised in this kind of an atmosphere, Konki had obtained a certain knack or talent for dodging. It had become instinctual to know when to duck or when to slink cat-like back an inch or two so as not to be hit. Sometimes a young buck would try to throw him to the ground, thrusting his body against Konki, and it became a game for Konki to just step out of his way and apply a little pressure to the boy to help him keep going in the same direction, sending the boy crashing into the snow. There were times though in which someone would score and hit Konki, but only by ambush. Then everyone would cheer the one who hit him. By the time winter was over, they couldn't even ambush Konki. It seemed that some spirit always intervened and warned him of the ambush. He would either step out of the way or go back. Sometimes he would even catch the stone or the stick, but he would never throw it back. He would just stare at the person wondering why they had such a perverse nature.

Pay-wa-no-chay was the name of the old medicine man. Konki had found that out early whenever the chief came to talk. These two watched Konki. They wanted to know his secret. He was a sight to see, being a head

taller than most people in the village. He was lean and sinewy and swift...easy, like a cat that can't be touched.

If someone would try to touch him, even caress him, he would slink away like a cat as if he had the spine of a cat...loose and wavy. That's what made him detestable. He never stood proud and rock hard like the mountains. He always looked down and slouched. No wonder that he turned into a dog when caught by the people. He had no foundation. He was like a breeze that was sometimes refreshing and sometimes too cold and could never be touched.

Here, he came into the camp, one who could not be touched, not even by Death, not like a warrior to become a hero, but as a dog to be kicked around. Was this his true nature, not that of a soaring eagle? He did not deserve the eagle coat. When he was first spied, he was a soaring eagle, and that had been refreshing, but in the Testing of the Heart, he turned out to be only a little brown dog lost and far from home. What was he doing way out here in these mountains? He didn't look like the desert people or the plains people or the mountain people. He was totally different. Surely, his home was far away past the plains. It has been said that there is a great river that divides the world. Maybe he belongs on the other side of it. Is he the Son of the Great Eagle? He looks like an eagle with that long beak of his. He cannot die. Surely, the Great Eagle loves him, but neither Pay-wa-no-chay nor the chief could figure out why.

I will pray to the Great Spirit, thought Pay-wa-no-chay, and he will tell me what this boy is all about. He will give me an omen.

So the old medicine man climbed to the top of the peak that overlooked the little mountain village. There, he lifted up his arms, chanting his prayer and danced before his maker. He received his answer in the early morning.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Not all winter's moments were dark for Konki. There was a bright moment, a spark of joy called Peg-weg. He was the little boy in Pay-wa-no-chay's hut and was twice as young as Konki. Before Konki had arrived, Peg-weg's favorite thing to do was to follow the older boys around and copy them in what ever they did. Whenever the older boys scolded him, he would only laugh and imitate their faces. He became so good at it that he got them to laughing too. He was the jewel of the whole village. He was blessed. He could neither hear nor talk. Except, he did make bird calls. He could hear birds, it seemed, but nothing or nobody else.

When Konki joined the village that winter, and Peg-weg had joined in hitting Konki with sticks, Konki could not help liking the little rat. He knew instinctively that Peg-weg was pure and innocent and would be for the rest of his life. So Konki thought the boy to be no trouble. He often would let Peg-weg hit him and then howl like a dog and run around just playing. Peg-weg would howl in imitation and laugh. That would make Konki laugh, and they would wrestle, Peg-weg on top of Konki, and they would roll around in the snow. Konki enjoyed the attention. He was the only relief in what seemed to be a scourge from the older boys.

Mountain people were honorable. They were also very proud. They each had to show off their skills, courage and strength. Therefore, there was never a time the boys would gang up on Konki just to whip him. It was a game of skill to them to try to hit Konki, and each boy took his turn. If Konki knew they actually admired him, he wouldn't have been a dog.

Women were entirely different. They had no honor or pride to protect. They and the girls would ruthlessly gang up on Konki and try to beat him either until he bled all over or until he would escape into the woods the way he ran away from old Way-cho-kay. Whenever Konki made a mistake like being late for firewood or wrecking a hut when trying to fix it, step on a foot or a blanket someone woman was wearing, they attacked him like a pack of wolverines, throwing anything they could get their hands on. He was their slave, their property, and they let him know it continually. Perhaps they had to have such a slave to focus their tempers on so they wouldn't be so focused on each other. At least he was helping keep the peace. If any of them liked Konki, maybe it would be for that.

Peg-weg didn't like the women and what they did to Konki. Konki didn't fight back against the women, and that was good. Because of his cat-like prowess, Konki didn't get hurt too often, usually escaping without injury, but Peg-weg didn't see the wisdom. He only saw them hurting Konki, the Son of the Great Eagle (as Pay-way-no-chay told him). Peg-weg would stomp the ground, howl, hiss and chatter at the women with as much anger and fierceness as he could muster. Often, he would lunge at Konki when

Konki was being beaten to knock him away from the women so Konki could run away. Then the women would throw out every curse in their vocabulary and every condemning oath that was in their language at Peg-weg, but they would never hit him or throw things at him because of his blessed state. They would then turn around and laugh uproariously and disperse.

In the early Spring after the ground wasn't so frozen, Peg-weg made like a badger digging his burrow. He dug a giant burrow into the ground with his bare hands. It looked like a mound of earth. He placed some of last years golden leaves he had saved from Autumn into the burrow and thatched it over with sod and branches so it looked quite natural. He laughed all the while. This was for Konki...for him to hide in whenever he needed to run away from the women.

There came a day when flowers started poking their heads out of the snow-dampened soil, and the snow-melt started making little rivulets of clean mountain water running down to the rivers that fed the great salt lake. On such a Spring day when the sun shone bright in a clear blue sky, Konki made a big mistake of falling and tearing one woman's skirt and needed Peg-weg's protection from the enraged women. (He was only trying to grab at something to prevent his fall.)

Peg-weg bounded into the melee, butting against Konki with all his force, pushing out of reach of the women. Shouts and screams followed the boys for a long distance into the woods. Coming into a clearing, Peg-weg motioned with pointing fingers, jumping up and down in a frenzy, chattering like a squirrel, trying to get Konki to see this hole in a mound. Konki looked at the little mound with boyish pleasure. He understood and jumped down into the hole. Konki crawled all the way inside and rested against the dirt embankment. Peg-weg plugged up the hole with a boulder and set a log next to it. He sat down on the log and beamed with pride as the women of the village passed them by, shouting all the obscenities they knew.

One of the women came back and drove Peg-weg back towards home as though he was some cattle, lashing at his back with the switch, and lashing the rest of him with her tongue, using the meanest words that came to her. She didn't think he could hear her anyway. After everyone ran away, the woods were silent except for a song bird...the meadow lark. Konki was left alone with the task of opening up the hole. He decided then that he was not going back to the village. It was Spring time, and he should be off towards his own home.

Konki sat inside the little knoll on the yellow leaves thinking. He was glad to have a rest from those women. They were all witches. But he must be going. It was getting pretty stuffy in there. Thinking of exiting, he stared at the boulder sticking in the hole with beams of light streaking through around the edges and saw magic. He saw the expanse of the dug-out with its floor of golden leaves and felt himself to be in the womb of Mother Earth...a holy place. He looked at the leaves. They glittered in the

sunbeams. The glittering formed a circle around him as if signaling great things. He looked closer at the sun on the leaves and saw something peculiar. He laughed when he realized what he was looking at and rolled around in the leaves laughing. It was something he had done when he was a little boy like Peg-weg. Peg-weg had drawn little picture symbols on all the leaves. Oh, what a wonderful little guy Peg-weg was. He was going to miss him. Konki rested on his belly and looked at the leaves one by one, holding them up into a sunbeam.

Pay-wa-no-chay's chanting could be heard in the distance. Konki became alert, noticing the similarity to old Wey-cho-kay's chants. Here he was inside Mother Earth waiting to be born again as if he were going through another vigil. Similar feelings entered his breast. There was a far off buzz in the air inviting sleep. All of a sudden, panic struck, he pushed against the boulder with all his might!

The angle of assent made it hard to push the boulder out. How had Peg-weg ever pushed that boulder in so hard? He was only a little thing. Konki couldn't see that the log had been twisted around and had its nose up against the boulder and its tail end plowing into the snow-softened sod.

By the time Pay-wa-no-chay came down into the little clearing where Konki was struggling to get out of Peg-weg's little knoll, the Great Fire Spirit was descending into the western desert over the salty waters throwing up legs of purple and orange fires to pull down the stars. When Pay-wa-no-chay stopped to stare at the little knoll (for he heard a rumbling and a grunting inside), Konki popped out all covered with golden leaves with writing on them. The leaves caught the fire in the sky and threw it, dazzling the eyes of the old medicine man.

There was the omen! Pay-wa-no-chay started chanting, and Konki, so startled at running into the medicine man, was shocked into the same spirit, and trance-like, started chanting along with him.

Behold, all, as is in a night vision:
The hungry man eateth and awaketh
But behold, his soul remaineth empty;
The thirsty man drinketh and awaketh
But behold, he is faint and runneth;
His soul hath appetite and he fleeth.
So shall it be with those that fight,
To those that war against Yeo-sep-was.

For behold, all ye that doeth iniquity hear:
Stay your own selves and ye shall wonder be;
Of your own staff ye shall cry out and cry;
Ye shall be drunken but not with strong wine;
Ye shall stagger but not with strong drink;
For behold, he hath poured out upon you all

The spirit of a deep sleep with closed eyes;
He hath covered your seers for your iniquities.

And it shall be that the words of a book
Shall be brought forth out of the ground,
And it shall be the words of them, they,
The ones who have slumbered and slept;
And the words are upon yellow leaves of gold,
A vision of all from the beginning of man
To the end of the world and its destruction,
And a seer shall be brought forth to read them.

In that day shall the book be read by them;
It shall be read upon the tops of mountains;
They shall be read by the power of the Light,
In as much as the eyes of the blind shall
See out of obscurity and out of darkness,
And the deaf shall hear the words of the book,
And all things shall be revealed that ever
Have been and that ever will be to the end.

So cry out and cry for the work of Yeo-sep-was,
For the terrible ones are brought to naught,
And the scorner is consumed with his fire,
And all that watch for iniquity are cut off.
Great Yeo-sep-was shall not now be ashamed,
Neither shall his face now wax pale and faint,
But when he shall see his children in the midst,
They shall sanctify the Holy One of Yeo-sep-was.

As the song came to an end, Pay-way-no-chay and Konki were one with the Great Spirit. Both were on the straight path. They breathed the same breath. With their eyes, they saw in each other's eyes, their own reflection. They were no more enemies nor strangers nor foreigners, and they were more than friends, so had the Great Spirit entered them.

CHAPTER NINE

After a long spell in which Konki was swept up into ecstasy, standing there in front of little Peg-weg's knoll, Konki opened his eyes and shook off the feeling of over-all numbness. He looked and Pay-way-no-chay was gone. In his place was his eagle's coat and ram's horn and a well trodden path up and over the mountains to the east which hadn't been there before.

Konki jumped into the air, giving a loud shout for joy, beating the air with his fist. He picked up his ram's horn and blew a long loud full blast. A little dog yelped, jumping out of Peg-weg's knoll and fled whining back to the village. Above in the air, a lone bald eagle circled. Konki blinked, and he could see out of the eagle's eyes. He blinked again, and he saw out of his own eyes looking up at the eagle. The sun shone through the circle made by the eagle. Konki was whole again. The air smelled fresh and clean. The trees sang to him in gentle breezes. He whistled with the meadow lark and took off up the trail.

Not long after Konki had started on the trail eastward, he heard the sound of a bear behind him. It had the distinct sound of crying out "Ma-ma!" A big grizzly bear came romping up the trail wailing in his deep full voice. Konki gulped back the tears. It was Bearcub! He was full grown. Not far behind him was Cat. He came running up behind Bearcub, all four paws in the air, trying to catch up. He plowed right into Bearcub's rear, yelling, "Yeow! Watch it!" Bearcub turned, so burned up he was at that cat! "What'd ya do that for!" He asked in really fast grunts. "If you'd keep up, ya wouldn't be so much trouble!" And he shook his head fast as if tearing at the air. "Trouble!" He shook his whole body and galloped up to Konki yelling, "Ma-ma!" Cat yelled out "Sorry!" then ran up along side Bearcub who had Konki in a squeeze, licking him in the face. Cat started licking Konki on the rear and on the head, saying, "Chonki" with his tongue sticking out.

Konki laughed so hard at the antics of his friends that his insides were hurting. They all three wound up on the ground on top of Bearcub wrestling. Suddenly, Bearcub jumped up. He had enough of that, but Konki wound up on his back, riding him. Off he ran up the mountain trail with Cat following, crying "Where? Where? Where are we going?" Cat would repeat his whining every hundred feet or so, and Bearcub would respond by shaking his head and growling, "Shuddup!" Konki enjoyed it all. It was Springtime, a time for laughter.

The air was perfumed with the smells of wild flowers, and that was mixed with the sounds of bubbling brooks, whispering trees and the piping and trilling gaiety of the birds. Spring air freshened all of Konki's senses to a new life and a heart-felt destiny. All the hardships of winter were forgotten. He rode peacefully on the giant grizzly's back. At the same time, he soared over-head seeing out of the eyes of the eagle the mountains that lay before

him and the great plains with its masses of buffalo.

Coming upon a clearing they startled a dozen or so doe and young buck grazing. They lifted their heads and started backing away. One of the young bucks, a six pointer, jumped from the bushes and startled the three travelers. He put his head down ready to charge.

Cat approached softly and whispered, "I am quite willing to eat fish, thank you."

Bear volunteered, "I love the beauty of the deer and the antelope."

And Konki said, "Yes, we're fish eaters."

Taken aback, the buck cleared his throat and lowered his tail, and looked at the coat of many feathers that Konki wore. He spoke up. "I have heard of The Son of the Great Eagle, that he was in these mountains. The description fits you. You even smell like a bird. Wait here." He then walked away slowly and went down through the herd. Later, Konki could see him on a rock ledge talking to the Great Prince.

Cat and Bearcub were getting fidgety. Konki calmed them down by petting them. In Nature, all three would have been enemies, but now, they trusted each other, and Cat and Bear were content just to be with Konki.

Presently, the young buck returned. He said, "The Prince will see you Eagle-son," he said haughtily, wearing his pride as a badge of authority. "You have permission to cross. This way."

Crossing the green-way, all the doe and young ones parted as the three untouchables followed the buck. They came to the edge of the clearing where the mountain resumed its rise. He told the cat and bear to remain and took Konki up a steep trail to the left. Pine trees covered their ascent until they reached the rocky abutment. There on the rocky ledge stood the Great Prince watching over his brood. His massive hairy chest and great antlers were striking. He was a twelve pointer. His antlers were almost as big as his body. His neck and shoulders rippled with muscles. He was a little undignified in that he was still shedding his winter coat, but his eyes were black and piercing.

"Bow before the Prince," spoke the young buck in subdued tones.

Konki bowed with his legs as a deer would with his right knee on the earth.

"There are changes coming," said the Prince, not looking directly at Konki. "I fear for my brood and all the forest creatures." He walked around nervously, not being accustomed to humans.

"My kind have always been hunted by your kind. It has always been so. Yet, there has always been mutual respect. Your kind has never taken without asking nor have left us without the strong, the beautiful, and the brave. That is coming to an end.

"Oh! Please do get up. That is enough bowing," said the Prince with a sharp glance of his eye. "Hate to see a man bowing to an animal. It's obscene.

"Now, where was I? Oh, yes...coming to an end. There will be great trouble for your kind as well as mine. The forests will be diminished. Its sweet smell will become bitter. The clear waters will no longer be clean. Buffalo will be slaughtered. My kind will grow small in number. Your people will starve, become greatly sick in both mind and body. Your people will be slaughtered in great numbers just as they will do to the buffalo. All life is in danger...great changes...great pollutions." The Prince looked directly at Konki. "*He* is coming! More powerful than all of us put together. He carries thunder in his hands. He will lay waste the land. He will destroy all that he sees to build him a dwelling place, and the land, the Great Mother will lay on her death-bed."

"Who?" asked Konki. "Who is *He*?"

"The Pale Face, of course," said the Prince matter-of-factly. "Not the ones that used to live here, the ones that were destroyed in the great war because they rebelled against the Great Creator of all things...no...a different breed altogether.

He comes as a conqueror...some kind of pestilence that eats up the land...and its people.

The Prince looked blank for a second and then looked up into the air. "Great thunder birds will chase the eagle out of the sky, spreading their great pollutions, changing the seasons. They will carry men aloft who will spread fire and destruction from the sky." He looked back at Konki. "Your people will be pushed back into small corners of the earth...will become weak for a time, but if they unite, they will be like wolves among the herd.

"My family will be hunted for sport, just for laughs. Only the ugly and weak will remain. The young braves will be brought to shame and the old braves humbled to the dust.

"The land will be raped. Her insides eaten away as by giant worms. Her beautiful mountains will be torn down to feed the belly of the Pale Face. The waters will be poisoned by his waste and the forests stripped to build his dwelling places. Many lives who subsist on the forest will perish. The forest will no longer feed her young. The land will become sick and die as when a man burns with a fever and dies.

"Go and tell your people that because they refused Shiloh, the Peace Giver, and because they have sought each others blood up to their necks...because they waded in the blood of their brother," and the Great Prince's eyes looked like fire, "tell them that the Great Eagle sends upon them a great flood from the east to wash away their blood...to wash away the blood from off the land. It will not be a flood of water as in the old times, but it will be a flood of men, women, and their children and their children's children who come to inherit the land. It will be a flood of their feet and the feet of their horses and their chariots and their houses and their towers and all their cattle, and their thunder and smoke that kills."

Konki saw that tears ran freely from the Great Prince's eyes, yet his

voice never faltered. He looked at Konki and said, "That is enough. I am tired. You may take your leave." As he talked, the Great Prince walked away, shaking his tail behind him.

Konki was escorted back down the mountain trail by the young buck that brought him. He told Konki that it was time for him to leave, and that he should visit the buffalo. "Visit them and behold their grandeur that will be no more," he said.

Konki had heard rumors of the buffalo and had seen their clouds from being carried by the Great Eagle across the sky, but he could only speculate what the buffalo was. He had heard the buffalo was a giant monster with many many legs, and that when he ran, he made it thunder, and that he made the clouds and the rain. He caused the lightening to strike, causing great mountains to topple and burning up whole forests with his fire. He made the earth to shake and swallowed up whole villages, causing mountains to come up where there had been valleys before.

"What is a buffalo?" asked Konki as the buck turned to go.

"The buffalo is a giant hairy beast that runs on many many legs. When he runs, he shakes the earth. He makes it thunder. He makes the clouds and the rain. He is the Life-Giver. His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. His skin clothes the people and makes their dwellings." He turned and walked slowly away. He added as an after thought, "He is one of us, only bigger and more hairy, and he only has two points, but how big are those points!"

"Oh," said Konki softly, still not knowing what a buffalo looked like. He would have to see one for himself, so he walked away, nodding his head abruptly.

Konki called to his friends Bearcub and Cat and headed southeast out of the valley. He turned to look at the bluff where he and the Prince had talked. He saw the Prince standing there majestically, looking over his brood. He raised his hand in farewell. The Prince nodded his head and disappeared back into the shadows. Konki left, wondering about the Pale Face.

It wasn't hard to figure out that his ancestor Wayne MacKonki had come from the land of the Pale Face. Knowing that his ancestor's people were aware of the existence of this land, they might be telling others about it around their home fires. Others were bound to know about this land. It wouldn't be too long before the word spread and the Pale Face would start arriving here in the great numbers the Prince had talked about.

There were stories handed down how the people of the north had driven out the Pale Face long ago that had come from the sea beyond the rising sun. Now, Konki had the vision of great invading forces that would over whelm the land and his own people. What could *he* do but spread the prophecy? How could his people defend themselves against prophecy?

Bearcub and Cat caught up with him after he left the valley. He left going through a ravine and up a canyon wall to the east. Bearcub had found

some honey and had gorged himself, coming back all sweet and sticky. Cat had found a nice sunny rock near a stream where fish flew through the air from time to time. All he had to do was to swat them his way. He smelled fishy and satisfied. The three of them started off on their trek following the eagle flying above them.

CHAPTER TEN

Mountains and valleys they crossed. Swollen streams full of the winter melted snow were forded with difficulties, each taking their turn at almost drowning.

Spring showers threw up rainbows about the traveling trio. Konki remembered home and the great waterfall across from Rock Face. It was always shrouded in a white mist. With the sun shining on it, it threw up a rainbow like a circle around himself when he was younger. Only, the center of the rainbow had been, not about his head, but about the head of his shadow. He figured then that as he had a shadow, the rainbow must be the shadow of the Great Spirit. It was a sign that the Great Spirit surrounded him as its shadow surrounded his shadow.

The shadow of the Great Spirit followed Konki and his friends in bows so big they covered whole mountains. As they crossed the last of the great Rocky Mountains and entered the vast grass lands, the land of the buffalo, they saw a huge rainbow, mountain high, stand between them and the black clouds to the east. It was like a doorway opening up to other adventures that lie ahead, a sign from the Great Spirit saying "This is the way."

Not a day had passed when Konki heard the distant thunder that never stopped. It went on all night with black clouds and lightening, the thunder drawing ever closer.

Morning brought a surprise. As Konki lay in the grass on a little knoll, he realized thunder was upon him and the ground was shaking. Not fifty strides from him was a black mass of buffalo moving south. Chills ran up and down Konki's spine. Here was life and death all in one. Cat and Bearcub had disappeared. They were no where to be seen. They had run away and left Konki to experience this mind rendering and heart tearing sensation alone.

It took most of the day for the herd to pass. While waiting, Konki had time to look around his immediate surroundings to see if Cat or Bearcub were nearby. He couldn't see far because of the dust cloud like a dense fog. What he did see made him laugh. Cat and Bearcub were huddled in a deep ravine behind him. He laughed so hard that he rolled over and fell into the ravine.

This area of the grass lands were rather hilly and cut by the mountain waters into deep ravines.

Konki hit bottom laughing. He reached for his horn and let out all his joy into it. The blast was so astounding that it changed the course of the herd. One young bison was so confused that he ran right into the deepest part of the ravine and broke his neck. Konki looked around. There were some small trees, and yes, even a spring further down from the dead buffalo. He immediately went to work on the carcass, gutting it and laying out its hide as if it were a deer, using the knife blade he had used among the mountain people.

Cat and Bearcub were drawn by their noses to the carcass. Konki fed them huge chunks of the meat until they were satisfied. He cut stakes, and finding good fire wood that had been washed down from the mountains, smoked the rest of the meat, cooking only a small portion for himself. After his meal, he started on the hide, scraping and cleaning it. From the hide and more stakes, Konki made himself a shelter, some new moccasins and a loin belt.

Konki moved his quarters out of the ravine when the rains came. He followed Cat and Bearcub instinctually, looking back down into the ravine afterwards to see a torrent of water washing away their previous camp. All their provisions took most of the room in the little hut, so when the sky cleared, Konki slept outside underneath a carpet of stars.

On the fourth day, Konki decided he'd better head for home. He packed up everything and put it on Bearcub's back. It wasn't long before they heard the familiar sounds of war. All three of them dropped down into the tall grass, only Bearcub's back stuck up. Of course, he could easily be mistaken for a buffalo.

War whoops and yells surrounded them. He heard arrows slicing the air and heard the cries of the dead and dying. Men ran passed him and then chills ran up and down Konki as he saw the most beautiful animal as if it were a spirit carrying a man aloft. It seemed to fly across the grass lands. He fell in love. But he stuck his head up too far and something hard hit it. He was knocked unconscious. The next thing he knew was Bearcub's tongue licking his sore head.

What Konki hadn't seen was a warrior rush past him on a horse and knock him on the head with his club. Bearcub had raised up on his back legs, bellowed and sent many warriors scattering. Cat cried out, shattering the air. The warriors with their painted faces and painted ponies retreated to the north. They thought that for sure they had awakened some evil spirits in the place of battle.

While unconscious, Konki dreamed he was racing with the wind, racing with the wind animal he had seen in battle. These animals were sleek with flowing manes and tails. They looked like nothing he had seen before and so he called them the wind animals, for, they flew along the ground with the wind. The buffalo were made of the earth and were heavy, but this new one was made of the wind.

In his dream, Konki was again an eagle, and he watched the warriors on their sleek wind animals travel to huge village to the north. It would take many many forest villages to fill it, and all their dwellings were pointed...large pointed huts.

Though Konki wanted to follow and watch the horsemen, the Great Spirit called him back to the place of death. The eagle cried. His screams could be heard from the mountains to the horizon. The warriors noticed. A lone man lying among the dead noticed. Konki heard the scream and awoke

to Bearcub's licking.

Konki moved the bear's head with his arm away from his face. "I'll be alright!" he exclaimed. He looked above as he heard the eagle's scream again. It was the Great Spirit directing him to the dead. The Great Spirit told him there was someone yet alive that he must attend.

Konki wandered among the dead, listening for a heartbeat, for a breath. Cat heard it first and pricked his ears, then Bearcub. Konki followed them to a deep ravine where he heard groaning. Only one remained alive.

They have come for me, thought the dying man as he looked up and saw a blurred image of a huge cat, a monstrous bear and a tall thin man, not quit a man, peering at him from the edge of the ravine wall. They have come to take me away from my people to live with the mountain spirits. The Great Buffalo has deserted me. I am unworthy, he thought. I have failed. At that thought, he fainted for loss of blood.

Konki, Cat and Bearcub jumped down into the ravine.

"On my back, the man," groaned Bearcub.

"Away from this place," Cat whispered loudly.

Konki placed the man on Bearcub's back. He looked around, but he saw nor heard anyone else alive. Tears ran down his cheeks when he saw a boy his own age with an arrow through his heart lying white with the muddy water of the ravine running over him.

Searching for a place of shelter on the open plains was difficult. Konki knew now not to make camp in one of the ravines, and it wasn't safe out in the open to be spotted by warriors or be trampled by buffalo. He didn't have the eyes of the plainsmen, but he did have the eyes of an eagle. He raised his arms to the Great Spirit and prayed. An eagle cried. He followed the eagle, and it led them to an outcropping of rock, a flint quarry, and it had an overhang. Cat sat on top of the rock as a look-out while Bearcub added his body to the rest of the outcropping to be a perfect wind-break for the wounded man.

Leaving his friends to watch over the man, Konki went back to their previous camp which had been in the ravine. It was upwards of the battle scene and now poison water. He found that although there was now a muddy stream in it, the spring was still trickling clean water. Building a fire, he took clay and made some pots, filling them and surrounding them with coals and ash. While the pots were firing, Konki looked around and tasted several herbs, asking desperately in his heart if they would be good to heal the man. He came across a couple which revealed themselves to him...a prairie flower to heal a prairie man.

After the firing of the pots, Konki filled them with fresh water and herbs. He had never thought to put water in a buffalo's bladder like a plainsman. He was raised in the woods in a village and did what he saw the women of his village do. When he reached the camp, he immediately gave the wounded man a drink. The man woke up a little, long enough for a drink,

thinking what a strange thing had been put to his lips, for he was not accustomed to pottery. He took several gulps of water and passed out again.

Konki nursed the wounded man for several days, dressing his wounds with herbs and cool clay. He would chant the songs of his old medicine man, the songs of healing he had heard old Wey-chok-kay chant over the sick. After a couple of days, Konki made a broth of buffalo meat and fed to him, lifting his head into his lap, letting him sip out of a blackened pot.

Konki nursed the young brave for several days, dwindling his supply of buffalo meat. Cat understood that and started bringing them prairie dog and rabbit. Cat had to feed Bearcub because the little animals were always too fast for his bulk. He didn't like it and complained a lot, growling and making a fuss every time a little carcass was laid at his feet.

Konki continued his kindness he had learned from Aaron. When the brave came to his senses, Konki signed to him, asking his name and place of origin. Konki called him What-chew-make-it-to-be, and learned that he was from the south. His people were simply called the Southern People.

Bearcub tried to come around the outcrop to lick the young man's face. He screamed and tried to knock the bear away with his arms. Konki just laughed. Cat watched from the upper ledge and tried pawing the young man's scalp. He let out another yelp and started shivering.

"Back off, you two," Konki said calmly.

The two pets came down and sat down beside Konki to stare at the man. He was strange to them.

The stranger backed up against the rock, signing, "Who are you? What are you?"

Konki signed "Son of the Great Eagle," because he had no sign for Konki. "And these two are my pets. Cat and Bearcub. They will not hurt you. We have nursed you." Konki signed, "What happened that you had to fight?"

"Where are all the other braves?" What-chew-make-it-to-be signed.

"They have all gone to the Happy Hunting Grounds. Why did you fight?" Konki signed, not understanding why men had to fight.

"I am of the Southern People. My people do not have the wind with four legs." (This could be interpreted as Wind Runners, thought Konki, as he looked at the signs.) "The Northern People always take them. They do not let us have them. We went to trade for the wind runners. The Northern People are very rich. They want nothing from us. So we took the wind runners and escaped. The Northern People followed us and killed us. Now, we will have no wind runners to hunt the buffalo. We run with the buffalo and shoot them and chase them to fall over the cliffs. I cannot go back to my people in shame. I am ready to go to the Happy Hunting Grounds with you, oh mighty spirit."

Konki looked at the sadness in the young brave's face. It was the

sadness of dishonor. He remembered that he himself had been as a mere dog in the presence of the mountain people. He had been rescued by the prayers of the medicine man Pay-wa-no-kay whom he had thought to be his enemy. Konki would pray for Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be, and surely, the Great Spirit would take away his disgrace and his dishonor and give him his freedom again. The Great Spirit had done so with himself. Surely, thought Konki, the Great Spirit would be graceful and give unto Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be a final victory he could not obtain for himself, giving him wind runners not belonging to someone else for his people to hunt the buffalo. Konki wanted him and his people to be happy. He couldn't stand the sadness he saw here among the dead.

"Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be," Konki addressed the young brave in as honorable tone of voice as he could project, speaking in his own tongue and signing to him, "Your story has filled my heart with much sorrow..." and he felt for the right words to say. "I am moved to give you back your honor and lead your people to victory. And the souls of your brothers who have died in combat at your side will not walk the earth in disgrace, but will find a safe home with the Great Eagle whom people say is the Great Father of All." He didn't want to seem proud and say "my father," so he said "Father of All." "I will pray to the Great Spirit, and he will give us the wisdom to give you back your honor." With that, Konki climbed up to the top of the outcropping of rock.

Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be, still being frightened at the two mountain spirits, as he supposed, started mumbling a chant to the Great Buffalo. He started rocking back and forth to the rhythm of the chant.

Cat watched him closely, putting himself in a crouching position, ready to pounce on the man. Cat's face was expression-less, except that his eyes were filled with ferocity, a ferocity that cut into the young brave's soul. A light entered into his mind and seared his heart, showing him all the petty theft and lying, revealing all the evil and slyness, seeking revenge, resentments, trying to get power over others, his pride and his anger. All his secret past was revealed to him, causing him to break out into a cold sweat as he had this strange communication with Cat. All the while, Konki prayed to the Great Spirit on top of the rock outcropping with raised hands.

Cat thought to protect Konki by finding the purity of this man's heart, the bright spot covered by the darkness of mortality (he knew instinctively the vile nature of man and his kind), or, he thought, he will die in his own guilt.

So the Great Spirit poured out upon these four creatures a gift and a light to help this poor man and his people that they may become a great people.

Storm clouds gathered overhead;
The air was heavy like stone that
Pressed against the man's chest

And tore like lightening his soul.
Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be cried out,
His heart wide open like his mouth
That swallowed deep his anguish loud
In roaring thunder torn from the earth
Giving birth to some form bright and
Shining like burning white fire
Brandishing steeds shaking deeds
Making rain breaking forth that
Washes away...that rumbles away
The mirth brought on by filth
Leaving strong steel in his veins,
Bringing a man as living gold as
Gift to the One who rules on High.

Rumbling within, Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be bled into the ground making the ground to rumble with the sound of the buffalo. Lightening flashed and the rain poured, and the thunder overtook the four friends as the black hordes shook the sheltering rocks they huddled behind. All the darkness in Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be fled with the thundering and the rumbling and the huffing and braying of the buffalo. He felt cleansed and washed in the rain of someone else's tears. He climbed to the top of the rocks, wanting to grasp the sky, wanting to grasp the presence of someone he felt he could only imagine as the Great Buffalo or the Great Eagle with his teeth and his hands, giving out a yell and a whoop...whoop, and screaming with glee, crying in gratitude to the Great Creator of the earth and sky.

Lightening flashed, revealing the Great Eagle. With a tearing scream, he swooped down and caught Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be and carried him aloft into the storm. Out of the clouds, the wind runners came. The wind poured from their nostrils and beat upon the earth and upon the three friends. The lightning fast eagle placed the young brave onto the back of the leading steed. He caught his mane and gave a war whoop. He led the herd and chased the white buffalo in the sky. With his bow taken from his back and a single arrow, placing it in the bow and aiming surely, he pulled back and let go, placing the arrow in the heart of the beast.

Konki climbed down from the prayer-rock, returning from praying to the Great Spirit. He had seen a vision in the great lightnings and thunder of the storm...had been shaken by the thunder claps too near, yet he had prayed on in the presence of lightening striking too close. Chills had run up and down his spine. As he reached the ground, he saw Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be huddled together with Bearcub and Cat under the rock. There was a light rain falling. The young brave was calmly meditating and looked comfortable with the animals. He opened his eyes, looking at Konki with a smile. He spoke softly without signing.

"Konki, my brother, you have returned me to honor and oneness. I am

grateful."

Konki held back a thrill. He seemed to understand the man's tongue. He nodded his head with a manly shake and sat down among the trio where steam like smoke came from everyone's nostrils.

"You have honored me and my people. You have given us the runners-with-the-wind," he said slowly to Konki. "Come, you will be honored in my village and in my tepee." At that saying, he pointed to a buffalo laying on its side only a few strides from them to the south.

Konki had not noticed it before. It seemed magical as if it had just appeared as Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be spoke. He could see an arrow sticking out of the breast of the beast.

Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be arose. The animals stirred, looked lazily at the two and went back to sleep. He took one of the clay bowls and led Konki over to the buffalo. Taking his sharp flint knife, he cut a deep hole where the arrow had pierced the heart. The bowl caught the blood. Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be chanted his buffalo song as he opened the big animal's chest. He stopped chanting long enough to drink from the bowl the blood of what he called the Life Giver in his chanting. He continued to chant as he handed the bowl to Konki. Konki drank the rest of the blood very solemnly. There came a buzzing in his head and everything became weightless, ephemeral. Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be, Konki, the buffalo, the rock outcropping, Bearcub and Cat, all seemed to float upwards as clouds lifting off the mountain side on a spring morning as the sun rises.

Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be cut off some of the warm flesh of the buffalo, still chanting smoothly, cut it in two and handed a piece to Konki. They ate in silence with great respect to the buffalo. The Great Spirit entered them and they chanted the buffalo song together. As they sang, they danced, and as they danced, the dead buffalo arose and embraced Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be. They became one. Konki could see the face of the young brave peering out from the mouth of the buffalo, and the feet and hands were the hands of a man. They danced the buffalo dance, telling how Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be rode the wind-runner and chased the buffalo...how, with one swift arrow to the heart, the young brave had vanquished the foe and how the buffalo had given his life for the brave so that the foe would not take him with him in death, recalling how the Great Spirit could pierce a man's heart with such terror if he disobeyed the great teachings of the Creator of all. They sang of the Life Giver and how he provided his flesh and blood, his skin and bones for all the people of the plains who lived within the skin of the buffalo, made tools of the buffalo's bones, clothed themselves with the buffalo's skin, fed upon the buffalo's flesh, and so living within the Great Buffalo, He lived within them.

When the dance was over, Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be taught Konki the correct way to cut up the buffalo and smoke the flesh and expose of the entrails and head. There were many delicacies which they enjoyed, and

many parts which they could not properly preserve. When they got through with the carcass, Cat and Bearcub devoured the remains. There was not one piece left. All four of them left with a full stomach. Each one took turns burping.

Using poles from the nearby ravine, the two men built a small tepee, using both Konki's skin and the recently acquired skin. There, they rested for the night, telling each other stories and visions and the histories of their people.

"Tell me of your dream given you, Konki, Son of the Great Eagle, by the Great Spirit of the wind-runners," asked Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be.

"I saw many wind-runners," responded Konki. "I saw you riding the lead stallion, bringing the whole herd of them into your village. I saw much honor bestowed upon you and your family by your village."

"Konki, Son of the Great Eagle, only you with your far vision can see the wind-runners running wild upon the flat-lands. Only you can take me there. To you will be given much honor and praise."

"Let us give honor to whom honor is due," replied Konki. "...to the Great Spirit who giveth to all men all things they are worthy of, as my mother taught me."

"This is true. The Great Spirit is in the buffalo as he is in the Great Eagle. He is the true Life Giver and Creator of all things...as my mother also taught me," said Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be with a far off look in his eyes.

"And so it should stand in the councils of all the nations," said Konki, thinking of his mother, which brought a tear to his eye, yet he did not choke on it.

"What shall we do now?" Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be asked.

Konki knelt down upon the ground facing east and facing his new friend. He took his ram's horn in both hands, showing it to him.

"This is my power," he said. "It was given to me by my friend who dwelt in the cave into which the sun sets each night. It is the horn of the Life-Giver whose blood I drank with him, and now, with you. With it, I call the name of the Life-Giver, even the Great Spirit who created all things." Then to make his cause holy, he commanded, "Anoint this ram's horn with the blood of the buffalo and your desire will be sent up to the sky to the Great Spirit. I desire to give you this great gift, that you may have the wind-runners, that you may be at peace with the other people of the plains and not covet nor envy nor steal any more. The power has been given me to bless others, and this is the blessing that I desire to give you...to give you your honor."

With desire bursting from his heart, Konki pushed the horn at Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be. "Anoint it!" he cried.

Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be looked wildly around, knowing they had already devoured the buffalo. He went to the bones. He ran his hand over the bones of the buffalo, hoping there would be enough blood left. The more

he rubbed, the more wet his hand became. He touched his own breast and then going over to Konki, smeared some of the blood onto the ram's horn.

Konki brought the end of the horn to his mouth and blew long and loud. Nothing happened. He cried to the Great Spirit..."Oh bless me according to my desire!"

He blew again. Nothing happened. His breast swelled with such burning that he thought he would burst!

His friend waited in great anticipation, for what, he knew not.

Bowing his head, Konki prayed, filling his prayer with all the faith, humility and desire he could muster, shaking, shedding all the human nature in him, concentrating on all the light and truth he was made of. Suddenly relaxed in a moment of inspiration, he could feel the Spirit pour into the top of his head like a funnel from the Heavens above filling his whole soul. the Great Eagle had turned into a dove and lighted upon his heart. The Spirit raised him to his feet, and then he floated to the top of the rock outcropping, putting the horn to his mouth. As his foot touched the rock, he threw his head back and gave out a loud and clear call on the horn that filled the sky and all the plains. Bearcub and Cat stood still, looking at their master. The buffalo miles away stood still and listened. All the prairie dogs and rabbits stood still with their ears pointed towards the call. The whole of the plains and the sky were calmed at this outpouring of the Spirit.

Thunder Bird screaming,
Light flashing at midday,
Changing, quickening,
Konki spreading his wings,
Southward soaring flying,
Screeching against the sky,
Triumph songs sounding,
Konki diving grabbing
Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be.

Caught up into the sky, the young brave was dazed, knowing only the great wings flapping around him. He could see the great white head, an eye looking back at him, the golden beak that was as big as his leg. He looked below as if looking out of the eye of the eagle. He could see each branch on each bush and each hair on each rabbit and prairie dog and each eye bulging from each buffalo, though, he was high into the clouds of the sky. He saw the villages of his people spread out over many lands. He saw others riding their wind-runners hunting the buffalo. Then he saw *his* wind-runners running free on the plain in a great heard, and the Great Eagle swooped down and dropped him on the lead stallion's back. He ran with the wind-runners.

The stallion was all white. His black eyes popping out in great desire, his nostrils flaring, his tail aflame with glory. They ran into the wind, into the clouds, through rainbows of color. All the mares and young lords followed,

followed their master into the clouds. Wha-chew-mak-it-to-be ran with them, was one with them, running as the wind.

Wind in his face,
Wind in his arms and legs,
The wind racing burning
His breast on fire,
His wind-runners
Bequeathed to him
"Maker of the wind
Whose wings roar,"
Roaring thunder
Across the plains
Wind-runners' mains
Flying reigns
Of pure color stroked
Their new master
Giving him a new name.

Konki, soaring from above swooped down and joined Maker-of-the-Wind, settling onto the back of a mare running beside his friend. As cloud gave way to solid earth, they neared an encampment of tepees. The roaring of the wind was answered by the roaring of the glorious voices of the people, his people. With great exultation, Maker-of-the-Wind ran his wind-runners through the village amid the shouting and cheering, and the whoop-whooping of the people. He sought the tepee of his father. He would give them all to his father, for his father was chief of the tribe. He would show his father that this day he was a man reborn and could no longer fail him, having been immersed in the Great Spirit. Now, he could sit in council with him and with all the elders and braves of his people.

Maker-of-the-Wind found his father standing by the entrance of his tepee. He quickly slid off the white stallion, ran and embraced the ankles of his father, crying, "Oh father, I give you all these Runners-with-the-wind!"

Maker-of-the-Wind's father lifted him up and embraced him. "This day," he called out to his people who had gathered around, "I have a new son! I give unto you a new name. From this time forward, you shall be called Maker-of-the-Wind-Whose-Wings-Roar!"

The People shouted for joy. They sang. Now, they would starve no more. Now, they would be looked upon with honor by the other tribes. They sang, "The Great Spirit has lifted us up. The Great Spirit has brought upon us honor and glory. We shall rejoice all the days of our lives."

A great and noble figure stood in their midst clothed in a buffalo skin, wearing the head of a large buffalo. He spoke from the buffalo's mouth, having authority from the Great Buffalo.

"Now is the buffalo ours. We do not steal nor do we slink in the grass. We will ride along side the buffalo. He is ours and we are his, and we will not

fall to shame anymore. Our shame is gone, and our honor has been brought back to us, therefore, let us live by the law the Great Buffalo has given to us."

The people shouted again for joy. The Great Chief, father of Maker-of-the-Wind, spoke out.

"Saddle the Wind, for tonight we ride! Tonight we hunt the buffalo as men and not as dogs. Tonight, we prove our honor!"

All the young men that were left in the camp and all the old men who dared leaped upon the wind-runners and rode out of camp yelling and whooping, crying out their thanks to the Great Spirit and to the Great Buffalo and to the Wind-Runners, and to their hero, the son of the Chief, Maker-of-the-Wind. Many ran out calling him their new chief.

Maker's father was too old to go, or he was entranced by the whole situation enough to where he just stood by the door of his tepee bathed in the pride of his new son. His old son, the one he had sent to trade for the wind-runners had been no good. He had been lazy and too proud to work. He made others do his work, making slaves of those who would have been his friends, stealing anything from anybody in the village because his father had allowed it. He loved his only son. He had scolded and admonished, but nothing had worked. The medicine man told him to send him out to trade for the one thing this tribe needed...the runners-with-the-wind. But he knew he sent him to his death. He knew he would not pass the tests the northern tribe would require of him. They would immediately take him for a thief. They would read it in his eyes and in his countenance. They would kill him. Yet, he returned, and he returned with a greater prize than what he had gone out for to seek. He brought his better and higher self back. Only an outside influence, some higher power, could have done this. He knew these wind-runners had not been stolen. They had no marks of man on them, and no marks of having been ridden. They were fresh and wild. Where had he found them, and where did he get them?

There was a presence standing near the old chief. He turned to see a tall lanky boy covered with eagle feathers of the Great Eagle. The horn of a great mountain ram hung at his side. Chills ran through his spine as he beheld the boy's blue eyes...eyes as blue as the noon-day sky and as deep as eternity. His nose was itself a beak, long and pointed. His presence was noble, yet, without pride. He had noticed him only momentarily when his son had ridden into camp with the runners-with-the-wind. He had thought perhaps it had been one of his own village. Now he remembered. It was him! He was puzzled at his presence, and why did a mere boy wear the feathers of the Great Eagle?

"Are you a spirit?" he asked. "Who are you, and how is it that you were with my son in the stead of all the young braves I sent with him. Where are they? Did you take them?"

Konki bowed his head and spread out his hands, answering, "Oh Great

Chief, I am but a small boy sent out on a quest. I found your son among the dead. I pulled him out of the earth. I loved him and nursed him back to health. The others are all dead. They died bravely."

The women who stood by wondering where *their* sons were started moaning. The story was clear enough. Their sons had been sent out to trade for wind-runners and had lost their lives. That night, there would be songs of sorrow at the loss of loved ones mixed with songs of rejoicing for the wind-runners.

The old chief opened the portal of his tepee and motioned for Konki to enter.

"You who have loved my son, come," he said. "You are welcome to my tepee. Come and tell me how a mountain boy like you have wondered so far from home, and how is it that you have been so honored. Come and honor my home."

Konki was ushered into the tepee, ducking low to get through the hole. He uttered a small blessing as he entered as his mother had taught him. This was a strange type of home to live in, he contemplated. Although he saw the medicine man who had set aside his buffalo head, he felt no animosity or fear hear. He remembered the witches of the mountain people. He hadn't given their wigwam a blessing. Maybe the malevolence had come from his fear only. In this tepee, he felt and saw the radiance of the sun come through the tanned skins of the wall. The dwelling was shaped like a horn. Maybe in token of the buffalo who gave them life.

The three of them sat around a small central fire. The two men talked together telling of the coming of their people from the south lands, of the wars they had with the cliff people and the mesa people. They talked of the Mother Buffalo with her calf leading them to the plains and feeding them with the flesh of her own calf, of how she tore her calf into many pieces and it became a great herd that sustained their people in time of need. They said that she has ever fed them since.

Then they looked to Konki for his turn. He told his story of how his people came forth out of the great waters, landing on a river, and of how they were almost drowned. If it hadn't been for the Great Bear feeding them and nursing them, they would have perished. He told of how the Great Bear gave them great wisdom in how to hunt and fish, make clothing, homes, and how to govern quarreling families...how, in ceremonies they are given wisdom...of his own vigil...of how he was driven from his village, and of being rescued by the Great Eagle. He told them how he has been wondering the through the mountains and now the plains to get back home.

"But tell me now," said the chief, "how is it that you came here with my son. Tell me how he became a man."

Konki started with his stay with the mountain people, about Pay-wa-no-chay and the strange writings on the golden leaves...of how he had left and trodden over mountains, meeting the Great Prince, what he said to him,

and ending up on the plains with the great herds of buffalo.

Buffalo-who-hunts-people was the medicine-man's name. He asked Konki, "What are these writings on yellow leaves?"

Konki looked puzzled. It was so obvious to him that he didn't know how to express it. He just said, "Writings."

"Show me!" demanded Buffalo-who-hunts-people, jabbing his fore finger into the dirt near the fire. He was a dark figure, and looked like Old Stone Face back home. His expression was fierce, yet without expression, and never changing. Konki also noticed that all the men wore their hair long like women. All men in his tribe shaved their heads. It made him cautious to see men like these, but respectful still.

Konki wrote on the ground in the curling figures he had seen on the leaves. Buffalo-who-hunts-people looked at his chief and back to Konki with a puzzle in his eye. Both he and the chief had seen such writings when they were young bucks.

Chief No-way-che told Konki of the long ago time when he and Buffalo-who-hunts-people were young and hunting in a canyon far to the south. They came upon an old white man who showed them yellow plates covered with writings on them just as Konki had described.

"The old man was pale like a spirit," said Buffalo-who-hunts-people. "He had white hair and long white whiskers on his face. He talked a strange guttural tongue. We could almost understand it, but we knew the signs portrayed by his hand. He said the yellow plates were the writings of the Great Spirit and that it talked about our ancestors and our children's children. He said there would come other white men to the land just as your Great Prince said. He said that the white men would give these writings to our children's children but not the plates, and that they were sacred, telling of the Great White Brother among our people long ago, that these white men would take our land away from us, but that the Great White Brother would come and give it back. He said that our people were bad because of our wars and bloodshed and that we would not get these writings until our hearts were broken and lay upon the land like dust. We got angry at him and would have killed him, but he disappeared right in front of us. He was a Spirit, and we ran from that place and never have gone back there."

For a time, the chief and the medicine-man both sat silent, staring at Konki as if they expected him too to disappear. Their eyes were white and round, enlarged, expecting something.

"What is it you want?" asked Konki.

"We now have a second witness," said the chief. "It is good you are with us. Continue...about my son."

Konki told them about how he had found his son and cared for him and loved him and wanted to give him a sacred gift...so he gave him the wind-runners by the gifts given him by the Great Spirit.

"How did you come to own such great gifts from the Great Spirit?"

asked Buffalo-who-hunts-people.

Konki told them of his long relationship with the forest spirits, Wey-cho-kay, Aaron, and Pay-wa-no-chay.

"You have great medicine. You will rule over your people, serve and protect them," Buffalo-who-hunts-people said.

At that, many elders who had not gone on the hunt came through the door as if by some unseen summons. They all sat around the central fire. Someone brought out a peace pipe and passed it around. When it came to Konki, he felt so honored he wanted to shed a tear, but he didn't think that would be approved. As he inhaled, Konki struggled not to cough, and everyone laughed, but only in fun and friendship. These people were good people and humble. They talked of many things and then the wind-runners were heard in the camp. Everyone got up and filed out into the whoop-whooping and yelling.

"Come," said the chief, "a feast in your honor and for my son who has come home to me."

Women, children, and the elders followed their chief and Konki as they became surrounded by wind-runners and the merry-making of young bucks bringing in many buffalo. Konki was surprised at the women taking charge of the buffalo and dragging them off to the middle of the camp. They sang to the beating of drums as they skinned and cleaned the buffalo. Smoke fires were started. Some women cut up the carcasses while others cleaned the hides. The heads were put in great stew pots and boiled, as were the entrails. Nothing was wasted.

Maker-of-the-Wind felt glorious. His heart within him was swollen with joy for his people. Even before he had reached the camp, he could hear the villagers sing songs of heroic deeds for Maker-of-the-Wind and for all the young braves that followed him. The last time he had gone out with the band of warriors, it had ended up in defeat, but now, he had come home to victory. Everyone who had followed him on the big hunt had returned unharmed and safe. Arrows and spears had met their marks, and the harvest had been plenty. It was a grand omen. Maker joined his voice with the hundreds of voices now singing. His heart was full. Thanksgiving would be an all night affair.

People were dancing around the fires and singing Thanksgiving to the Great Buffalo who gave them life. The throb of chanting and drumming echoed off the sky stretched over the earth, and the night fires reflected off the clouds, turning them into reds and oranges. Grotesque shadows danced on the walls of the tepees.

Buffalo-who-hunts-people had taken Konki and Maker together and gave them a special seat where they could watch all the dancing. This was the Dance of the Great Buffalo in which both the chief and his medicine-man took part. Several of the most prominent men of the tribe donned buffalo heads and skins adorned with eagle feathers and beads of all kinds. With

knees and elbows bent like bows, their feet stomped the ground in step to the rhythm of the drums. Others sang and danced in the sacred circle enclosing the buffalo dancers. Their voices were raised in Thanksgiving and blessings and songs of the hunt which was portrayed in the dance.

The battle was fought valiantly by the buffalo, and the Great Buffalo showed the people of the plains which ones to kill and which ones to leave alive so they would always have the buffalo with them. None of the fathers or mothers expecting were ever killed. The fathers and princes of the buffalo were revered and honored. When it was their time to die, their heads and skins were used in the ceremonies and adorned the chief tepees of the tribe.

All during the festivities, Konki was given the chief seats, the choicest meats, the pipe like a man, and the women took the feathers of his coat and put them into a headdress for him. This was presented to him by Maker-of-the-Wind as everyone shouted great honors upon him. Everyone sang to him as if he were a god. Maker-of-the-Wind gave him his own white stallion. Konki's heart swelled as big as the Heavens. He put his arms around the stallion and laughed with joy. Was he lifted upon the wind-runner's back or did his joy lift him up? He didn't know, but he was paraded through the camp and was presented to the rising sun at dawn. The horse turned and faced the people. There was a halo formed by the sun around Konki and the horse.

Wind-Runner whinnied and rose up on his back feet, waving his forelegs. Joining his voice from behind and coming to stand on either side were Bearcub and Cat. Wind-Runner didn't stir. They were all magical creatures. It was time for Konki to go. The people trembled with terror. Konki was indelibly impressed upon their memories as the Great Spirit who brought them the runners-with-the-wind.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Konki, Bearcub, Cat, and now, Wind-Runner, the white stallion, headed east into the sun-rise towards home. Overhead was the bluest sky in all creation. It was the waters overhead, the very vault of heaven. Everything that was made, thought Konki, must have dropped out of that infinite expanse. At night, it was a sea of stars as numberless as the grains of sand in the desert they had once crossed. Night after night, Konki was caught up in the Eternal Glories of the Heavens and of the breathing presence of the Great Spirit. Never had he witnessed such glory while living in the eastern forests. The sky on the plains was infinite. But the forests to the east he did yearn for, and after sun baked weeks passed, he saw a line of trees on the horizon. Konki's heart leapt for joy at the sight of trees, not the scrubby things he had been passing, but real forest green. Though he could soar above the forest, nothing felt as much like home as the smell of pine and green woodlands, the smell of familiar animal spoor and the feeling of familiar animal spirits that haunted the woodland shadows.

Wind-Runner was not a forest animal. As he moved through the forest, rubbing up against trees and bushes all the time and smelling unfamiliar animal smells, he became very jittery. He felt closed in...trapped. He would jump at the smallest noise or smell.

"What is it?" inquired Konki soothingly, rubbing Wind-Runner's neck. "What's wrong?"

"This is not my world," whinnied Wind-Runner. "It fills me with terror! I cannot run free as I was born to do."

"There is nothing to be frightened of. I, Bearcub, and Cat are right here. We can protect you from anything."

"I don't belong in the forest, Master. I know that death is stalking me. I need to return. I need to run free on the plains."

Konki bent down and put both arms around the neck of Wind-Runner. "Oh, I love you Wind-Runner! I want you to stay with me. With us. We need you to take me to my home and always be with me."

"Yeah!" said Bearcub.

"Yes. Please stay," said Cat.

"Very well. I will stay until we come to the big river that divides the land in half. But I cannot cross that river without meeting my death. I have had it in a dream. That dream has always been with me to warn me."

Konki hugged Wind-Runner and thanked him. He would not push him to disobey his own heart or the Great Spirit. For surely, it is the Great Spirit that speaks in dreams. After this, they went on, stopping only when hunger or fatigue over took them. Konki grew more homesick the further east they went. He didn't want to stop.

Thoughts arose like smoke from the heart of Konki. He wondered at

his adventures of living like a slave among the mountain people and living as an honored guest among the plains people. He had been a dog on the one hand and almost a god on the other hand...two extreme opposites. As he pondered this, he seemed to dose off with Wind-Runner still plodding on to the east and through the darkest part of the forest. With a jerk of his head, he woke up. Had it been a dream? He remembered having stopped at a camp fire and talked with his friend Aaron. He knew this as a real experience, but knew it only as a memory...as if it hadn't really happened, not even dreamed it. It was more like the Great Spirit just placed the memory of it in his mind. Aaron had quite answered his questions as to his experience.

"You have had these experiences," Aaron had said as the fire light danced upon his face. "that you may have therewith to judge all situations in your life and know how to act with others."

"And what does it mean to have in both experiences the writings on yellow leaves or plates?" Konki had asked.

"They are the words of the Master, or whom you call the Great Spirit. Seek for them always in your heart and he will speak these words to you. They will be given to the pale face who is coming, and he will give them to your people. They contain a history of the Master's dealings with the people of this land as well as the people before them. Be patient in your life and you will see both the pale face and these words of the Master written on the yellow metal called gold by the pale face."

Konki remembered them talking for a long time, but these are the only words he could remember. He pondered these words and felt the deep warmth of love in his bosom. His meditation was interrupted by the Big-River-That-Divided-the-Land as Wind-Runner stepped out of the forest. There, to his surprise, was his plains-man friend, Maker-of-the-Wind.

Maker was standing by the bank of the wide river waist deep in grass, just beyond the woods. He was holding the reins of his horse who was gray with white spots on her flanks. It was the same wind-runner on which he had ridden into Maker's village weeks ago. Two mounted warriors stood on each side of him.

Konki wanted to dismount, run over to him, and give him a bear hug, but seeing the other two braves beside him, he deferred. Having the feeling that this was a formal meeting, he put on his bonnet of horns and feathers that draped down his back and rode over to them, Bearcub and Cat on either side of him. Wind-Runner whinnied at the sight of his former master, anxious for the reunion. Konki raised his hand to the square and greeted them.

"Hail, Maker-of-the-Wind! Hail to the greatest of buffalo hunters!"

"Greetings Most High Brother of the Wind and Sky," Maker said in return.

There was a period of staring at each other because Maker was in such awe of Konki, Son of the Great Eagle that he was afraid to ask what was in

his heart.

Konki dismounted and removed his bonnet and everyone relaxed.

"I am amazed," Konki said, smiling. "The great Wind-Runner was just talking to me, telling me how much he missed his home on the great prairies." He held his bonnet to his chest, hiding his own feelings. "And here you are. The Great Spirit must have sent you here to lead him home."

It was Maker that was astounded at Konki's generosity. Maker's heart nearly burst. He grabbed Konki in a wild rush and kissed his neck. He let out a yelp, and they both laughed. Maker had gotten the point of a buffalo horn in his side, but he was unabated and held Konki's arms.

"Konki, son of the Great Eagle," Maker said proudly, "I came here carrying a great burden in my heart, and you have lifted it out. You are a true brother. I don't know what to say."

"Say the truth," Konki grinned, shrugging his shoulders, and said, "Be glad."

Maker was not going to tell Konki something that they both knew...that he had brought his two best braves with him to take what he thought was rightfully his, but he would honor him. He knelt down before Konki with up-raised hands and said, "You will always have my loyalty." They both felt the presence of the Great Spirit like a fire burning around them and in them.

"Maker-of-the-Wind," Konki said, taking him and lifting him up, "this is truly the workings of the Great Spirit. I will always remember my brother...no, my two brothers...Maker-of-the-Wind and Wind-Runner."

Wind-Runner neighed and pushed his nose against Konki. Everyone laughed, even the two braves standing by.

At parting, Wind-Runner talked to his master Maker-of-the-Wind.

"Master, I would like to honor the great one also. Will you give him my mare to carry him forward across this great water? She is a great swimmer, and she is fearless."

"Konki, would you accept a gift...another gift from us? Please take this paint. She will deliver you safely across this great water, and she is fearless in the woodlands."

Konki put on his bonnet again and said his thank-yous. He mounted the beautiful mare and called out, "I shall not forget my brothers of the Great Buffalo."

With whoops hollers of joy, their horses kicking into the air, the two parties rode off in opposite directions...Konki, up river to find a crossing, and Maker-of-the-Wind and his two braves off through the forest and on to the great plains and the buffalo.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Konki saw a village on the other side of the river, hopefully, before they saw him.

"Let's go back into the woods," he said to his animal friends, "before they spot us...though, it's doubtful. Perhaps we can watch them from the trees. We will find out if they are friendly or not, but I have a suspicion."

So back into the woods they went, winding around the trees and bushes until they faced the village head on, directly across the river.

Villages within barricades usually meant trouble either from within (because hostiles would have enemies) or from without. It could also be used to keep people in as well as out. A fenced city, it was told, was usually a dirty place with bitter people inside having narrow minds working only for themselves, forgetting their neighbors. Konki remembered this from his mother. But as he climbed high into the tree-tops, he saw something different. The huts were spaced wide apart with gardens in between them or places to smoke meat. There were many gardens that looked well cared for. There was a main thoroughfare in the center leading to a central lodge that was big enough for many many families to sit in. The lodge and the huts were made of bark and palmetto leaves

Both men and women were tending their gardens. Konki guessed that the men were tending the medicinal herbs. Children were playing everywhere. Some were rolling the hoop or chasing each other. He saw hunters come in and clean and smoke there catch of the day. There were many canoes along the river bank at the village gate and a lot of traffic in the river.

Having spotted canoes crossing the river, Konki decided to come down. It would mean men would be coming his way. It would be hard to hide from experienced hunters, so he had to rely upon the Great Spirit to protect him if there would be trouble. He pulled Paint back into the shadows and donned his bonnet and mounted his mare. Cat and Bearcub stayed on either side. Konki didn't have to wait very long until he was surrounded by the hunters. He had been protected in the past, he expected to be protected now. Should he wait until they passed, or should he make his presence known?

Konki didn't have to make the decision. He was spotted. The hunters, seeing him, drew their arrows and trembled. When Konki moved out into an opening into the sunlight, he and his animal friends were quite an unexpected spectacle. Konki's bonnet with its buffalo horns and eagle feathers made him look like a specter. Cat and Bearcub didn't like the weapons pointed at them, so Bearcub reared up and Cat put up a paw, screaming, which made Paint raise up, so every one of the hunters ran, leaving their bows and arrows unused on the ground.

Konki thought this was an odd greeting. He had put his hand to the

square in peaceful greeting, but he guessed the animals must have frightened them off. Just the same, he would now have to visit these people and explain his presence. He didn't want them to get the wrong impression. He headed for the river.

Cat and Bearcub thought it better for them to go up river to find a better crossing. Konki thought it better too to start crossing further up so he could land straight across. He had observed the canoes, that they could not come straight across but slanted down river as the river carried them. When Konki decided to cross, Cat and Bearcub said their moaning goodbyes, and Paint said that she would protect him. She was swift and able...and, she was a good swimmer, as Konki found out as they crossed the river.

Guards at the gates of the palisade were not used to young boys not of their tribe approaching with such courage, especially ones wearing such an extravagance of eagle feathers and buffalo horns. How could a boy be such a great warrior? He must be a thief, they thought. They sent for the leader of their tribe that he might examine him.

While the Chief Councilor of the village walked around Konki, looking at him and asking him questions in signs with his hands, Konki noticed a great commotion about the gate and all around him. It seemed that all the people had come to see him. They were all talking at the same time. The Great Spirit told him that some were saying that he must be a great warrior. Some said that they saw him across the river with two devils and that he himself must be a devil and that they must be rid of him. Some said that he must be a thief, for no boy could be so decorated. Some said that he must have killed a great chief, taking his war bonnet and his horse, and in that case, they must welcome him with great honors.

At the same time, Konki was telling the Chief that he was carried from his home by the Great Eagle, that his home was to the north by the sea of many waters from where the great Father of Fire arose into the sky each morning, that he was only trying to return to his home, would he give him free passage across his land, and that he had many tales to tell if he would be allowed, for this would be the only way, thought Konki to explain his appearance.

"This is an omen," the old chief told the crowd. "Make a feast for this boy. He will take our prayers up to the Father of Fire this day!"

With that, there was a unanimous shout of joy. Everyone started singing and dancing throughout the village. Drums beat a heart-felt rhythm. People started bringing out food and costumes. Bonfires were built, and circles of dancers orbited around them. Konki was led into a city of festivals.

Konki was made to slip down from Paint and was led away by the chief councilor surrounded by other councilors of the village, they all having wide grins on their faces. Konki thought that perhaps he was in the hands of more witches, but when he was led to a table spread upon the ground with many

aromatic meats and fishes and fruits of all kinds that made his mouth water, he forgot the grinning faces of witches. They sat him down and was told to eat. Bare breasted girls brought him wreaths of flowers and beaded skins and moccasins. Boys brought gifts of hunting knives and bows and arrows they had made along with bear-claw necklaces and the heads of many pointed deer.

People danced before Konki until the setting of the sun. Their cries and chants and cheers filled his heart, something he never wanted to happen. He had only wanted to explain why he was here, and that he would like permission to cross their land. This shouldn't be happening to me, he thought.

Konki was compelled to try on the new clothes and necklaces they had given him. He was so distracted by the bare-breasted girls trying to change his clothes and dancing all around him and rubbing up against his face that he couldn't do anything for himself. The girls stripped him and put a brightly beaded shirt on him, the design signifying the sun-god they worshiped. They put a new loin cloth on him that was brightly beaded as were the moccasins they slipped onto his feet. He was so embarrassed that he was shaking.

After they had dressed him, all the girls seemed to be asking him questions. They seemed to be asking him to marry them. He was getting pretty frightened, and the men were laughing at him. The big chief came over to him and with a swing of his arm wiped away most of the girls. He started signing to Konki that he wanted to give him one of his daughters, maybe two or three. Then he started signing to him what the questions meant. The many people talking to him wanted him to convey messages to their Sun God in the Heavens who gave them Light and Life. Some asked that their crops grow and produce much fruit. Some wanted lots of children. Some asked that their hunting would be successful throughout the year. Some wanted leadership in war. Some wanted messages of love sent to their dear departed loved ones. It sounded as though the questions were framed in respect to him returning home to the Great Fire Cave in the west, back from whence he came. He had told them of his journey west while he ate and watched the three bare-breasted dancing girls in front of him. Now, it seemed that he was being asked to return west instead of going east to his own home. Only Paint understood what they really wanted.

Paint had loosened her tether and had nudged her way to Konki. He nudged his shoulder and whinnied a message to him only he could understand. "Konki, Great Master," she whinnied. "These people are cannibals, and they plan to eat you after they dance themselves into a frenzy and slay you on their altar of sacrifice, that mound in the middle of their village. Move back slowly now, but mount me sure and fast. I will take you to the wall where you can jump over. Don't worry about me."

Konki's hand moved stealthily over to his sheep's horn which Aaron had given him. He slowly put the leather string over his neck. He didn't want

to leave it behind. The bonnet would be too cumbersome, so he left that behind. He also grabbed his old clothes, stripping himself while backing.

Konki quickly slipped back and mounted Paint who jumped over the crowd of people that had surrounded Konki and ran for the north wall. Konki threw his clothes over the wall and jumped from Paint's back, grabbed two of the spear-like points on top of the wall and hurled himself over all in one motion.

How he landed and ran into the forest without hurting himself, he didn't know. All he knew was the angry voices behind him who wanted to take his life. He heard the screams and kicking of Paint. Tears streamed down his cheeks for her. It would be Paint whom they would sacrifice now instead of him. That's where Wind-Runner would have wound up, but because of the wisdom of the Great Spirit, Paint had become a valiant warrior who sacrificed herself to save him. His heart burned within his breast. He could feel that he was being carried through the forest by the spirit of that valiant wind-runner, now running free.

He didn't put his clothes back on until he was far into the night.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Konki ran through the green woodlands for days without end. Seldom did he stop for water or food. He ran as though in a dream, flying with the eagles above and with the wind-runners of the sky. Longing for his family and his people, he ran north and east to a land of many lakes and rivers and jutting mountain peaks. Soon, Bearcub and Cat joined him in his race, and whenever they ran into a hunting party or a war party, the men ran from them as though they were spirits chasing them. They were phantoms passing through the green silence, for everywhere they approached, the birds stopped singing to see who was going there, and all the animals pricked up their ears.

As Konki ran, he dreamed of meeting Aaron, sitting down at a campfire in the green darkness and talking with him.

"Aaron, tell me of the animals, and how they came to be," he asked, "and why does man hunt them for food? And why did Paint sacrifice herself for me, and why did the eagles?"

Aaron laughed at all those questions spoken at once. "There are many legends about the animals," he explained, "but there is only one truth. You will learn one day that all life came from the Place of Light where all return when they die. That is, all the plants and animals and all the creepy crawly things in the earth and man himself came from the Place of Light. All life grew in experience as far as they could, knowing all things. Only one experience they lacked."

"What was that?" Konki asked, eager to learn.

"They lacked knowledge of darkness...being blind and deaf and being all on their own to make their own choices which they could only obtain in this world of opposites that we now live in. I say opposites, because the Great Creator of all things would never leave them without light.

"Man decided to come down into this world of darkness to gain all knowledge, to compare good and evil, pleasure and pain, light and darkness. They could do that because the Great Creator let them bring with them the light they had in the Place of Light.

"Now, some of the animals knew that without them, man would not be able to survive. So they decided to follow man to this earth, this world of darkness, from the Place of Light or the world of spirits (for all were created as spirits before being born into this world of knowledge, as it is also called), and they would teach man how to survive, and even give up their lives if necessary, for the survival of man. The animals made a covenant with man to be meat for man and to be their clothing, their homes and their weapons, doing all things for man, even to carry their burdens. The plants also made a similar covenant.

"The bear and the lion would teach courage and ferocity. The sheep

would teach loyalty. The buffalo would teach them honor. The turtle, patience. The eagle would teach them to soar above their petty selfishness to the heights of wisdom. The wind-runners would teach them freedom and sacrifice and again, loyalty. The weasel and snake could teach them craftiness and carefulness and to be invisible. There are many animals that can teach you many things as you watch them and imitate them. Yet, many of them have been overcome by the darkness and should not be followed. You will find an order in all things. The Great Creator teaches both man and animal that killing is to be only out of necessity, only out of hunger and great need...yet, there is more to life than all this.

"You must call upon the Great Spirit in all things that come to your mind and then listen. He will teach you of the Master, and the Master will teach you why the eagles sacrificed themselves for you. You must know that you are nothing and that you are everything, as your experiences have taught you."

Dreaming, Konki passed by a lonesome people moving south. He recognized none of them. They were a shadow to him. Dreaming, Konki, as an eagle, flew over Rock-Face Mountain and the Cave of the Great Bear. Konki ran north of his homeland, north of the place of his birth, passed an empty village that used to be his own place, the place of his family. Dreaming, he ran on, forgetting entirely why he ran, forgetting expected joy and the happy reunion with his family. Dreaming, he ran upon a place of mounds and hills that looked man-made, a place gorged out by glacier ice and snow. The very rocks in the valley had been sheared off. He recognized none of the many lakes. He was lost. He landed himself on the side of a long lonely hill covered by evergreen trees.

Konki ran into a giant grizzly that roared. It stopped him. Numb as he was, he fell against the bear and went into a dreamless sleep. The cat that accompanied the bear licked his face and head, thinking that his friend was dead.

Konki woke up to a mind-wrenching sadness. Both Bearcub and Cat were moaning. He pulled his knees to his chest and leaned against the bear for comfort, rocking, trying to press down his swollen heart. This was the place of the dead. It was more than just a place of the dead. He could feel the presence of an immense number of the dead, as numerous as the sands of the sea. Whole nations had died here. He could put his hands beneath the grass and feel the graininess of crushed bones. The soil was white, full of bits of bones. Every where under the soil was this white layer of what used to be piles and piles of bones heaped up upon the earth as far as the eye could see.

Konki dreamed again. He dreamed of a great battle fought in this place. The dark enemy were numberless. They were as a dark mass that covered the earth sweeping down tens of thousands here and tens of thousands there, and the smell of carrion boiled in his throat and nostrils. He

couldn't breath the air! It choked him!

There was one lone character wearing yellow armor stained crimson red. He was wounded. He was an old man dying, and he was a pale-face. He knelt upon the earth and cried, "Oh ye fair ones! Why have ye died! Why did ye reject him who could have saved you? Why have ye fallen! Why have ye rejected your Lord and Redeemer, your Master who would have gathered you as a chicken gathers her young ones under her wings, and ye would not? Ye wanted revenge and blood, and now it is a sea of blood, your own blood that ye have!"

Another man rose up, also a pale-face, having fainted for the loss of blood, tried to comfort the old man. He called him his father. The young man was none other than the image Konki had seen near the great salt sea in the middle of the desert! He awoke!

There standing before him, just above the ground in the air was this shining visage of that young man, the same that had blown his horn made of yellow metal in the desert.

"Who are you?" Konki asked, shielding his eyes with his hand, so bright was the young man.

Konki was shocked. He didn't really know, but as he searched his mind, he realized that once, he had asked Aaron why the eagles had saved his life. He had a premonition that it had something to do with the Master Aaron had spoken of. So he asked, "Why did the eagles save my life when I was only a dog, not worth much, and was it the Great Eagle or the Master that Aaron spoke of?"

The young man gave a wide sweep of his arm and said, "Look." And Konki looked and beheld a panorama of a people who had come to this land as being given a promised land for their inheritance. He saw the people multiply and cover the face of the land. There were many cities from the sea east to the sea west and from the sea north to the sea south. He saw that the people were divided into a pale skinned people and a dark skinned people, and that the dark skinned people hated the pale skinned people. He saw many wars and rumors of wars between the two peoples. He saw that because of the wickedness of the people, the earth heaved herself into convulsions, tearing herself in pieces and heaving waters upon the land, covering many cities. He saw many cities burned by lightening and many cities carried away by the whirlwinds of a mighty storm.

After the storm, after three days of total darkness and much morning of the peoples, there came the Great White Brother spoken of only in sacred circles and in private. It was the Master. Konki knew it. Many secrets now revealed themselves to him, never-the-less, Konki asked, "Who is this great man?"

The Great Spirit opened up Konki's eyes and showed him a great city across the many waters where his people came from, and he saw this great man who had descended out of the sky to his people long ago going about

healing the sick, casting out devils and teaching the people many and important things and then being lifted up upon a cross, and the Great Spirit said, "Behold the Great Eagle, the Master who saved your life and will save it until his purposes be revealed in you."

Konki then saw that the people to whom the Great Master had revealed himself rebelled against him, and there were wars and rumors of wars, and he saw the final great battle in which most all the pale-faces were destroyed except for those who denied the Master and joined the dark skinned race and twenty four who did not deny who were hunted down and destroyed.

He was upon the last great battle field and felt the anguish of it all. "Why? Why?" he asked, "did they turn away from the very Life?"

Konki saw the pride in the hearts of his own people. He saw all the wars still among his own. He saw his village destroyed and the people fleeing south. He saw his mother wounded and left to die. He saw his father dead and not cared for. But where was his brother? Maybe that was him leading the old ones and the young ones who had fled and who had not been hewn down, moving south as he had run passed a deserted village in his dreams.

Konki saw his people move south to seek a tribe of peace to join with and to share their land. He saw his people assimilated by a friendly tribe in the southern mountains. And then he saw an astonishing thing, as foretold by the Great Prince whom the Great Spirit said was a symbol of the Master. His people and the people they would live with would come in contact with pale-faces who wear short beards. Some have golden hair, and they all wear shining metal bonnets. And...they also ride the runners-with-the-wind! He saw it all as though it had already happened.

Konki saw others coming from across the many waters from the way of the rising sun. He saw many settlements where his people used to live. He saw much religious commotion, and he saw a young lad about his own age, but not as tall, come to this very hill, open it up and lift out a thing made of yellow leaves with writing upon them!

The Light dawned upon Konki...yellow leaves with writing on them! He knew about them!

"What are they?" Konki asked. "I have known of them before. The boy showed them to me. The Plains Chieftain talked to me about them."

The Great Spirit answered that they were the record of his own people through the lineage of his father down to the time they came from a distant land called Jerusalem.

Konki felt everything within him shine for joy. The Great Spirit told him that this record would be translated by the gift and power of the Great Creator, and that his people would learn the language of the pale-face, and that this record of the Master's dealings with his people would be given them and that they would read it and know from whence they came and their purpose here on the earth which was to gain the knowledge it would take to

go back and live with the Great Creator and the Master and the Great Spirit in that Place of Light forever and ever.

As Konki meditated on these things, he heard the rustle of silken robes. There was the soft beating of giant wings in slow motion, a feeling of fainting and then the shining of a bright light. A soft feather caressed his cheek. He sighed. Before him stood the Great Eagle, but as the light grew brighter, it appeared as though it were a man shining brighter than the sun.

He held out his hands and said, "Handle me and see. Feel the prints of the nails in my hands and put forth your hand into my side."

As Konki did so, he beheld a vision of the Master's hands being nailed to a cross. And as he put forth his hand to feel the wound in his side, he saw in the vision a warrior stab the Master in the side as he hung on the cross and water and blood gushed forth. He heard him say from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Black clouds gathered as he said, "It is finished." And he died. All Nature trembled. Konki trembled as he recognized that he had known his Master before he was born. He cried out, "Master!" but all passed away as though it were a dream. He remembered though that the Master had said, "You will witness of me to your people."

Konki lay in a daze for a long time...how long, he knew not. He only knew that it was very difficult to breathe! There was a giant grizzly bear sitting on top of him, wailing his heart out!

"Get off me, you ugly oaf!" Konki grunted.

Bearcub turned over and licked Konki's face.

"Get off me!"

"It's a sa-a-a-a-a-d place! A-a-a-a-ah!" Bearcub wailed.

He got off Konki when Cat swatted at him. But Cat was wailing also, causing Konki to cover his ears so piercing was the wail. It sounded like the screams of the dead.

Konki was weak. He didn't want to leave what he now knew to be a holy place, but he had to leave to go to his people...to find his mother...and then, to his people. So he had Bearcub carry him out of this place of vision and this place of mourning.

Konki fainted and dreamed he was back in the cave of healing, being fed by his friend Aaron. It was a dream remembered as he lay on the back of Bearcub who carried him back to the place of his village. He felt stronger now and could stand. He looked around. The village was left standing as though the people left in a hurry. Remembering his dreams, he knew that was the case. They had fled from the enemy.

Konki ate some cornmeal he had found and some smoked meat that had been left behind in their haste. He knew there had been an invasion from somewhere, but he didn't know why the invaders had not burned the village, leaving all these supplies. Konki felt gratitude at his village being spared. Perhaps the invading army had been too busy fighting and chasing

his people, and perhaps they would be back. He ate as he thought of these things. The cornmeal mush tasted good. He hadn't had any for more than a year now.

After receiving his full strength, Konki thought of his mother dying somewhere. Even though it was dark now, he would take her some cornmeal mush. Konki was anxious to tell her of the things he had seen and heard. He would like to tell others...those that would listen. Maybe he would find others.

Konki ran in a straight course to his mother, not consciously knowing where she was, just following the Great Spirit as an eagle flying just overhead, seeing ahead for him. He took with him a bear coat that had been left behind. It was probably old Wey-cho-kay's. He wondered what ever happened to him.

Konki found his mother lying beside a stream of water too weak to lift up her hand to drink. The water mocked her as it splashed along the rocks and stones. Konki took the bear coat and draped it around her skinny body. He then lifted her head onto his lap, dipped his hand into the water and brought it to his mother's mouth. She drank and coughed. He continued bringing the water, letting her drink from his hand until she shook her head, saying that was enough. She was satisfied. Someone cared.

Konki's mother knew not who it could be. Was it the old medicine man? All the others were dead, she thought. No, by feeling his arms and chest, she could tell it was a young man. Why didn't he say anything? She grabbed his hand and pressed it to her heart. She knew then that it was her son, but which one? Her older boy was gone, and her younger boy Konki was dead. She knew it was Konki, but here nursing her was a man. She called out in a raspy voice, "White Eagle! Your name is White Eagle." She was joyful that she was yet alive to give Konki his new name. He was no longer her child. He was now her man. She had given birth to a man.

After a long talk with his mother as he fed her the cornmeal mush, telling her of all his adventures and witnessing of the Master, telling her of the record to come written on leaves of gold, she passed away silently in his arms. At sunrise, he buried her, wrapped up in the old man's bear coat. She never saw his animal friends. They stayed their distance in the surrounding bush.

Winter was upon him again, and he would have to find himself another coat if he were to survive. If he could find one of the many caves in this area, an empty one, Bearcub and Cat would keep him warm enough. He could just keep between them all night and hunt for food and a coat by day. Thinking of the possibility that the invading army might be back soon to burn the village, White Eagle thought of old Wey-cho-kay's cave. If he had fled with the others, his cave would be empty. He would go up there and investigate. It would be a good place to hold out for the winter and hide from the invaders. He would go back to the village and gather up all the necessary

supplies that might have been left and take them up to the Great Bear Cave.

White Eagle. That was his new name. His mother had named him. He wondered about it. He wondered about all he had seen at that hill. He had gone out seeking manhood. He came back with a vision and a mission.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

And Conclusion

Old Wey-cho-kay lay dying in his cave. He waited for death. He was too sick and wounded to flee south with his people. Besides, he had to wait for his replacement, the one who would watch over his people and guide them through life's hard journey, through their dreaming (for, he taught, true life comes after death). Who would teach the young? Who would heal the sick? Time was running out and he had no apprentice. How could he teach anyone the medicine herbs and ceremonies? The people will forget.

Time brought the two together at the right place. Wey-cho-kay's replacement walked right into the cave followed by a big grizzly bear and a mountain lion. Old Wey-cho-kay moved slowly to lean himself up against the back wall.

"You have come to eat my bones, have you?" asked the old man with quite a bit of spunk.

The two animals now standing on either side of White Eagle stretched their noses out and sniffed the old man.

"They won't harm you," said White Eagle.

Old Wey-cho-kay opened his eyes wider and got a good look at the intruder as his camp fire reflected its wavy red and orange image off the young man's face.

"Why, the thief has returned, I see!" he said, "and with power!" Old Wey-cho-kay paused. He reached out to touch the snout of Cat, but Cat quickly pulled back. "You were always bringing animals into the village and getting scolded for it."

"These are my friends. We need a place to stay for the night," White Eagle said, almost apologizing.

"I am dying. You must carry me down to the place of bones." He pointed to the back of the cave which was in the shadows. The little fire he had burning didn't reveal the entrance to the bigger cave. "Here, take my bearskin coat. You will take my place as resident and keeper of the ways. I taught you. Now, you must teach others. Only, you don't know how to use the healing herbs properly."

White Eagle took the bear coat. He figured that, maybe that wasn't the old man's coat he had buried his mother in. And here he was, trying to take credit for teaching Konki, the White Eagle, when he knew it was the Great Spirit that should take the credit. He reflected now on a memory or a dream in which Aaron was talking with him at a campfire deep in the dark woods in which Aaron was teaching him of the different herbs. Aaron should take some credit for teaching him, but he wouldn't, of course. He knelt down to view the old man more intimately.

"Hee, hee," laughed the old man.

"I have gained knowledge, and the plants and animals tell me their

secrets. So don't worry. I have come to take your place. The world is changing. The old ways are dying with you. New knowledge will be taught our people," White Eagle said gently.

Old Weh-cho-kay got angry and said, "You think I don't know about the Master? About the Great White Brother? About the book? I know them all! But that won't save this people! They need to be taught about the land and the animals and the way of Life itself so they can survive. They need to learn to hunt and grow corn and squash so they can survive in this wilderness. You think I don't know the history of this people and their wars? What do you think a man of knowledge is? This people need to be taught to survive in the wilderness. They are a city people. They came from the big village from across the many waters. They do not know how to live in the wilderness. They must be taught. It was my duty to teach them. Now it is your duty. You must teach them the ceremonies so they can live at one with Mother Earth, the land, the animals, the plants...so they can survive. If you take this knowledge away from them, they will again be city people...unable to live out here in the wilderness. The Great Spirit gave them to live on this land. The land is to be their nursing mother, to feed them and clothe them, and if they do not continually renew their knowledge, they will die. City people die in the wilderness."

"Yes, old man. Their life will change. They will become city dwellers. They will forget their old ways. But a new teaching from the book that comes will save them. They will learn of the Master and his ways, and he will lead them. They will not die. They will be given a new life."

"Take me to the place of bones. I cannot stand to look upon the death of my people. The white man comest. He will be the death of my people." Tears came down the old man's cheeks.

"Yes, their old life will die. Their pride will die. Their lust for blood will die. There will come a time of war with the pale-face, but then, there will be peace as the pale-face learns of the land and learns to live in harmony with it...and our people will learn of the Master and learn to live in harmony with him."

White Eagle took a fire brand from the fire and said, "You hold this old man, and you can guide the way." He then took the old man up in his arms and moved to the back of the cave. The light from the fire showed a cleft in the rock which they could scoot through. Bearcub and Cat watched the two disappear through the hole in the rock and sniffed after them. Bearcub smelled another bear and growled. Cat slipped through silently slinking to follow his master. Bearcub found it difficult to squeeze through, but he made it.

There was a trail that led through a maze of stalagmites and stalactites. The old man said to just follow the trail. The light of the fire brand threw up iridescent shadows and ghosts upon the walls of the cave. They followed the roundness of pillars and vestibules. It was a holy place,

full of spirits of great power. White Eagle could feel the pushing of the Great Bear Spirit, and he remembered his vigil that important night before he left. He could feel ghosts of other medicine men all around him chanting their songs of power and knowledge. The air and stones down here were frigid. The trail led ever downward, ever colder. This was the trek of death, and the death song came from deep within White Eagle's throat to mix with those of the ghosts.

Turning a corner, Wey-cho-kay told him to lay him on top of the bones of his ancestors. There was indeed a pile of bones. Some still had the flesh upon them. It was like leather. White Eagle lay Wey-cho-kay on the pile of bones gently.

He interrupted his song to ask, "Shouldn't I build a fire or something? Do something for you?"

"You want to take away my honor with a fire? Go on with you! Leave me to my death! Death is *honorable*! You should *learn* that. Go and find our people and take care of them. They need you."

With that, White Eagle took the fire brand from the old man. They resumed chanting the death song, and White Eagle turned to go. Wey-cho-kay's last words were, "Remember! Protect the people. Teach them how to live in this wilderness."

"I will," White Eagle called back, his words echoing through the cave.

White Eagle stayed that winter along with Bearcub and Cat in the Cave of the Great Bear. He watched the people of the north set fire to his village. They never found him. A great bush grew in front of the cave entrance. He later went in search of his people and found them, but they rejected him and his fancy words. He went back to the Great Bear Cave. He met the pale-face coming up from the south, but that is another story. As he grew to full stature, he learned to hibernate like the bear during the winter months, learning he could live longer that way. Bearcub and Cat wondered off every spring to father offspring, but they would always return to be with their master.

There grew up a legend among the people of the north about an old man wandering the forests and mountains followed by a giant grizzly bear and a mountain lion of extra normal size. He would seek out young boys who were on their trial of manhood, who went in search of their dream and song, who went out to learn to hunt, to build their own wigwam and make their own clothes. It was told that he would show himself to those few who had the Great Spirit with them and teach them...not only how to survive in the wilderness, but also of the Master and the book that was coming that would be given them by the pale-face. He also taught of the Great White Brother who would come and bring peace to the land. To one or two he deemed worthy, he introduced to his friend Aaron. Whenever he blew on his ram's horn, he could perform miracles by the power of the Great Spirit, and always, there would be Bearcub and Cat by his side who never seemed to

grow old.

So told many mothers to their children.

THE END